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# Lesson One

## JESUS: THE PRINCE OF LIFE

### Discussion:

1. Read John 11:1-44
2. Prior to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and manifesting the resurrection life and glory of God we can catch a glimpse of a powerful truth in John 11:3.

Jn.11:3 So his sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, our brother Lazarus, the one you love, is very sick. Please come!”

This has to be the greatest assurance we can have; I am the one whom He loves. Notice, the sisters didn’t mention their love for Him or their faith, they didn’t even mention how Lazarus loved Jesus; what they were hanging all their hopes and prayers on was His love for Lazarus. That’s where everything starts for all of us. My love for Him was birthed from His love for me. He has loved me from before time began. This eternal love is very intentional, not casual. He has fixed His affections on me before I was ever born. This is how Paul describes this love.

Eph.1:5,6 – “For it was always in his perfect plan to adopt us as his delightful children, through our union with Jesus, the Anointed One, so that his tremendous love that cascades over us would glorify his grace—for the same love he has for his Beloved One, Jesus, he has for us. And this unfolding plan brings him great pleasure!”

So, my trust and faith hinges on His love for me. That’s why Martha and Mary could ask for the unthinkable, they knew Jesus loved Lazarus.

### Discussion:

1. Discuss this truth and the impact that God’s love for you has on your daily life.

Read the following quote from Matthew Henry regarding the love God has for us as is communicated in John 11:3.

“Though God knows all our wants, and griefs, and cares, he will know them from us, and is honored by our laying them before him. The message they sent was very short, not petitioning, much less prescribing or pressing, but barely relating the case with the tender insinuation of a powerful plea, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. They do not say, He whom we love, but he whom thou lovest. Our greatest encouragements in prayer are

fetches from God himself and from his grace. They do not say, Lord, behold, he who loveth thee, but he whom thou lovest; for herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us. Our love to him is not worth speaking of, but his to us can never be enough spoken of.”

**Discussion:**

1. Discuss how this truth impacts your prayer life.
2. Discuss how this impacts us witnessing to others.

Read John 11:25-26 below again and discuss the importance and the blessing of believing in Jesus.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

John 11:25-26(TPT) – “Martha,” Jesus said, “You don’t have to wait until then. I am the Resurrection, and I am Life Eternal. Anyone who clings to me in faith, even though he dies, will live forever. And the one who lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

**Discussion:**

1. Read and discuss the following observation from the Passion Notes and Pastor Frank on resurrection.

“The Aramaic uses a word that is related linguistically to the name Noah, who was symbolically “resurrected” from the flood as the life-giver to those who repopulated the earth. Resurrection is superior to life, for life can be defeated and ended. But resurrection overcomes. Life is the power to exist, but resurrection is the power to conquer all, even death itself. Believers must learn to live in Christ our Life, but also, Christ our Resurrection to conquer all things.” (Passion Notes)

When you taste God’s love for you, you are done. You know that no matter what obstacles you face, or enemies try to hinder you the Lord will see you through. The sisters had no idea what was going on when Jesus took four days to answer their appeal. They knew that when everything was said and done that Jesus loved them and that would be enough. It is always enough. His love is enough when you are facing sickness and death. It is enough when you are facing temptation. It is enough when bills seem to be piling up with no visible solution. Just remember, Jesus loves you and has a plan for your life.

We are all born in a state of spiritual death. Paul said that “you were once like corpses, dead in your sins and offenses”. When Christ came into our lives we were literally born again. We were in the graves of our sins and Christ called us out into this brand-new life. Every time I read or hear about this great miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead I focus on the scene, Christ looking into the dark tomb of death and calling Lazarus by name, “Lazarus! Come out of the tomb!” Then I am reminded that Jesus stood outside of my tomb of death and called me by name. He called me to live in His new resurrection life. I was dead in my offenses and sins, now I am living by the power of resurrection. (Pastor Frank Bailey)

### **Discussion:**

1. Read and discuss Pastor Frank’s additional comments on John 11:25-26 regarding being raised to life.

So, Jesus was talking about more than being raised up from the tombs at the end of the age. He was talking about being raised to life out of death in this life now. We were once enslaved to our personal sinful desires, now we have been raised up into new life. Here is how Paul says it in Philippians.

Phil.3:10,11 – “And I continually long to know the wonders of Jesus more fully and to experience the overflowing power of his resurrection working in me. I will be one with him in his sufferings and I will be one with him in his death. Only then will I be able to experience complete oneness with him in his resurrection from the realm of death.”

Salvation is more than just after life insurance; it is a new way of supernatural life starting now. Are you still “dead in your sins” or have you been truly born again?

Read John 11:43-44 again. Discuss the role that we have in helping new believers remove their grave clothes. How does one do this?

John 11:43-44 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”

# Lesson Two

## Jesus: The King

### FACES IN THE CROWD

Jn.12:12-15 – On the next day, when the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began shouting, “Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, indeed, the King of Israel!” Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: “DO NOT FEAR, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.”

There had never been a Passover like this one before. It wasn't the size of the crowd that year that made it special, there were always big crowds. It was something more than that. It was as if the air itself carried a strange expectancy in it. Rumors of miracles were literally everywhere. Jesus Himself was said to be making a grand entrance, maybe even taking possession of the throne in Jerusalem. When Jesus finally began to make His way into Jerusalem, the streets literally exploded with singing. Clinging to His side was the greatest miracle of all, Lazarus Himself was with Jesus. Just last week Lazarus had been in his own tomb, now he was joining the singing as the procession moved into the city. Was Lazarus a picture of things to come? Was death itself going to be defeated?

Next to Lazarus was his sister Mary. It was rumored that she had washed Jesus' feet with her hair, her tears, and a very expensive ointment. No wonder the Pharisees were upset. Mary appeared to be worshiping Jesus as if He were God Himself. Nothing like this had ever happened in Jerusalem, maybe there was something to all this talk about miracles. For a moment there was almost a hush among the throng of people, suddenly the people began to recognize the woman following close behind the donkey. It was Mary herself, the mother of Jesus. Of all people there that day Mary knew the truth about the birth of her Son, and she also knew who His Father really was. Maybe this talk of the Son of God was true after all, apparently Mary believed that it was true. Soon the celebration intensified, the Messiah was making His way to Jerusalem. Expectancy was in the air that day, something had to give, everyone knew that life as they had known it was about to change. The truth about who Jesus was, was about to be made very clear.

As Jesus and the growing crowd came into the city it was as if Christ was placing His miracles on display. The time had finally come, the cross was imminent, and Jesus was showing why He came. Christ came to save sinners. He came to heal broken lives. It seemed like the loudest commotion was coming from one of His newest followers. It had been just a week since

Bartimaeus had received his sight. He still hadn't stopped crying out. "This is the Son of David. I was blind and last week He healed my eyes."

Nearby was another one of the Lord's miracles. This one may have been the most shocking of all. It was the tax collector from Jericho, Zacchaeus. He was paying back all the people he had cheated. He was crying out almost as loud as Bartimaeus, "Surely this is the Son of God". Zacchaeus was saying last week I was totally lost, Jesus has changed my life.

Then there was Nicodemus, the Pharisee. He probably made the other Pharisees madder than all the others. Nicodemus was a respected teacher, if he believed that Jesus was the Son of God that could cause many others to believe as well. All Nicodemus could say was, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might have eternal life".

As the crowd approached the temple the children all began to sing, "Hosanna, hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord".

So here they were for all to see, Lazarus who had been dead, Bartimaeus who had been blind, Zacchaeus who had been a thief, and Nicodemus the teacher. What was the one thing they all had in common? One moment in the presence of Jesus had changed their lives. Surely this is the Son of God.

### **Discussion:**

1. Read Zechariah 9:9 and discuss its meaning.

### **CONTEMPLATING ANOTHER KINGDOM**

Jn.12:12,13 – On the next day, when the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began shouting, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, indeed, the King of Israel!"

The people couldn't see it, they were too focused on an earthly kingdom with an earthly king. Like people today all they wanted was to live their best life now. Get rid of the Romans and restore the kingdom of David and everything will be just fine. Hosanna – Victory over the Romans now, we want to install our new king. The one thing almost everyone was missing was that Jesus had come to set up a different kingdom. He wasn't in a fine chariot escorted by a band of soldiers. He wasn't in a fine royal robe and there were no weapons to be found. He was a king alright, just not the kind of king they had been looking for. Here is how Martin Luther describes the scene.

“He did not have his own donkey. He sits on the donkey simply as he came, barefoot. According to reason this is all completely foolish! Still the disciples shout: “Hosanna!” That is, “Victory to the new kingdom!” From this it is evident that Christ did not enter Jerusalem in worldly pomp as fleshly kings are accustomed to doing, gathering treasures, etc. In Christ’s kingdom I need no gold, indeed I lack nothing for all of eternity! This the world despises most incisively, that is that we should work here, use our possessions and still contemplate that [heavenly] life. Yes, the goods of this kingdom in the end we must leave behind us. We should think like this: wherever we are, there Christ is present. And he will speak to us like this: “Come, you are blessed by my Father!” Thus, Christians alone are here [on earth] with their left hand, there [in heaven] with their right. For we are baptized into future life. God grant us the grace to accept this King with joy, Amen.”

The natural man has no time or need to contemplate heavenly life. The problem with that: that is the reason Christ came. He came to get us ready for His coming kingdom. Most can’t even see it. Jesus said the only way anyone could see His kingdom was to be born again.

## **KING OF OUR HEART**

What a strange way to conquer a city. Make no mistake, this King of Peace came into Jerusalem to conquer. His conquest was not like any other invading king. There were no swords, horses, or armies and no arrows piercing the sky. His conquest was different from all the others. He came to conquer our hearts. His entrance on a young donkey was hardly a great military maneuver. Jesus had His sights set on our hearts all along. He would cleanse the temple, heal the sick, and prophesy about the coming of the Holy Spirit. No threats, no blows, just the love of God pouring out of Him into all who were thirsty. Here is how Barclay describes this scene.

“It was not the kingship of the throne which he claimed; it was the kingship of the heart. He came humbly and riding upon an ass. We must be careful to see the real meaning of that. In western lands the ass is a despised beast; but in the east the ass could be a noble animal. Often a king came riding upon an ass, but when he did, it was the sign that he came in peace. The horse was the mount of war; the ass was the mount of peace. So, when Jesus claimed to be king, he claimed to be the king of peace. He showed that he came, not to destroy, but to love; not to condemn, but to help; not in the might of arms, but in the strength of love.”

So.... has He captured your heart yet? Have you been captured by His agonizing prayer as He prayed for us in the garden? Maybe your heart was touched when He was whipped beyond recognition carrying our sickness and pains. Or was it the crucifixion that got you, He was wounded for our transgressions and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. His entrance to Jerusalem was all about His choice to suffer and die for us. He is the conquering, King; He has captured the hearts of His sons and daughters.

**Discussion:**

1. Describe the natural kingdom vs the heavenly kingdom in our life worshiping the king!

# Lesson Three

## WASH HIS FEET

Jn.12:1,2 – Therefore, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So, they made Him a dinner there, and Martha was serving; and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.

The first image that pops into my head when I imagine this scene is the celebration that is coming very soon, you know the one, the day we will be raised to life with Christ and seated with Him at the wedding feast with Christ. Here is how Musculus sees this passage.

“Consider here how wonderful and splendid this banquet was. Christ and Lazarus were at the same table, the one who raises a man dead for four days, and the man who was raised after being dead for four days. And lift up your mind to the heavenly dinner in heaven where Christ, the raiser of all the dead, will sit at the table together with the faithful who have been raised by him.”

Next, I begin to wonder why Mary went to such an extreme in this worship of the Lord. The only answer was that she had a revelation of His approaching death that the others had not seen yet. Christ died to save sinners, Mary got it, her sins were washed away by His coming crucifixion. How would Mary respond, she would give herself to Him in worship. This is how Erasmus describes this worship.

“Mary burned with a singular love for the Lord because of his many kindnesses, and especially the recent kindness extended to her brother. So, she came to that banquet and poured on the head of Jesus, who was reclining at the table, a great quantity of precious fragrant oil, made from fine nard, a full pound’s worth. So much oil was poured out that its fragrance filled the entire house. The woman’s love, a love that is unheard of, was not content with this. She bathed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.”

For those who could not see why Jesus had come, Mary was wasting her extravagant gift, for Mary there was no other response, she wanted to give her best, her everything to Jesus. After all, He had given her everything, His anointing was more precious than her costly gift. Mary had become a picture of New Testament worship; we too want to wash His feet with our tears.

## **FRAGRANCE OF THE HOUSE**

Jn.12:3 – Mary then took a pound of very expensive perfume of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

This was quite a scene, Lazarus sitting at the table, Jesus of Nazareth the guest of honor, Mary of Bethany washing the feet of Jesus with her tears, hair, and spikenard. Then there was Judas and the disciples in a heated discussion about Mary's worship. This is a great picture of the impact a true worshiper has on the rest of the world. Mary was caught up at Jesus' feet, she was not aware of anything but Jesus and His kingdom. Judas was distracted with the other kingdom, you know the one, the one with power, money and influence. In today's world worshipers can be quite unnerving. Their focus on the Lord makes others highly uncomfortable. Just as the fragrance from the spikenard became an elephant in the room, that is what worship becomes. It has a smell about it. To some it is the smell of life but to others it has the fragrance of death. Here is how Augustine described this scene.

“Listen to the apostle, when he says, “We are a sweet savor of Christ in every place.” As it is said also in the Song of Songs, “Thy name is as ointment poured forth.” Attend again to the apostle: “We are a sweet savor,” he says, “of Christ in every place, both in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of life unto life, to the other the savor of death unto death: and who is sufficient for these things?.....He called himself a sweet savor, not an evil; and represented himself as the same sweet savor, to some unto life, to others unto death. Happy are they who find life in this sweet savor! but what misery can be greater than theirs, to whom the sweet savor is the messenger of death?”

My thoughts often wander to that hot August night in New Orleans when that fragrance of worship grabbed my attention. It wasn't particularly good music that night on the lakefront but there was something strangely attractive about it. It carried the sweet fragrance of authenticity. I can't remember the voices or the guitar licks from that night, but I remember the fragrance. It was the sweet smell of worship that got me, His name is like fragrant ointment poured out.

### **Discussion:**

1. Why is worship such a big deal?

## **EXPOSED BY WORSHIP**

John 12:3 “Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

It's funny how worship can expose the heart of everyone involved. Mary had just poured out the fragrant oil on the feet of Jesus when another fragrance filled the room. It wasn't enough for Judas to have his own opinions, he had to attack Mary and her extravagant display of affection. Why do you allow this kind of affection? Why do you allow this kind of waste? Shouldn't we have fed the poor instead of wasting the oil on your hands and feet?

Have you ever wondered what was really eating at Judas? Sure, he was bummed about the apparent waste of resources (he had other ideas of how to use the money). That wasn't the real issue; the real issue was the public display of affection. Judas couldn't let that slide. It put too much pressure on him and the others. Were they expected to worship this way too? What Judas didn't quite understand was what had made Mary this kind of worshiper? What had changed in the last few days? From something Jesus said, we can see into the heart of Mary's actions.

“For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.”

That was it! Mary seemed to be the very first from the inner circle to get the implications of His death. This is why He had come. Mary finally understood the source of His mercy and her forgiveness. He was the sacrificial lamb that John the Baptist had prophesied about. Jesus had come to die. This is what exposed Judas' heart. Judas wanted the power that would result from a revolution, His death would be the end of those hopes and plans. That's why that blasted fragrance was so disturbing; it was the smell of Mary's worship. This was the fragrant worship that sprung from revelation. Jesus had come to die for sinners, this was Mary's only hope.

This brings us to us. Who is Jesus to you? Is He just a way for us to accomplish our earthly dreams, maybe business, ministry, or even family? Or is He more than that, maybe He is way more than that. How will you know? You will know when you next find yourself in a room where that aroma of worship begins to be poured out. It has a way of uncovering the condition of our hearts.

### **Discussion:**

1. Go around the room and discuss who Jesus is to you.

# Lesson Four

## Jesus: The Servant

Jn13:1 – “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He would depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

I love this phrase “to the end”; it has so many implied connotations. It speaks of Jesus loving His disciples all the way up to His death on the cross, even when His own circumstances are crying out for attention. It speaks of loving them until the completion of His redemption plan. It also implies His love and care for His followers until their race is completed. Best of all, it reminds us that His love is eternal; He will love us personally throughout the coming ages. He displayed this love during the last supper by tenderly washing each disciple’s feet. His love is tender and personal. Here is how Matthew Henry describes this phrase, “He loved them to the end”

“This is true of the disciples that were his immediate followers, in particular the twelve. These were his own in the world, his family, his school, his bosom-friends. Children he had none to call his own, but he adopted them, and took them as his own... These he loved, he called them into fellowship with himself, conversed familiarly with them, was always tender of them, and of their comfort and reputation. He allowed them to be very free with him and bore with their weaknesses. He loved them to the end, continued his love to them as long as he lived, and after his resurrection; he never took away his loving kindness. Though there were some persons of quality that espoused his cause, he did not lay aside his old friends, to make room for new ones, but still stuck to his poor fishermen. They were weak and defective in knowledge and grace, dull and forgetful; and yet, though he reprov'd them often, he never ceased to love them and take care of them.”

Not only was Jesus displaying love to His followers, He was mirroring the coming work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. That’s what this whole night was about; foot washing, instituting the Lord’s Supper that would prepare the world for the Holy Spirit, and finally an extensive teaching on the One He called Another Helper.

In this teaching on the Holy Spirit that is really over our heads and past comprehension, Jesus began to describe the love the Father has for Jesus. He was now saying that that infinite love enjoyed by the trinity is now becoming available to us. Jesus said it like this, Jn.15:9 – “I love each of you with the same love that the Father loves me. You must continually let my love nourish your hearts”. This is unending love, eternal love, the love that is enjoyed between the

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus proclaimed the unthinkable, this love is now available to us. Here is a description of this love from the Passion Notes.

“Unconditional love flies in the face of the most basic drives of human nature. We tend to love conditionally; we love only those we consider worthy. God’s love is nothing like that. Christians see the unconditional quality of God’s love displayed on the Cross. It is love for the utterly unworthy, a love that proceeds from a God who loves simply because He is love. Such a love could never be conceived by men. Only God would dare to love in such a way.”

So when we meet Christ we are confronted with a totally different kind of love than we have ever known before. He loves us despite us being us. He loves us because that is Who He is. God is love and the Holy Spirit is the outpouring of God’s love on whosoever will.

We see in this passage a shocking display of the Lord’s love for fallen man. Just imagine what Jesus was going through. His arrest and execution were imminent, before the night was over He would be taken into custody and the interrogation and beating would begin. His response is unthinkable, He is still moved by love, loving His confused disciples until the end. He humbled Himself to take the role of a servant and begin to wash the filthy feet of His disciples. From John to Judas, Peter to Thomas; Jesus tenderly took the feet of each disciple, fixed His gaze upon each one, and began to wash their feet. He wanted them to feel His touch one last time before His departure. He was preparing for the work that would lie ahead. Here is how Bishop Ellicott describes this verse.

“He knew during the course of His earthly work that His hour was not yet come, and again and again declared this. Now He knows with equal certainty that the hour is at hand that He should depart unto the Father. Having loved his own which were in the world... The words as here used refer specially to those who had been called by Him, and had left all and followed Him.... He would depart “out of the world;” they would be left “in the world,” as sheep among wolves, and as sheep without their shepherd. St. John places these facts in touching contrast. His thoughts are for them and not for Himself. For Him there would be the return to the glory of His Father’s throne, but His mind dwells on the bereavement and sorrow of those He leaves behind, and this moves Him to a special manifestation of His love.... “Having loved His own, He continued to love them until the last moment.”

The most amazing thing about this passage is the personal nature of the ministry of Jesus. All through the gospel of John Jesus took time for the one. From the woman at the well, to the blind man beside the road, Jesus loves people. He loves you and has you on His radar. He wants to wash your feet, actually He wants to wash all of you in His love. Sit down in His presence. He is coming to pour out His love on you.

## **Discussion:**

1. Talk about the love of God and how He loves to the very end!

Jn.13:8,9 – “Peter \*said to Him, ‘Never shall You wash my feet!’ Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no place with Me.’ Simon Peter \*said to Him, ‘Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!’”

One of the most beautiful and actually shocking characteristics of Jesus was His amazing humility. It is impossible to exaggerate His greatness so pride really doesn't come into play; He is greater than anyone can fathom. When He was approaching His greatest triumph and His greatest test, He humbled Himself again. Already infinite condescension is on display in Christ by becoming a man. God became a man- unthinkable. Now, He takes it further and puts Himself in the role of a slave and displays His love for us by washing our feet. In this life, the lesser serves the greater; the slaves serve the rich and powerful. In His world it is not so; the powerful serve the weak and helpless. Here is how Barclay describes this scene:

“Jesus knew all things had been given into his hands. He knew that his hour of humiliation was near, but he knew that his hour of glory was also near. Such a consciousness might well have filled him with pride; and yet, with the knowledge of the power and the glory that were his, he washed his disciples' feet. At that moment when he might have had supreme pride, he had supreme humility. Love is always like that. When, for example, people fall ill, those who love them will perform the most menial services and delight to do them, because love is like that. Sometimes people feel that they are too distinguished to do the humble things, too important to do some menial tasks. Jesus was not like that. He knew that he was Lord of all, and yet he washed his disciples' feet.”

I think this act of humility shocked the disciples more than anything else Christ had done. They were just beginning to wrap their heads around His greatness and now this; He dressed like a slave and began washing filthy feet. The amazing thing about this act is that it led into His teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continues His ministry of humility. He is daily washing us through and through with His presence. Let Him come near to you today. He will wash away your past and your pain and make all things new.

About two years ago my wife and I acquired an RV. We love the outdoors, and this has allowed us to take short trips and to enjoy the state parks. Often your feet get muddy, and we have a habit of leaving our shoes just outside to avoid the mess. This has reminded me of the custom in Jesus' day of washing your feet as you entered a home. The streets were made of dirt and often quite muddy. Wearing sandals in muddy streets is not ideal and could create quite a mess. The solution, wash your feet before you enter a home. The affluent would have a servant that would wash everyone's feet as they entered the house. In other words, you can't come in with dirty feet.

There is a spiritual application to this- we must be washed to enter God's house. Water baptism is the image of this; the true washing happens by the work of the Holy Spirit. Here is how Barclay describes this.

“It was the custom that before people went to a feast, they bathed themselves. When they came to the house of their host, they did not need to be bathed again; all they needed was to have their feet washed. The washing of the feet was the ceremony which preceded entry into the house where they were to be guests. It was what we might call the washing of entry into the house. So, Jesus says to Peter: ‘It is not the bathing of your body that you require. That you can do for yourself. What you need is the washing which marks entry into the household of the faith.’ ...In the early Church, and still today, the way in is the way of baptism; baptism is what we might call the washing of entry.”

All of us get our “feet dirty” by just dealing with the daily stuff. It's not just our first entrance that requires washing, we need daily “foot washing” by the Holy Spirit. Maybe you have stepped in some stuff this week. No worries!! The Holy Spirit is always ready for a good foot washing.

### **Discussion:**

1. What are ways that we can be washed?
2. Have a discussion of the meaning of “washing one another's feet” and how it plays out in real life.

## **JESUS THE SERVANT OF LOVE**

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

God's love is supernatural. Of course, it is, everything about Him is supernatural. This new commandment of love given to us by the Lord is more than difficult, the agape love that Jesus speaks of is impossible for a human to accomplish. Then why does He require it of us? Like Augustine famously said, “Lord, command what you will but give what you command”. That's what makes this new law of love possible for us to live in. Christ has made His home in our hearts since we have been born again. As we yield to Him and walk in the Spirit, He begins to love through us. This is the sure sign of conversion, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts loving this unlovable world. So, the new commandment is something only He can fulfill. Then what is the good news? He has chosen to love the world through us. Here is a quote from Johnson's Commentary on John.

“A new commandment I give unto you. The commandment to love was not new, but such love as the Savior commanded was new. It was such love for each other as he had shown for them

that he commanded. That love was one so intense as to give up all things. His love led him to leave heaven, to take our infirmities upon him, to endure a weary and painful ministry, to become a servant, even to wash the feet of his disciples, and it was about to show itself forth in the outpouring of his blood for the sake of his people. It was such love as he would inspire in the hearts of his disciples for each other; a self-denying, self-sacrificing love which is not of the earth, but carries its own demonstration that it is of heavenly origin. The “new life” is love.”

To me, this love is seen most clearly with Christ’s prayer for His executioners as He hung dying on the cross. He prayed the unthinkable, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do”. That is the display of God loving the world through His Son Jesus. Now He has chosen to love the world through us. We can now do the impossible, loving the unlovely with the love of God.

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35

This verse describes what separates Christians from the culture of this world. This love Jesus is talking about is not human love; it is imparted, supernatural love, that changes the way we live our lives. The Lord did not just set a high standard of walking in love and step back to inspect our behavior, He came near and began to live this life of love inside us. The kind of love demanded and displayed in Jesus Christ is not attainable by human effort, it is only when Christ lives in us and loves through us that we begin to be separated from the rest of society. Without the love of God in our hearts our Christian preaching smacks of hypocrisy. Here is how Andrew Murray describes it.

“Love is the power that moved Christ to die for us. In love, God highly exalted Him as Lord. Love is the power that broke our hearts, and love is the power that heals them. Love is the power through which Christ dwells in us and works in us. Love can change my whole nature and enable me to surrender all to God. It gives me the strength to live a holy, joyous life, full of blessing to others. Every Christian should mirror the love of God. Alas, Christians seldom realize this! They seek, in the power of human love, to love Christ and their fellow men. And when they fail, they stop desiring it or praying for it. They do not understand that we may, and can, love with God’s own love that is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. If we fully believe that the Holy Spirit will maintain this heavenly love from hour to hour, we shall be able to love God and Christ with all our heart. We shall also be able to love our fellow men and, yes, even our enemies.”

I love Murray’s description of the love of God. It is love that attracts us, love that converts us, and love that empowers us. God’s love is clearly seen in the life Jesus lived, His ministry of compassion to the poor, and the incredible demonstration of His love at the cross. This very same love is poured out on us through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Because of His impartation of love in our lives we can begin to live this life of love that changes our world. How will you really know this love has captured you? First, your undeniable love for Jesus. He has become

your first love. Secondly, the unexplainable love you have for others, even and especially the unlovely. This is the love that separates us from the world, this is the love that satisfies us.

**Discussion:**

1. Why does love have to be supernatural?

# Lesson Five

## THE CONSOLER

Jn.14:20 – On that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I in you.

I remember many years ago back in my Bible School days our teacher made us memorize today's verse. This particular professor was not focused on scripture memorization, this is the only verse we memorized that semester. He wanted us to see the importance of this scripture verse. Not only is Christ in me, but I am also in Him. This is where we live, we are literally surrounded and engulfed by Him. The trick is bringing this revelation into our daily experience. This is more than what we believe, this is the very essence of our lives. This is what Augustine says about this verse.

“For as long as we are in the body, as it now is, to wit, corruptible, and encumbering to the soul, we live at a distance from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight. Then accordingly it will be by sight, for we shall see Him as He is. For if Christ were not even now in us, the apostle would not say, “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead indeed because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” But that we are also in Him even then, He makes sufficiently clear, when He says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” Accordingly in that day, when we shall be living the life, whereby death shall be swallowed up, we shall know that He is in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us; for then shall be completed that very state which is already in the present begun by Him, that He should be in us, and we in Him.”

Augustine says that our future state in glory is being tasted now in this life. When you are born again, Christ comes into your very life and at the same time we are in Him. We are literally surrounded and consumed by Christ Himself. As we look to Him and as Jesus said “Abide in Him”, this revelation can begin to enter into our daily experience. He is our life. Jesus is not an add on to the rest of our life, He is life itself. From that place of being in Him our whole life becomes centered. Understanding our vital connection to Him effects everything about our lives.

## SUPERNATURAL HELP

Jn.14:16,17 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

The night before Jesus was killed, He spent the evening with His disciples, telling them about the season of the Holy Spirit that was about to begin. "I will not leave you as orphans", He said, "I

will send the Helper to be with you". The phrase Jesus used was actually, allos paracletos, which means another helper exactly like Him. The disciples had no idea of the magnitude of His promise, but they were certainly about to find out. After about fifty days, the Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus, nothing could ever be the same after that. What kind of help did the Holy Spirit offer? His help is limitless and effects every area of our lives. Here are some of the ways He helps us today. In Acts 11:18, He gives us the ability to repent, to change our lives. In Romans 8:26, 27, He enables us to pray supernatural prayers. He helps us to worship, in John 4:23,24, we see the Spirit and His involvement in true worship. The Spirit also equips us to testify, in Acts 1:8 He said to empower us to be witnesses of His work. He is also involved with our spiritual understanding, in John 16:13 we see Him leading us into all truth. Concerning addictions, habits, and fleshly weaknesses, the Holy Spirit joins together with us to overcome all of our struggles in this carnal arena. Paul describes this help quite graphically in Romans 8:26. As far as ministry is concerned, He is the supernatural power of God distributing His gifts for the purpose of ministry and outreach. Just as in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit will help us reach our world by equipping us with the power of signs, wonders, and miracles.

What kind of help do you need today? The Helper has come, His power is unlimited, and His love is immeasurable. If you are sick, He is the Healer, if you are lost, He is the Savior, if you feel weak and powerless, He is the mighty power of God available to you today. How can you receive His help? That part is simple, call upon the name of Jesus. He promised that when you call, He will answer and all that call upon His Name will be saved.

### **Discussion:**

1. How does Christ the counselor help us in our daily life?
2. How can we allow the helper to help us more?

### **CHRIST'S FINAL PROMISE**

John 14:2,3 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

In chapters 14-16 in John's gospel, we see an intimate glimpse into those last moments with His friends. In this passage He talked about what really mattered. He revealed why He really came, to open up a way for us to live a new kind of life. This flows out of a new intimacy with God characterized by a profound relationship with the Holy Spirit. Here are some words from Jonathan Edwards about this passage.

"The promises of the new covenant were never so particularly expressed and so solemnly given forth by Christ, in all the time that he was upon earth, as in this discourse. Christ promises them

mansions in his Father's house. Here he promises them whatever blessings they should need and ask in his name. Here he does, more solemnly and fully than anywhere else, give forth and confirm the promise of the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of the blessings of the covenant of grace. Here he promises them his own and his Father's gracious presence and favor. Here he promises them peace. Here he promises them his joy. Here he promises grace to bring forth holy fruit, and victory over the world. And indeed, there seems to be nowhere else so full and complete an edition of the covenant of grace in the whole Bible, as in this dying discourse of Christ with his eleven true disciples."

Here we see that Jesus died for more than just a life that lasts forever, we already had that being created in the image of God. He came and He died to give us a different quality of life. This life is the very life that Jesus enjoyed with His Father. He purchased that for us. This new kind of life begins when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. This Spirit filled life is life indeed.

## **OUR BIG OLE BUCKET**

John 4:10 "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?"

You can't help but identify with this woman and this story. Jesus was tired, he sent the disciples into the city to fetch something to eat and He rested by this well. Up walks a lady and he strikes up a conversation. They both had a need; Jesus was thirsty and so was this lady because she brought with her a big bucket. I think all of us can relate to her bucket. She carried it around probably her whole life. Just when we think our bucket is full, we find something else to throw in there. I remember my childhood dream was to travel the country in a VW van, going to music festivals, and living in tents. (It was the 70's!) That was my bucket at the time. The funny thing about that is, I did live in tents at our bible school as missionary training and traveled the country, but it wasn't as romantic as I had imagined!

The point is that the graces of His Spirit and his comfort can satisfy the thirsting soul. There was standing in front of her the biggest bucket of all time, and she didn't even know it. Jesus is so patient with all of us. We answer back to his fullness with a blunt- "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." Just as she looked at him with her natural eyes, we too look at all our circumstances and our needs in the natural, after all He wasn't carrying His bucket and couldn't possibly draw water. I've seen it over and over again in a person's life and in my life. We simply can't believe that He truly can satisfy this thirst. I find the thirst of this world only gives me a transient satisfaction and supply. It might quench my present thirst, but the thirst will return.

I thank God, Jesus takes the time for all of us just like He took the time for this thirsting soul. He walked her down the memory her past life and told her how she no longer needed to carry that big ol' bucket anymore. In fact, the more He talked I can imagine she began to feel so very full; an unbelievably satisfying feeling took over her. I have felt that feeling and still feel it. I love this part of the story in John; she forgot the very errand that brought her to the well. I think she found her very last bucket.

### **Discussion:**

1. Discuss how we go everywhere except to Christ to fill us.

### **LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED**

But Jesus mentions another world far away from all the government strife, wars, soaring gas prices and whatever may be your problem at the moment. Christ has a plan, He always does! He encourages us to not be troubled. The word TROUBLED in Greek is- tarassestho. "Be not so troubled as to be put into a hurry and confusion, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. He does not say, "Let not your hearts be sensible of the griefs, or sad because of them" but," Be not ruffled and discomposed, be not cast down and disquieted."" (Barnes) It will be up to us to watch over our heart, to cause it to be still in the storms of life. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it is the wellspring of life" In other words keep possession of your own souls when you can keep possession of nothing else. "The heart is the main fort; whatever you do, keep trouble from this, keep this with all diligence. The spirit must sustain the infirmity!" (Simpson)

Jesus was telling the disciples and us we will just have to "believe". To Believe in the Greek is pisteuete: Spurgeon says we have to "believe in God and his perfections and providence. Build with confidence upon the great acknowledged principles of natural religion: that there is a God, that he is most holy, wise, powerful, and good; that he is the governor of the world and has the sovereign disposal of all events."

### **Discussion:**

1. How are you managing the stress in your life?
2. Discuss the words Pisteuete and tarassestho.

# Lesson Six

## Jesus: The True Vine

Read John 15:1-16

### Discussion:

1. Jesus is the Vine. Read and discuss Pastor Frank's comments on this verse.

### THE VINE

John. 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."

John. 15:4,5 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

This illustration of the Vine and the Vinedresser gives us a look into the supernatural nature of our relationship with the Lord. One of the lessons is the importance of our total dependency on the Lord. Jesus said that He is the Vine, and we are the branches, the Father is the Vinedresser. One of the great lessons we learn from the humanity of Christ is His utter dependency on the Father for all things. He often said He could do nothing without the Father. The Father planted the Vine and provides all the life that the vine needs. The sunlight, water, and nutrients all flow from the Father of lights. In the same way the branches are dependent on the Vine. Separated from Him we can do nothing. Everything we have flows from the Vine into the branches. If we abide in Him we will bear fruit, disconnected we will wither up and die. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this illustration.

"At the very root of all Christian life lies the thought that God is to do all, that our work is to give and leave ourselves in His hands, in the confession of utter helplessness and dependence, in the assured confidence that He gives all we need. The great lack of the Christian life is that, even where we trust Christ, we leave God out of the count. Christ came to bring us to God. Christ lived the life of a man exactly as we have to live it. Christ the Vine points to God the Husbandman. As He trusted God, let us trust God, that everything we ought to be and have, as those who belong to the Vine, will be given us from above."

This is our place of productivity; it is also our place of joy and protection. Think about it, what is the life that flows through the branches? It is the very life of God. This life in us is the source of everything our hearts have searched for, in Him we are finally fulfilled.

### **Discussion:**

1. How does this affect how we live?
2. In John 15:3, we see that the Lord prunes every branch on purpose. Read and discuss the following scripture and commentaries.

John 15:1 – I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

The Lord loves to speak to us from images and pictures from His creation, after all, their primary purpose is to display the glory of God. Today's verse is a prime example of how Jesus taught from the world He lived in. He spoke of fishing, and farming, and in this case He spoke about the ever present vineyards in His homeland. This passage has always been special to me because of lessons I learned in my early years while I was at Bible school in the San Joaquin Valley in California. Our Bible school was surrounded for miles and miles by grape vineyards. The first week after I arrived at school, I worked for the farmer across from the school harvesting grapes. These vines served as a constant word from the Lord as I would turn time and again to John 15. I was learning the first and most vital lesson of my spiritual journey, intimacy and total dependency on the Lord. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this verse.

“All earthly things are the shadows of heavenly realities—the expression, in created, visible forms, of the invisible glory of God. The Life and the Truth are in Heaven; on earth we have figures and shadows of the heavenly truths. When Jesus says: “I am the true Vine,” He tells us that all the vines of earth are pictures and emblems of Himself. He is the divine “reality, of which they are the created expression. They all point to Him, and preach Him, and reveal Him. If you would know Jesus, study the vine. The vine is the living Lord, who Himself speaks, and gives, and works all that He has for us. If you would know the meaning and power of that word, do not think to find it by thought or study; these may help to show you what you must get from Him to awaken desire and hope and prayer, but they cannot show you the Vine. Jesus alone can reveal Himself. He gives His Holy Spirit to open the eyes to gaze upon Himself, to open the heart to receive Himself. He must Himself speak the word to you and me.”

There is life and nourishment flowing through the vine. Acknowledge your connection to the Lord and drink in His nourishment. If you abide in Him and He abides in you, you will bear much fruit.

### **Discussion:**

1. Discuss seasons of pruning in your life and the harvest and growth that resulted.

2. Read John 15:7 below and discuss what abiding in Jesus means to you. Also discuss ways you abide in Jesus. What practical things can you do to abide in Jesus? Then discuss how you can have Jesus's words abide or live in you.

Jn. 15:7 – If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

### **Discussion:**

1. Read and discuss Pastor Frank's comments below on this verse.

Oneness, that is what our hearts are crying out for and that is what Jesus is describing through this powerful illustration of the Vine and the branches. He is the vine we are the branches. We are connected to Him, the life that He experiences He shares with us. His life is flowing in us and through us. In this verse the Lord describes the practical way we can flow with Him and allow this experience to deepen in us. Jesus is the Word of God, as we abide in His word, we begin to experience the beauty of our union with Him. His word is in us, His word birthed us, His word enlivens us, His word is the very life of God in our souls. This is the source of our power in our prayers, Christ Himself is breathing His prayers in us by His Spirit and His word. Abide in His word and you will abide in Christ and His life.

### **Discussion:**

1. Read and discuss Andrew Murray's comment on this verse.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you—This He gives as the equivalent of the other expression: “I in you. If my words abide in you”—that is, not only in meditation, in memory, in love, in faith—all these words enter into your will, your being, and constitute your life—if they transform your character into their own likeness, and you become and are what they speak and mean—ask what ye will; it shall be done unto you. Your words to God in prayer will be the fruit of Christ and His words living in you.... If ye abide. Yes, Lord, the power to pray and the power to prevail must depend on this abiding in Thee. As Thou art the Vine, Thou art the divine Intercessor, who breathest Thy spirit in us. Oh, for grace to abide simply and wholly in Thee, and ask great things.”

So, Jesus is taking us beyond memorization and mental acceptance, He is teaching us to take the word of God into the depths of our heart. Love His word, embrace His word, delight in His word, and your prayers become intertwined with His prayers. This is the place where we begin to bear fruit. The result: God is glorified and we are filled with joy. (Pastor Frank Bailey)

**Discussion:**

1. Read and discuss John 15:11. Whose joy is meant to remain in you? It is the joy of Jesus?
2. Discuss the significance of the fact that Jesus desires to fill you with His joy. He wants to fill you with the awareness of His joy right now.

John 15:11 – These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

**Discussion:**

1. Read and discuss how Pastor Frank describes this joyous reality found in John 15:11.

“This is really, hard to understand. For many years fullness of joy was just a theological belief. I really had no idea what the joy of the Lord even was. Of course, I had tastes of His joy at various times in my Christian journey but something more than that happened to me about 25 years ago at this writing. I experienced an unprecedented (for me) download of joy when I was touched by the Holy Spirit in a revival meeting. I am talking about can’t walk and can’t stop laughing kind of joy. Joy that would wake me out of sleep and that brought an incredible sense of the nearness of God into my life. I think I had begun to taste the edge of what Jesus was talking about in today’s verse. I was tasting His love, the effect in me was unspeakable joy.

When you discover the love of God, that He loves you just because He does, you will be incapacitated by His joy. That is the obvious response to being loved. Being loved by God will bring you to the discovery of what life is all about. We are created to be satisfied by His joy; this is what brings God glory.”

**Discussion:**

1. Read and discuss how Andrew Murray describes this verse.

“That My joy may be in you–We are to have Christ’s own joy in us. And what is Christ’s own joy? There is no joy like love. There is no joy but love. Christ had just spoken of the Father’s love and His own abiding in it, and of His having loved us with that same love. His joy is nothing but the joy of love, of being loved and of loving. It was the joy of receiving His Father’s love and abiding in it, and then the joy of passing on that love and pouring it out on sinners. It is this joy He wants us to share: the joy of being loved of the Father and of Him; the joy of in our turn loving and living for those around us. This is just the joy of being truly branches: abiding in His love, and then giving up ourselves in love to bear fruit for others.”

# Lesson Seven

## Christ: The Vine

John 15:1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”

David and Paul both had touched the secret of the mystery of creation. Creation exists to display various aspects of the glory of God. Jesus Himself affirmed this truth when He simply declared “I am the Vine”. God’s creation is loaded with spiritual images of His glory. We see the refreshing nature and power of the wind, we see the thirst-quenching quality of the river of living water, and we see the picture of the vine. All life flows from the vine into the branches and finally into the fruit. The fruit brings glory to the vine. If we are the branches, then our connectivity to Him is essential. Disconnected we are worthless, connected we begin to bear the fruit of the vine. This is how God is glorified, when we bear much fruit. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this verse:

“All earthly things are the shadows of heavenly realities—the expression, in created, visible forms, of the invisible glory of God. The Life and the Truth are in Heaven; on earth we have figures and shadows of the heavenly truths. When Jesus says: “I am the true Vine,” He tells us that all the vines of earth are pictures and emblems of Himself. He is the divine reality, of which they are the created expression. They all point to Him, and preach Him, and reveal Him. If you would know Jesus, study the vine. How many eyes have gazed on and admired a great vine with its beautiful fruit? Come and gaze on the heavenly Vine till your eye turns from all else to admire Him. How many, in a sunny climate, sit and rest under the shadow of a vine? Come and be still under the shadow of the true Vine, and rest under it from the heat of the day.”

This makes my Christian life simple and supernatural at the same time. As I abide in Him through worship and prayer, His life flows into me. The result of the life of Christ flowing into us is His abundant fruit. Apart from Him our life becomes complicated and barren. Connected to Him, I become a channel for the life of God to flow into my hurting world. Abide in Christ! Lean on Him. Like John, rest on His bosom in prayer. This is where fruit is released and where God is glorified.

### Discussion:

1. Discuss aspects of a vine and how it relates to our Christian walk.
2. What happens when we are disconnected from the life flow? What character traits begin to manifest in our walk?

### SPONTANEOUS JOY

John 15:11 “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

I hated reading ‘Fox’s Book of Martyrs’ while in Bible School. I remember stories throughout history of Christians going joyfully to their deaths, often singing and even laughing as they

faced their executioners. I was quite disturbed at this for years and really avoided that book. All of that changed for me in the summer of 1994. In a moment of time, I understood. What was the change? I tasted supernatural joy for myself. I was visited by waves of unexplainable joy. Joy came when I worshipped, it came when I read my Bible, it even came upon me in my sleep and in my dreams. I was filled with joy when preaching, singing, and especially when praying for others. Jesus told the disciples that they would be filled with overflowing joy when the Holy Spirit came upon them. That's what today's verse is about. John 15 is part of Jesus' great teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit He delivered to His disciples on the last night He spent with them. Supernatural joy sustained those early Christians even to death. Here are some thoughts from A.B. Simpson on the joy of the Lord.

“There is a joy that springs spontaneously in the heart without any external or even rational cause. It is like an artesian fountain. It rejoices because it cannot help it. It is the glory of God; it is the heart of Christ; it is the joy divine of which He says, these things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. And your joy no man can take from you. Those who possess this fountain are not discouraged by surrounding circumstances. Rather, they are often surprised at the deep, sweet gladness that comes without apparent cause—a joy that frequently is strongest when everything in their condition and circumstances would tend to fill them with sorrow and depression. It is the nightingale in the heart that sings at night because it is its nature to sing. It is the glorified and incorruptible joy that belongs with heaven and anticipates already the everlasting song.”

No wonder Jesus said to rejoice when you are persecuted for His Name. He said when that happened the Spirit of glory would rest on us. This supernatural joy is part of what happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Remember, the Holy Spirit is infinite. That means that no matter how much you have received of Him there is always more; more than we can ever imagine.

### **Discussion:**

1. What does being connected to the vine have to do with joy?

### **THE TRUE LIFE OF THE BRANCH**

John 15:7,8 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so, you will be My disciples.”

The word of God is inseparable from abiding in the Vine. Christ said He is the Vine; we also know He is the Word of God. Becoming saturated with the Word of God is the great key to abiding in Christ. This is the life of intimacy with God. His word transforms every part of us. It is more than knowing what to pray that is the key to answered prayer, it is Christ being formed in us, through His word. His desires become our desires; His prayers are our prayers. It is impossible for the prayers of Jesus to go unanswered. As we spend time taking in the word of God we are actually taking in Christ. This is the true life of the branch; I am in Him and He is in me. I am now breathing in and breathing out the prayers of Jesus. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this verse.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you—This He gives as the equivalent of the other

expression: “I in you. If my words abide in you”—that is, not only in meditation, in memory, in love, in faith— all these words enter into your will, your being, and constitute your life—if they transform your character into their own likeness, and you become and are what they speak and mean—ask what ye will; it shall be done unto you. Your words to God in prayer will be the fruit of Christ and His words living in you. “Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you—Believe in the truth of this promise. Set yourself to be an intercessor for men; a fruit-bearing intercessor, ever calling down more blessing. Such faith and prayer will help you wonderfully to abide wholly and unceasingly.”

This is the key to bearing much fruit. Fruit is what Jesus is after, this is what brings Him glory. Abiding in Christ begins to allow His love to form in us. He loves me and that is all I need. His words form His words in me, His words become my prayers. This is the life of true intercession; Christ’s love being released through my prayer. These prayers are guaranteed to be answered.

### **Discussion:**

1. Describe the everyday life of a branch in detail.
2. Begin to meditate on how your own life must be connected to Christ.
3. Discuss other scriptures that describe this connection.

### **PRUNING TIME**

John. 15:3 –every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

This is the verse I want to skip over. I don’t like that word, prunes. As a matter of fact, I didn’t like that season when I lived among the vineyards in Central California. The grape fields had been so green and beautiful all summer. Harvest time brought the fruit bearing and rejoicing in the harvest. But then things got ugly quick, the vinedressers would come with their pruning knives and cut away all the beautiful green growth. All you could see for miles was the brown leftover stubs; everything green had been cut off. The lesson in this verse is filled with promise. This is the key to more fruit. The pruning focuses the life of the vine back to the fruit. Next season there will be more fruit, pruning is an essential part of the process. Here is how Murray describes the pruning.

“What a solemn, precious lesson! It is not to sin only that the cleansing of the Husbandman here refers. It is to our own religious activity, as it is developed in the very act of bearing fruit. It is this that must be cut down and cleansed away. We have, in working for God, to use our natural gifts of wisdom, or eloquence, or influence, or zeal. And yet they are ever in danger of being unduly developed, and then trusted in. And so, after each season of work, God has to bring us to the end of ourselves, to the consciousness of the helplessness and the danger of all that is of man, to feel that we are nothing. All that is to be left of us is just enough to receive the power of the life-giving sap of the Holy Spirit. What is of man must be reduced to its very lowest measure. All that is inconsistent with the most entire devotion to Christ’s service must be removed.”

When we abide in Christ, we will remain open to this pruning process. The Lord wants to

remove from us all our dependence on our own abilities and plans. We must allow Him to strip away our trust in ourselves and look to Him. How does He prune us? He prunes us with His word. This cleansing by His word prepares us for new growth and harvest. Remember why the pruning comes, He wants to have a greater harvest.

**Discussion:**

1. “What is of man must be reduced to its very lowest measure. All that is inconsistent with the most entire devotion to Christ’s service must be removed.” This is a profound statement by Murray. Discuss.
2. How do we prepare for more fruit?

# Lesson Eight

## **WE ARE IN HIM AND HE IS IN US**

Jn.15:4 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

This passage is touching on the mystery of New Testament revelation. This is what makes Christianity different and superior to all religions and philosophies. Remember, this teaching is in the middle of Christ’s discourse on the Holy Spirit the last night He was with His disciples. He was saying the Spirit would not only be with us and upon us, but He would also be in us. In John 14:20 – Jesus described it like this, “At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you”. Jesus told this parable of the vineyard to explain this very truth. We are in Him – He is in us – He is in the Father. Our satisfaction and productivity flows completely from that amazing relationship. Here is how Andrew Murray describes it.

“There is but one way for the branch to bear fruit, there is no other possibility, it must abide in unbroken communion with the vine. Not of itself, but only of the vine, does the fruit come. Christ had already said: “Abide in me”; in nature the branch teaches us the lesson so clearly; it is such a wonderful privilege to be called and allowed to abide in the heavenly Vine; one might have thought it needless to add these words of warning. But no—Christ knows so well what a renunciation of self is implied in this: “Abide in me”; how strong and universal the tendency would be to seek to bear fruit by our own efforts; how difficult it would be to get us to believe that actual, continuous abiding in Him is an absolute necessity! He insists upon the truth: Not of itself can the branch bear fruit; except it abide, it cannot bear fruit.”

This is way beyond our ability to grasp. The very life that Jesus enjoys is the life that flows through us. Without Him we can do nothing, with Him and in Him all things are possible. Cut off from Him we are listless and empty. Connected to Him we share His unspeakable joy. Abide in Him – let Him abide in you – we share an intimacy and a privilege way too big for words.

### **Discussion:**

1. What is way beyond our ability to grasp?
2. Discuss the importance of intimacy with Christ?

## **COMPLACENCY VS MORE OF HIM**

John 15:2 – And every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

One of the dangers of being used by the Lord is complacency. We tend to compare ourselves with others and sometimes come to the conclusion that we are doing pretty good. At Victory we could look back at revivals with salvations of years gone by, the thousands touched by Feed the Multitudes or Beyond the Grave, or the tremendous fruit we have seen from Mary’s Song and say we are okay, we are doing pretty good. That is not the lesson Jesus taught in this verse. He

told His disciples that if they were seeing fruit in their ministries and lives that they should not be satisfied, the Lord is looking for more fruit. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this.

“More Fruit–The word comes with divine authority to search and test our life: the true disciple will heartily surrender himself to its holy light, and will earnestly ask that God Himself may show what there may be lacking in the measure or the character of the fruit he bears. Do let us believe that the Word is meant to lead us on to a fuller experience of the Father’s purpose of love, of Christ’s fullness, and of the wonderful privilege of bearing much fruit in the salvation of men. More Fruit–The word is a most encouraging one. Let us listen to it. It is just to the branch that is bearing fruit that the message comes: more fruit. God does not demand this as Pharaoh the task-master, or as Moses the lawgiver, without providing the means. He comes as a Father, who gives what He asks, and works what He commands. He comes to us as the living branches of the living Vine, and offers to work the more fruit in us, if we but yield ourselves into His hands. Shall we not admit the claim, accept the offer, and look to Him to work it in us?”

There was a one-word prayer that we used to cry out to the Lord in the outpouring of 1994, “More, Lord!!!” This prayer often took on two meanings. We were crying for more of Him but at the same time I think the Lord was crying through us, “More, more fruit”. Today, thousands, no millions of souls, are groping through life with no sense of hope and no knowledge of God. The fields are white unto harvest – the Lord is calling for fruit bearers. More Lord!!! More fruit in our lives.

### **Discussion:**

1. When is the last time you have taken inventory of your life?
2. How does one do this?

## **ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE**

John 15:1 – I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

There are many lessons to be learned from Christ’s teaching on the vine. In this first verse Jesus reveals to us that the Father is the Husbandman (vinedresser). Jesus is connected to us because of His humanity. He is the vine; we are the branches. This illustration displays the Lord’s utter dependency on the Father. His entire mission was directed and empowered by the Husbandman. His miracles, His teaching, His death, and resurrection were all directed and empowered by the Father. Just as the vine in a vineyard needs the farmer’s care, wisdom, and resources; Jesus showed us His complete dependency On the Father. If that is true, we are also helpless without Him. Our prayers, our health, our preaching, our provision – everything flows out from the vine into the branches. Just as Jesus leans on the Father, our hope is totally in Christ. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this verse.

“My Father is the Husbandman. –Christ ever lived in the spirit of what He once said: “The Son can do nothing of himself.” As dependent as a vine is on a husbandman for the place where it is to grow, for its fencing in and watering and pruning. Christ felt Himself entirely dependent on the Father every day for the wisdom and the strength to do the Father’s will. As He said in the previous chapter (14:10): “The words that I say unto you, I speak not from Myself; but the

Father abiding in Me does his works.” This absolute dependence had as its blessed counterpart the most blessed confidence that He had nothing to fear: the Father could not disappoint Him. With such a Husbandman as His Father, He could enter death and the grave. He could trust God to raise Him up. All that Christ is and has, He has, not in Himself, but from the Father.”

So, there are two courses we can take in this life. We can try our best to fulfill our plans and goals in our own strength and resources; or we can fall on the Lord, looking to Him as our supply in all things. Jesus said it a few verses later, if we abide in Him we will bear much fruit. The fruit is what He is after. The fruit of the vine is the glory of the farmer. Abide in Christ – you will be satisfied, and God will be glorified.

### **Discussion:**

1. Discuss the two courses we can take in life and their outcome.

### **FINALLY FULFILLED**

John. 15:1 – I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

John. 15:4,5 – Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

This illustration of the Vine and the Vinedresser gives us a look into the supernatural nature of our relationship with the Lord. One of the lessons is the importance of our total dependency on the Lord. Jesus said that He is the Vine, and we are the branches, the Father is the Vinedresser. One of the great lessons we learn from the humanity of Christ is His utter dependency on the Father for all things. He often said He could do nothing without the Father. The Father planted the Vine and provides all the life that the vine needs. The sunlight, water, and nutrients all flow from the Father of lights. In the same way the branches are dependent on the Vine. Separated from Him we can do nothing. Everything we have flows from the Vine into the branches. If we abide in Him we will bear fruit, disconnected we will wither up and die. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this illustration.

“At the very root of all Christian life lies the thought that God is to do all, that our work is to give and leave ourselves in His hands, in the confession of utter helplessness and dependence, in the assured confidence that He gives all we need. The great lack of the Christian life is that, even where we trust Christ, we leave God out of the count. Christ came to bring us to God. Christ lived the life of a man exactly as we have to live it. Christ the Vine points to God the Husbandman. As He trusted God, let us trust God, that everything we ought to be and have, as those who belong to the Vine, will be given us from above.”

This is our place of productivity; it is also our place of joy and protection. Think about it, what is the life that flows through the branches? It is the very life of God. This life in us is the source of everything our hearts have searched for, in Him we are finally fulfilled.

**Discussion:**

1. What causes lack in our life?
2. What is productivity in the Christian life?

# Lesson Nine

## WHAT ARE BRANCHES FOR?

Jn. 15:7 – If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Oneness, that is what our hearts are crying out for and that is what Jesus is describing through this powerful illustration of the Vine and the branches. He is the vine; we are the branches. We are connected to Him, the life that He experiences He shares with us. His life is flowing in us and through us. In this verse the Lord describes the practical way we can flow with Him and allow this experience to deepen in us. Jesus is the Word of God, as we abide in His word, we begin to experience the beauty of our union with Him. His word is in us, His word birthed us, His word enlivens us, His word is the very life of God in our souls. This is the source of our power in our prayers, Christ Himself is breathing His prayers in us by His Spirit and His word. Abide in His word and you will abide in Christ and His life. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this verse.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you—This He gives as the equivalent of the other expression: “I in you. If my words abide in you”—that is, not only in meditation, in memory, in love, in faith— all these words enter into your will, your being, and constitute your life—if they transform your character into their own likeness, and you become and are what they speak and mean—ask what ye will; it shall be done unto you. Your words to God in prayer will be the fruit of Christ and His words living in you....If ye abide. Yes, Lord, the power to pray and the power to prevail must depend on this abiding in Thee. As Thou art the Vine, Thou art the divine Intercessor, who breathest Thy spirit in us. Oh, for grace to abide simply and wholly in Thee, and ask great things.”

So, Jesus is taking us beyond memorization and mental acceptance, He is teaching us to take the word of God into the depths of our heart. Love His word, embrace His word, delight in His word, and your prayers become intertwined with His prayers. This is the place where we begin to bear fruit. The result: God is glorified, and we are filled with joy. This is what branches are for!

### **Discussion:**

1. How important does God’s word come into place in order to be a branch?

John 15:8 “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

I think it is important for us to see this verse in its proper context. This is the passage of scripture where Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure and their ministry. It is after the foot washing and the Last Supper where He was teaching extensively about the Holy Spirit. This parable is the very heart of His message that night. They were to continue the Lord’s ministry. The whole point was for them to bear fruit. The fruit He was

talking about were human lives. They were called, like all of us are, to bring forgiveness of sins and recovery to broken lives. Of course, the solution to people's hurt is the life of God, the Holy Spirit. In order for this life to touch the world it had to flow from the vine through the branches. That is what branches are for. Here is how Andrew Murray describes this.

“They often desire it (bearing fruit) very earnestly; they read and meditate and pray, and yet they fail, they wonder why? The reason is very simple: they do not know that fruit-bearing is the one thing they have been saved for. Just as entirely as Christ became the true Vine with the one object, you have been made a branch too, with the one object of bearing fruit for the salvation of men. Let us begin to think as God thinks. Let us accept Christ's teaching and respond to it. The one object of my being a branch, the one mark of my being a true branch, the one condition of my abiding and growing strong, is that I bear the fruit of the heavenly Vine for dying men to eat and live. And the one thing of which I can have the most perfect assurance is that, with Christ as my Vine, and the Father as my Husbandman, I can indeed be a fruitful branch.”

This is the very heart of our Christian faith, the testimony of Jesus in us and flowing from us. I like to think of our world as clusters, like clusters of grapes. The Lord finds a person in one of these clusters and reveals Himself to them. His purpose was not just about them, it was about the whole cluster that they are part of. If you are reading this blog, you are probably already a branch. What is the Lord saying to you today? It is time to bear fruit. Abide in Him, let His life flow into you and then through you to your world. This is how the Father is glorified.

## **FRUITFUL PLACE TO LIVE**

Psalm 1:3 – He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

What is prosperity or fruitfulness anyway? Jesus said that bearing fruit is the mark of a disciple. He said it like this, John 15:8 – “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples”. David said it came from being planted by the river, Jesus said it came from abiding in the vine. Could it be that this is just two different ways of saying the same thing? Planted by the River would mean living my life in a dependency of the Holy Spirit. Drinking in His presence every day. Abiding in Christ is the same thing, looking to Jesus and allowing the life of the Spirit to flow from Him into me. Luther talked about this kind of fruitfulness. He said it was spiritual and not carnal. Check this out.

“And with regard to this “prospering,” take heed that thou understands not a carnal prosperity. This prosperity is hidden prosperity, and lies entirely secret in spirit; and therefore if thou hast not this prosperity that is by faith, thou shouldest rather judge thy prosperity to be the greatest adversity. For as the devil bitterly hates this leaf and the word of God, so does he also those who teach and hear it, and he persecutes such, aided by all the powers of the world. Therefore, thou hearest of a miracle the greatest of all miracles, when thou hearest that all things prosper which a blessed man doeth.”

Jesus said this fruitfulness would glorify the Lord. The reason it brings glory to the Lord is

because it points everyone and everything back to the Lord. By ourselves we can do nothing, planted by the river suddenly all things become possible. We are no longer limited by our limitations, we are limited only by the Lord's limitations. Of course He is all powerful and can do anything, in other words, abiding in Him breaks us into the supernatural arena. This fruitfulness effects every part of us; our work life, our family life, and our ministry life. Suddenly it is Christ working through us. Our part is to stay planted and let the River flow through us.

### **Discussion:**

1. Being planted by what river? How do we live this out in our experience?

### **ARTESIAN JOY**

John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

I remember just like it was yesterday the day I discovered the joy of the Lord. I had been hearing strange reports of people laughing in church services but didn't give it much thought; at least I didn't until it happened to me. You see I was a little hesitant to embrace what was being called the "laughing revival", I had seen so much weirdness that I was not so sure this was legit. There had been everything from excessive emphasis on deliverance, to apostolic weirdness, to flag waving; I was not so sure this was God. Like I said, what changed everything was the day I got surprised by joy. Not the normal kind of joy that comes from things going your way but an unexplainable visitation of heavenly laughter. You could call it Artesian Joy. Here are some thoughts from A. B. Simpson on the joy of heaven.

"There is a joy that springs spontaneously in the heart without any external or even rational cause. It is like an artesian fountain. It rejoices because it cannot help it. It is the glory of God; it is the heart of Christ; it is the joy divine of which He says, these things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. And your joy no man can take from you. Those who possess this fountain are not discouraged by surrounding circumstances. Rather, they are often surprised at the deep, sweet gladness that comes without apparent cause—a joy that frequently is strongest when everything in their condition and circumstances would tend to fill them with sorrow and depression. It is the nightingale in the heart that sings at night because it is its nature to sing. It is the glorified and incorruptible joy that belongs with heaven and anticipates already the everlasting song. Lord, give us Thy joy under all circumstances this day, and let our full hearts overflow in blessing to others."

This joy is like nothing I had ever experienced before. The most surprising thing of all, this artesian well of joy has stayed with me all these years. It comes at the most surprising times; in worship, during preaching, quiet reflection, or just looking at His beautiful creation. Maybe you have been bored or dry, start digging deep within your belly, artesian joy is not far away.

## **DID I CHOOSE HIM OR DID HE CHOOSE ME?**

John 15:16 “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

This is one of those doctrines people have fought about forever. You know, the free will thing. Did I choose Him or did He choose me? If you disengage your preconceived idea about free will, you will see clearly in the scriptures that He actually chose you. It's the choosing part that gets us confused. In order to understand freedom of the will you have to go back to the garden and that tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is quite apparent that something tragic happened when our first parents ate from that tree. What was the effect on us? I believe it twisted us, especially in our ability to choose rightly. Our free will became enslaved. That's why we often know and want to do right but find ourselves right back in the dumper of compromise and sin. It is the grace of God that liberates our will. How are we chosen, is it the work of the Holy Spirit on our hearts? Here is R.C. Sproul on Jonathan Edwards on this topic.

“God used Jonathan Edwards mightily during the eighteenth-century Great Awakening in New England. Edwards was a firm believer in the doctrine of election. He believed that unless God had chosen a person, elected him to salvation, that person would never come to faith. Nevertheless, he pled, cajoled, and scared people half to death, telling them to repent and come to faith, because he did not know who was numbered among the elect.... Some heard Edwards and asked, “What if I am not elect? What should I do?” Edwards said, ‘Be in church every Sunday morning because you do not know that you are not elect, and you should do everything you can do in your fallen condition.’ Edwards said there is nothing people can do to incline themselves to the things of God. They cannot muster from their heart's true repentance unless the Holy Spirit changes their souls, but they can hear the Word of God and know that they are going to be judged at the end of their lives.”

It happened to me at the lakefront in NOLA in 1973, the scales came off my eyes and my will was set free. Has it happened to you? How would you know, by testing the inclinations of your heart?

### **Discussion:**

1. Discuss the beauty of being chosen.
2. What is the difference between joy and happiness?

# Lesson Ten

## FRUIT OF THE VINE

John 15:4 “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.”

Dick Mills used to say I can't make it happen, but I can watch it happen. What did he mean by that? If you are dynamically connected to Christ and just stay there, fruit is certain. How much fruit, what kind of fruit, or how big the fruit is not within our ability to determine. That lies in the hands of God. What can I do? Just abide, stay connected, just rest in my organic relation to Him. If I abide in Him I will bear fruit, that fruit will be the beautiful work of God. Here is how Watchman Nee explains it.

“These familiar words remind us that it is God who has placed us in Christ. We are there, and we are told to stay there! It was God's own act, and we are to abide by it. “Abide in me, and I in you.” This is a double sentence: a command matched by a promise. That is to say, there is an objective and a subjective side to God's working, and the subjective depends on the objective; the “I in you” is the outcome of our abiding in Him. We need to guard against being overanxious about the subjective side of things, as though a branch of the vine should strive to produce grapes of a particular size or color. We need to dwell upon the objective— “Abide in me”—and let God take care of the outcome. And this He has undertaken to do. The character of the fruit is always determined by the Vine.”

How do I abide? What did Jesus mean by abiding in the vine? All a vine has to do to bear fruit is to stay connected to the rest of the plant. It is the same with us. We stay connected to Christ in three basic ways. First, by spending lots of time reading and searching the written word. This is our life and a major source of the life that flows into us. Secondly, focus on the Son of God. Worship and draw near to Him. The very presence of the Spirit flows from Him into us. Finally, stay closely connected to His body, the local church. This is where Christ flows into us as we are in relationship with His body. Remove the branch from the vine and it dies, remove a believer from the body and he dies. Remain in Him and fruit is certain.

### **Discussion:**

1. Discuss being overanxious and the importance of waiting.
2. What steps in the above paragraph does Pastor Bailey share that are necessary to abide?

## EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

It's amazing to me, as much as our world has changed, nothing has really changed. You may not be plowing a field by hand or loading a wagon with manure but we all still deal with the same

issues that Luther's congregation dealt with 500 years ago when Luther was alive. Enjoy this quote from Luther's devotion on extraordinary fruit.

“False Christians cannot understand what Jesus is saying in this passage. They wonder, “What kind of Christians are these people? They can't do anything more than eat and drink, work in their homes, take care of their children, and push a plow. We can do all that and better.” False Christians want to do something different and special—something above the everyday activities of an ordinary person. They want to join a convent, lie on the ground, wear sackcloth garments, and pray day and night. They believe these works are Christian fruit and produce a holy life. Accordingly, they believe that raising children, doing housework, and performing other ordinary chores aren't part of a holy life. For false Christians look on external appearances and don't consider the source of their works—whether or not they grow out of the vine.”

Luther spoke from experience. He had been an Augustinian monk and had searched for the Lord in many of these so-called spiritual exercises. All they brought him was emptiness, frustration, and disillusionment. That all changed for him when he discovered the source of all life. His eyes were opened when he read “the just shall live by faith”. In an instant he saw it and in an instant everything changed. It wasn't his works that justified him before God, it was the works of Christ Himself. Righteousness was not something we do but something we receive as a gift by faith. How does that relate to bearing fruit? Are we supposed to do nothing because we have been declared righteous? Of course not! Christ lives in us now and all our work can become the fruit of Christ working in us. Our daily job can take on a spiritual quality. We are doing our work as unto the Lord. We may be loading a truck, working at a computer, making sales in a retail store, or maybe even shoveling some kind of manure. As a Christian all of our work is extraordinary. We are doing our work as unto the Lord. He is in us and expressing Himself in our daily activities. So, we don't have to wait for the next retreat, conference, or ministry trip to become spiritual. We are walking with Him daily. He is in us. As we abide in Him and He abides in us we bare much fruit. This is the place where God is glorified, and we are satisfied. This is an extraordinary life bearing extraordinary fruit.

### **Discussion:**

1. What is the connection between working, a holy life, and bearing fruit?
2. What does it mean to “work unto the Lord”?

### **LOSE YOUR LUNCH**

“If you abide in me”, Jesus said. “I am the vine you are the branches”, these phrases describe the life of intimacy, fruitfulness, and answered prayer. Listen to what Charles Spurgeon said about this precious passage.

“Of necessity we must be in Christ to live unto Him, and we must abide in Him to be able to claim the largesse of this promise from Him. To abide in Jesus is never to quit Him for another love or another object, but to remain in living, loving, conscious, willing union with Him. The branch is not only ever near the stem but ever receiving life and fruitfulness from it. All true believers abide in Christ in a sense; but there is a higher meaning, and this we must know before we can gain unlimited power at the throne. “Ask what ye will” is for Enoch’s who walk with God, for Johns who lie in the LORD’s bosom, for those whose union with Christ leads to constant communion.”

As Spurgeon said, “we are ever receiving life and fruitfulness”. The Lord is giving us a glimpse, in this parable, at the fullness of life available to us in Christ. His description of the connection between the Christian and his Lord is quite enlightening. It is possible to be in a place of constantly receiving life from the Lord. This is not just a theory but a living reality. There is life flowing through the vine, the only question is, am I connected?

Practically speaking, how can I abide in Christ? First, spend time daily reading the scripture. Make a note of the verse or verses that stand out to you. Often, this is the Lord speaking into your life. Next, take personal time to worship and pray. You can start by reflecting on those special verses and then move into worship. As you spend more and more personal time reading your Bible and worshipping the Lord, you will become more aware of His nearness. When this begins to happen, you have begun your real life, His words are abiding in you and your prayers begin to take on new power.

### **Discussion:**

1. Discuss the practical ways listed by Pastor Bailey.
2. Discuss their benefits in your walk with Christ.

John 15:8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

“You are going to share your testimony in service tonight”. Those were the scariest words I had ever heard in my life. It was one of the elders at our Bible School informing me, minutes before our service started, that I was supposed to share my salvation testimony that night in service. I was terrified to say the least. What was my response? The first thing I did was run to the men’s room to lose my dinner. I was so filled with panic that I had to throw up. Somehow, I made it through the night, but this experience has always been a sign to me about my calling to preach the gospel. Preaching is not a vocation for the talented public orators, it is a supernatural calling where God is glorified by using the unqualified. Here are some comments from A. B. Simpson about God being glorified through our weakness.

“The true way to glorify God is for God to show His glory through us, to shine through us as empty vessels, reflecting His fullness of grace and power. The sun is glorified when it has a chance to show its light through the crystal window, or in reflection from the spotless mirror or the glassy sea. There is nothing that glorifies God so much as for a weak and helpless man or woman to be able to triumph through His strength in places where the highest human qualities will fail us and to carry on in divine power through every form of toll and suffering. A spirit naturally weak, irresolute, selfish, and sinful, transformed into sweetness, purity and power and standing victorious amid circumstances from which its natural qualities must utterly unfit it brings glory to God. A mind not naturally wise or strong yet directed by a divine wisdom and carried along the path of a great and mighty plan, being used to accomplish stupendous results for God and man-this glorifies God.”

So today, I magnify my ministry because it is the glory of God. By His grace I have preached in New Orleans for over thirty-five years and the Lord has raised up an incredible church. We have seen many thousands saved at our services and our production *Beyond the Grave*. There are converts in every church in this region. The Lord has allowed me to preach in Asia, Europe, Africa, North and South America, and Australia multiple times. Am I bragging? Absolutely! I am magnifying the Lord’s gift and calling to preach in my life. Without Him, I am headed to the men’s room to lose my lunch. With Him, I proclaim the word with signs and wonders.

**Discussion:**

1. In what ways is the Lord calling you to step out?
2. What areas are you in need of growth.
3. Take a moment and pray with one another for the church, pastors, and various ministries.