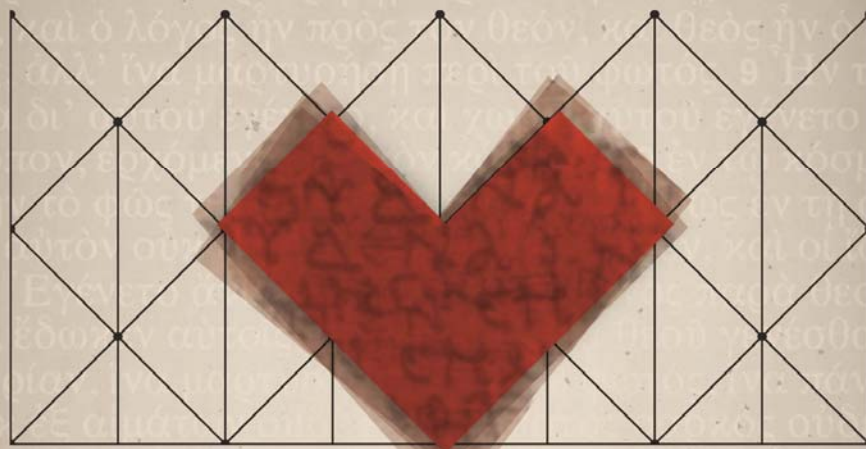


THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



BELIEVE

Studies in the book of John
PART NINE—John 14:1-16:4
Group Applications
Personal Study



FOUR OAKS CHURCH

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John 14:1-7

"Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.'"
John 13:38

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8

God's Love Manifested Through Christ

Has your heart ever been troubled? Christians face many difficulties in this life, but we have a powerful comfort in the words of Scripture. In these seven verses, Jesus comforts Peter and the disciples by reminding them that He will take care of them. They can bank on it. Jesus has already prepared for them a room in heaven, and He will personally escort them there. We draw comfort from this passage because as Christians we inherit all that belongs to Jesus.

This passage comes right after Jesus' warning that Peter will deny Him three times. Why does Jesus comfort Peter right after telling him he will turn away? What was Jesus trying to get Peter to see? The Lord wanted Peter to realize that everything he has is by grace. If Peter relies on his own strength, the troubles of the world will overcome him. Peter was proud and believed that his zeal and courage would be enough to carry him, but he needed to be humbled. He needed to realize that apart from God's grace he's done for. Jesus wanted Peter to learn that his hope was not in his own strength but in God's promise to make him a home and bring him there. Our salvation is God's grace from start to finish.

We have that same promise. God has prepared a place for us to be with Him and that is our anchor point in the storm of this life. Our security is rooted in God's promise and not our performance. This is good news because we mess things up all the time! Peter failed Christ and we often fail Christ, but the point of the gospel is that God *knows*. God

knows our sin, and He has acted to redeem us. We are promised eternal life because God loved us at our worst. When we are grounded in the love of God, we can face the trials of this world with courage. Our hearts will not be troubled because of what Christ has done. May we rest on that truth.

Sermon Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

John 14:1-7

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. Write down a list of things that trouble you this week.

2. What promises can you remind yourself of to help in those troubles?

Go

1. What difficulties do you face in your conversations with non-believers?

2. How would you explain security in Christ to a non-believer?

Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word "heaven"? Any particular images that capture your imagination?

2. Jesus is about to leave His disciples, but He tells them not to let their hearts be troubled and that He is preparing a place for them. How might heaven keep their and our hearts from being troubled?

3. Jesus makes it clear in verse 6 that He is the only way we can have access to God and to heaven. How does that truth impact you right now?

4. What changes do you think Jesus would want you to make in your life based on the fact that He is the way, the truth, and the life?

5. Jesus told His disciples not to be troubled. What troubles your heart right now? How might Jesus and your community group comfort you?

John 14:1-7

Additional Reading

from *Christ Jesus Came into the World to Save Sinners* by John Piper¹

Christ's Mercy and Power for All Sinners

1 Timothy 1:15 is a great summary statement of Christmas good news: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." His humble birth, obedient life, substitutionary death, and powerful resurrection covers the sins of his people and saves us from the loss of any good and precious thing and from the bondage of any evil and undesirable thing.

And notice the context of this great saying. It's Paul's own personal testimony of how he had been changed. Verse 13: "I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted Christ." Why did Christ choose the chief persecutor of the church to become the chief missionary of the church? The answer to that question is given very clearly in verse 16: he did it so that this morning you would grasp the message of Christmas—that no one who trusts Christ is beyond the reach of change. "I received mercy for this reason, that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." Christ picked the chief of sinners to demonstrate to you today what his mercy and power can do in your life. Don't belittle the mercy of God by saying that you cannot be changed!

When Paul calls the power of Christ which changed him from great sinner to great apostle—when he calls this power "mercy," he exalts not himself but the Savior. The Christmas gift of change is always a gift, and never a wage. It can never be boasted in. It can be sought after the way a helpless, hungry man seeks food; and it can be accepted by faith. But it can never be earned. And so none of the changes God gives can be the basis of pride. The more like Christ you become, the more you exalt Christ and not yourself.

What God did on the first Christmas and what He does in forgiving and changing people today He did and does in utterly free, sovereign mercy, so that all his people will end the paragraphs of their lives with the words like verse 17: "To the King of ages,

¹Piper, John. *Christ Jesus Came into the World to Save Sinners*. Desiring God, Desiring God Ministries, 23 July 2018, www.desiringgod.org/messages/christ-jesus-came-into-the-world-to-save-sinners.

immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." We are not saved from sin and changed into righteousness for the sake of pride but for the sake of praise. And when God's work on us is done and we stand perfected before Christ in the last day, we will not exult in our worth but will sing with millions of angels: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and honor and glory and blessing." Praise to you, O Lord. Amen.

John 14:8-14

"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

Hebrews 1:1-3

Two Errors to Avoid when Thinking about Jesus

Philip makes a modest request of Jesus: "Show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus, perhaps mildly amused or frustrated replies, "Don't you know me Philip, even after I've been with you such a long time?" Despite spending years with Jesus, Philip and the disciples still get it wrong. Jesus spells it out for them yet again: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me. ... I do not speak on my own authority, rather it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work."

Historically, the church has fallen into two errors regarding the identity of Jesus. In the fourth century, a false teacher named Arius taught that Jesus, the Son of God, was created by the Father. Arius and his followers believed Jesus was special among creation and had unique authority from God, but was not eternal. In other words, Jesus was not God, but rather an elevated creature in God's creation. The Arians used this passage to argue for their position. Jesus says explicitly, "I do not speak on my own authority, rather ...the Father ...who is doing His work." See? Jesus received His authority from the Father! Checkmate!

On the other hand, early Christians used this passage to argue that Jesus and the Father were the same person. The early church called this error Sabellianism or modalism. Sabellianism and modalism teach that the Father, the Son, and the Holy

Spirit are not three distinct persons but rather different 'modes' of God. The Father became the Son (Jesus), and then the Son became the Holy Spirit. They point out that Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" and (twice!) that "the Father is in me and I am in the Father." If the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father, then that makes them the same person! Checkmate!

But we know that both of these views are wrong. Each error accounts for only half of the textual data. They misunderstand the nature of God. Jesus tells us that He is going to the Father, therefore He cannot be the same person as the Father, contra the modalists. Jesus also tells us that when we see Him, we see the Father—that He and the Father share a relationship so close and unique that they are, in some sense, "in" each other. Jesus does have a unique relationship with the Father, a relationship that they shared, contra the Arians, "before the world began" (John 17:5). Right from the start of his Gospel, John tells us that Jesus existed before time, with God, and is God. It's easy to stray too far in one of these directions when thinking about the nature of God and the person of Jesus. For this reason, it's important that we humble ourselves to God's revelation in the person of Jesus and in the text of Scripture and "demolish ...every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Sermon Notes

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. What are some illustrations you have heard to explain the nature of God? What do you think of those illustrations?

2. How can we better improve our understanding of who God is?

Go

1. What is at stake when it comes to getting the nature of God right when talking to non-believers?
2. What are some ways you can help Christians who grew up in the church but do not know who God is?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Share a time you felt or experienced “oneness” or unity.

2. In this passage, Jesus makes several statements to prove His oneness with the Father? What are they? Which one most captures your attention and why?

3. Jesus says His disciples will do greater works than Him. What does He mean? What is one greater work you long for God to do through you?

4. Jesus also says He will do whatever we ask in His name. What does He mean by this statement? How should this promise impact your prayers?

5. What is one thing you are asking for God to do in Jesus’ name today? Spend some time as a group praying for it.

Additional Reading

from *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* by Thomas Torrance ¹

In the incarnation, the Son of God abased himself, substituted himself in our place, interposed himself between us and God the Father, taking all our shame and curse upon himself, not as a third person, but as one who is God himself, God against whom we had sinned and rebelled, and yet as he who is man identified to the utmost with man's estrangement and disobedience that he might really stand in humanity's place and work out in himself humanity's reconciliation. In that he thus took our place of sin and shame and death, he freely gives us his place of holiness and glory and life, that we through his poverty might become rich, that we through his being made sin and a curse for us, might be reconciled to God clothed with his righteousness and stand before God in his person. He came in our name, that we in his name might have access to the presence of the Father and be restored to him as his children.

¹Thomas F. Torrance. *Atonement: the Person and Work of Christ*, IVP Academic, 2014, p. 151.

John 14:15-24

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

1 John 5:2-3

What It Means to be a Christian

In verse 15, Jesus makes what philosophers call a "conditional statement," or an "If...then" statement. "If you love Me, [then] you will keep My commandments" is such a statement. There are two things to keep in mind that will help us as Christians to understand this statement. First, it can be said that loving Jesus means (or guarantees) that you will keep His commandments. There's no possible way for a person to not love Jesus and keep His commandments at the same time. The only way we can obey God and desire to obey Him is by loving Him. Second, if you will not keep Jesus' commandments, it is because you do not love Him. It is not possible to say a person does not obey God and does not seek to do so, but still loves Him. You cannot love God and not obey Him willingly at the same time.

When Jesus asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit to indwell us who believe, it began His priestly and intercessory work on our behalf. In John 14:6 we saw that, "...no one may come to the Father but by [Jesus]." The only way we are able to have access to our Father in heaven is by Christ interceding for us, because He is the only one to live a perfect life on earth in complete submission to the Father. When Jesus says the Father will send "another," that word means another of the same kind, that is, someone who would take Jesus' place as another person of the Godhead to play a role in God's plan of redemption. When Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the "Helper," the word literally means, "one called alongside to help." This word also implies that this person is someone who encourages and exhorts. The Holy Spirit takes a permanent residence in believers to make them more like Christ each and every day (1 Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit is the source of truth and communicates that truth to all believers in Jesus, and apart from Him, no one can know God's truth (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). The reason we know and have the Holy Spirit is because of the salvation that was freely given to us by God's grace.

Verse 18 begins Jesus' reference to His death and resurrection when He tells the disciples that after He dies, only they would see Him and the "world" will not. There is no record in the Bible of anyone who saw Jesus after His resurrection who was not converted. Jesus then emphasizes again the importance of habitual obedience to God that is evidence of one's conversion. This is paralleled with James 2:14-26 when James explains that a person's obedience to God's law is not what saves them, but evidence that they are saved. True saving faith is made manifest by works that are produced by God in the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

Sermon Notes

[illegible]

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. What are some obstacles to obedience to God's commands in your life?

2. How do you see the Holy Spirit as your "Helper" in daily life?

Go

1. What role does the Holy Spirit play in evangelism?

2. What do you think most non-believers think when they hear "Holy Spirit"?

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit in this passage as a helper. Share a time you experienced the Holy Spirit's help.

2. Jesus lists several ways the Holy Spirit helps us. What are they? Which one is most meaningful to you right now and why?

3. Jesus says that those who love Him will obey His commandments. How does obedience show love?

4. How are you doing right now at showing love to God through your obedience? What is one area (or commandment) you need to grow in your obedience to God?

5. One assurance for believers is that God makes His home with us (verse 17 & 23). How can this promise of His presence impact you in the midst of your sin & suffering today?

Additional Reading

from *The Help of God in Every Step* by Donald Macleod¹

The word “Helper” (Greek *parakletos*) means, literally, one called to be beside us, but Jesus also spoke of Him as being with us and even of His being in us. These words bespeak a remarkable intimacy between believers and the Holy Spirit. True, we see Jesus no more. But in place of that external presence, we now have an inner presence. We never walk alone. Whether on great missionary journeys, or languishing in prison cells, or fighting our own personal battles, the Helper is always beside us, always with us, and always in us.

But not as a replacement for Christ, as if He went away when the Spirit comes. Remember the words of John 14:18: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” This cannot mean only that the disciples would see Him again in his resurrection appearances. If that were all, then Christians would indeed be “orphans” for the whole period between Jesus’ ascension and His return. The truth, surely, is that in the Helper, Jesus Himself comes.

¹ Macleod, Donald. “The Help of God in Every Step.” *www.desiringgod.org*, Desiring God, 8 Nov. 2015, www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-help-of-god-in-every-step.

John 14:25-31

*"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you."*

Isaiah 26:3

Otherworldly Peace Through Supernatural Help

We all get worried and anxious about life. We also know how hard it is to talk ourselves out of that state of anxiety. We can tell ourselves all the right things but in the end anxiety has a vise grip on us. Our mind circles back to the doubts and fears that grip us and keeps us in a continual feedback loop of anxiety. We want to be kept in perfect peace, but it seems impossible to stay our minds on the Lord. We need help.

In John 14, Jesus gives us help. He tells us that all the support we need is available to us in Him. We were never meant to find peace on our own or focus our gaze on the Lord by sheer willpower. Instead, we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ died, rose, and ascended to the right hand of the Father to give us His Spirit. To give us our Helper. The Holy Spirit came to help anxious people like us. He is the one who makes it possible for us to be kept in perfect peace. We are not promised smooth sailing in this life, but we are promised that God will be with us through the storms and currents of life in this world. We get anxious because the world is not as it should be, but our comfort is that Jesus knows. He knows what we are afraid of. And because He knows He gives us His Spirit.

Jesus tells us that He leaves His peace with us. What is Jesus's peace? It is a peace that does not come from the world. This peace is for those who "believe" (14:29) and receive the promised Helper with humility. It is a supernatural peace that enables us to be untroubled and unafraid (14:27). When we look at the world we see stressed out people clinging to any strand of hope to steady them in the chaos of life. We have something to offer them. We can offer them perfect peace through Christ. For a Christian peace is not only possible, but real. God's Spirit is our Helper. Will you trust Him?

[illegible]

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. Who or what do you turn to when you are filled with fear and anxiety?

2. What area in your life do you need God's perfect peace? Write out a prayer and ask the Spirit to comfort you and give you His help in this area.

Go

1. What are some ways you can explain the Spirit as a 'helper' to a non-believer?

2. What are some ways in which you can engage a non-believer about anxiety?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Share a time when you were at peace. What were the circumstances? How did you experience this peace?

2. For the second time in this chapter, Jesus tells His disciples to not let their hearts be troubled. He also says that He leaves them with His peace. What does this concern for peace reveal about Jesus' heart for His disciples and for us?

3. Right now, are you at peace? Why or why not? How might you receive more of the peace Jesus offers?

4. Jesus reveals the Holy Spirit as one who "teaches you all things and brings to your remembrance all that He said." Why is this ministry of the Spirit important?

5. Jesus concludes this section by telling His disciples He is going away before it takes place, so that they would believe that He rather than the "ruler of this world" is greater. Is there a place in your life right now where it looks like Satan rather than God is winning? How might Jesus' words encourage your heart today?

Additional Reading

from *Theological Primer: The Holy Spirit* by Kevin DeYoung

A Personal Spirit

On Sunday night I saw a few minutes of the Morgan Freeman Story of God series on the National Geographic channel. It only took a few minutes to hear both a Hindu and a Jew refer to God as a force, a power, or a binding energy. There was no suggestion that God—whether one or many—was a person with whom we could have a relationship. So it bears repeating: the Holy Spirit is not a force or a principle of nature or a part of God or mode of his existence. The Holy Spirit is a person—a teaching (Luke 12:11-12), speaking (Acts 13:2), interceding (Rom. 8:26), grieving (Eph. 4:30) person—distinct from the Father and the Son.

The Spirit is eternal God (Heb. 9:14). He is everywhere, which does not mean the Spirit is everything or in everything, but rather that there is nowhere we can go where the Spirit isn't also present (Psalm 139:7). The Spirit alone knows the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11). The Holy Spirit is fully divine, his name being used interchangeably with the name "God" (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). The Holy Spirit is active in our salvation along with the Father and the Son (1 Peter 1:1-2). Jesus commands his disciples to be baptized in the name (singular) of all three persons (plural) of the Trinity, underlying the equality of rank, power, and majesty among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while also emphasizing their fundamental unity (Matt. 28:19; cf. 2 Cor. 13:14).

The Holy Spirit is not simply an omnipresent being that is with us in the sense that he is everywhere and so wherever we go there he will be also. The Spirit lives within us (1 Cor. 6:19) and makes his dwelling in our hearts (2 Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6). We have fellowship with Him (2 Cor. 13:14). This imagery should not be understood spatially as if the Spirit gets his mail delivered in the upper left chamber of that beating muscle in the chest. Rather, the Spirit dwells in us by animating our personality, shaping our character, renewing our minds, and stirring our emotions.

¹DeYoung, Kevin. *Theological Primer: The Holy Spirit*. The Gospel Coalition, 19 Apr. 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-holy-spirit/>.

A Beneficial Spirit

There are at least three benefits we experience through work of the Holy Spirit.

The first benefit is that we share in Christ and all his blessings. We too are looked upon with filial favor. Everything Christ accomplished is ours. All he won is ours. The promised inheritance of Abraham is ours (Gal. 3:14). All this and more because we belong to Christ and Christ's blessings belong to us through ministrations of the Spirit.

The second benefit is the Holy Spirit's comfort. Most of us have heard that the Holy Spirit is a Comforter (John 14:16 KJV). Other translations render *paracletos* a "Helper" (ESV), a "Counselor" (NIV), or an "Advocate" (NRSV), but the truth is still there: God comforts his people by the Holy Spirit. This happens in a number of ways. The Spirit may supernaturally strengthen your soul and give you a peace that passes understanding or a calm confidence in the work of the Lord (Acts 9:31). He may also comfort you through other Christians as you share in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of truth, he will often speak to you through the Word of God, leading you into all truth (John 16:12), encouraging you with the words of Scripture he inspired and now illuminates. He may cause you to remember a precious biblical truth or direct your thoughts to the finished work of Christ or give you eyes to see more clearly the glory of God. The Spirit may comfort you with the gift of assurance so that you more boldly embrace your new identity in Christ and more firmly trust the promise of eternal life.

The third benefit is the Holy Spirit's presence forever. Before studying the Heidelberg Catechism in depth several years ago, I had not really thought about Jesus's promise that the Holy Spirit would be with us forever (John 14:16), but the promise is very good news. In heaven, the Spirit will continue to keep us holy. He will continue to teach us more about the inexhaustible riches of Christ. He will continue to be the personal bond that unites believers in fellowship. And He will continue to minister to us the presence of God the Father and God the Son, who together with the Holy Spirit are Triune God, blessed forevermore, Amen.

John 15:1-11

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Hebrews 4:12

A Call to Abide

John 15 continues Jesus' intimate conversation He had with His disciples leading up to His arrest and final hours on earth. He is sharing His last thoughts and teaching for His closest friends, the men who would preach Jesus as Lord to the rest of the world. And these last words are specifically for those who believe in Him. Before He had focused on inviting others to come to Him and believe. But now His charge is to those who love and trust in Him. His command is that they abide.

The word 'abide' (*meno*) appears ten times in these seven verses (John 15: 4-11). Clearly, this is important to Jesus. In this passage abide means to stay, to remain, or to continue. So, what is Jesus asking of His disciples and of all believers? He wants them to remain in intimate union with Him. Even after He is gone. Especially after He is gone. The disciples needed to recognize the importance of staying in fellowship with Him. The words Jesus speaks in John 15: 1-11 are so important, because it presented the new way their relationship with Jesus was going to work. And it shows us how a relationship with Jesus works today. To abide is to trust all that God is for us in Christ. By receiving and believing and trusting in Jesus we share His words, His love, and His joy. (John 15:7, 9, 11)

Practically speaking we let Jesus abide in us by letting His word abide in us. We need to make room for Jesus in our lives. We must be wary of distraction, busyness, obligations, and plain old life. Abiding includes savoring and resting in Jesus. This fellowship takes place when we spend time in the Bible. But it cannot be a passive reading of the Word. John Piper puts it this way: "We [cannot] just memorize and meditate on the Bible, and [cannot] just listen to preaching and teaching from the Bible. It means that we seek the words of Jesus as living words – words that come not in the abstract but come from the heart and on the lips of a

living Person whom we love more than any other person in the world.”¹

To abide takes effort. To have a relationship, where Jesus can truly speak into our lives, we must be in union with Him. After all, in any relationship, both parties must be engaged.

Sermon Notes

[illegible]

¹ Piper, John. "If My Words Abide in You." *Desiring God*, 1 Jan. 2009, www.desiringgod.org/messages/if-my-words-abide-in-you--2.

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. What does it mean to 'bear fruit' for the Father?

2. What does it mean for Christ to love us as the Father loves Him?

Go

1. How would you explain the Bible's definition of 'love' to a non-believer?

2. How would you explain the relationship between love and obedience to a non-believer?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever lived on a farm or planted a garden? Share any stories you have with your group.

2. Jesus walks through a vineyard with His disciples and uses this as an opportunity for teaching. What are some analogies He makes?

3. Jesus repeats the word “abide” 10 times in this passage. What does abide mean? How does Jesus instruct us to abide in Him?

4. To what extent are you currently abiding in Jesus, His word, and His love? What steps can you take to grow?

5. What are the results of abiding vs. not abiding in Jesus? How can these promises motivate you today?

Additional Reading

from *Crazy Busy* by Kevin DeYoung ²

At the end of Luke 10 we find the closest thing Jesus gave to a sermon on busyness.

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-42

"Martha, Martha," [Jesus] says, "you are anxious and troubled about many things." The NIV says she was "worried and upset." The Message says, "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing." Many of us can relate. We go day after day, crazy month after crazy month: worried, upset, anxious, troubled, fussing, worked up...To paraphrase Titus 3:3, we live as slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in chaos and envy, hassled by others and hassling one another. We are all very busy, but not with what matters most.

That's the crux of the story: "Martha, you are freaking out, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the good portion. She is sitting at my feet to learn and to worship. I'm not going to take that away from her. Your busyness is not wrong. But it is not best." Granted, we shouldn't take this episode as a blueprint for every moment of every day. If God expected us to do nothing but sit crossed-legged on the floor and journal, the Bible could have been much smaller. Mary's example is not a summons to the

²DeYoung, Kevin. *Crazy Busy*. Crossway, 2013. Pages 109-111. Print.

contemplative life in a cloister. But it's a pretty strong reminder that we had better keep first things first.

For my money, the most important word in the whole story is "distracted" in verse 40. Martha isn't doing anything bad. She's just being pulled away from what is better. She's so busy with dinner that she is giving Jesus her spiritual left-overs...That's what we give to God when we don't keep first things first. He's not glaring at us from heaven when we have a hectic day. And yet, he knows that we are missing out on "the good portion." It is not enough to let "God-stuff" fill in the cracks during the day. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, whether corporately or individually, never just happens. We must make learning from him and taking time to be with him a priority.

John 15:12-17

"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."
Leviticus 19:18

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."
Romans 5:6-11

Jesus's Friends: Chosen and Loved

I have often breezed over this passage, completely missing the incredibly dense and weighty truths it contains. Shortly after Judas left to fulfill his betrayal, Jesus presented to the disciples the new command to love each other as He loved them. Later in the same conversation, as He continued to teach and reveal more of Himself to the eleven, Jesus returned to this new command. On hearing it, perhaps the eleven recalled Jesus washing their feet or one of many miracles: the feeding of thousands, the calming of a perilous sea, massive amounts of fish caught in overburdened nets. Some may have recalled Jesus writing on the ground as a woman caught in adultery stood accused before men. But beyond all these acts of love, Jesus told them the greatest love one

can demonstrate is the offering of one's life for a friend. This command of sacrificial love to the point of death leaps far beyond the rule (Lev.19:18) of love your neighbor as yourself. It is a high call that I have rarely considered deeply.

We are good at loving ourselves. Our hearts are inclined to fulfill our needs above others. But Jesus shows us a different way. He seeks our good by dying for us. He wants His sacrificial life to be our model. That means the church should be marked by love. And when I say love, I do not mean just feelings, but actions. We serve, pray, forgive, listen to, and help each other.

Christ declares that we are not only His servants but His friends. What an amazing gift to be not simply a creature made to serve a function, but to be loved as a friend! What an amazing assurance it must have been for the disciples to know that they were chosen for the task they were given, and that it was not their own venture doomed to the inevitable failures of man-made effort. How wonderful it is that we get to share in this truth if we know Jesus. We are evidence of the abiding fruit and bearers of new fruit, part of the ever expanding kingdom of God.

Sermon Notes

[illegible]

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. How does Jesus' friendship with the eleven compare to the friendships you have in your life?

2. What are some examples of fruit you have seen in your own life or others around you?

Go

1. What are differences between the world's understanding of friendship and the church's?

2. What are some ways you can welcome non-believers into the church?

Group Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “commandment”? Is it positive or negative? Why?

2. Jesus commands His disciples to love one another. Why is love the highest command?

3. On a scale of 1-10, rate how well you are currently showing love to others. Why do you give yourself that score?

4. Jesus links His disciples showing love with the Father choosing them. Why? How might our understanding of God’s electing love help us love others better?

5. Jesus promises that those who love & bear fruit will have their prayers answered. What does this mean? How have you seen this take place in your life?

6. How might you grow in your love for others? Pray for one another as a group.

Additional Reading

from a sermon delivered August 24, 1873 by C.H. Spurgeon

Beloved, we now are to remark that for a man to die for his friends is evidently the grandest of all proofs of his love in itself. The words glide over my tongue, and drop from my lips very readily; "lay down his life for his friends," but do you know or feel what the words mean? To die for another! There are some who will not even give of their substance to the poor; it seems like wrenching away a limb for them to give a trifle to God's poor servants; such people cannot guess what it must be to have love enough to die for another, any more than a blind man can imagine what colors can be like: such people are out of court altogether. There have been loving spirits who have denied themselves comfort and ease, and even common necessities, for the sake of their fellow men, and such as these are in a measure qualified to form an idea of what it must be to die for another; but still none of us can fully know what it means. To die for another! Conceive it! Concentrate your thoughts upon it! We start back from death, for under any light in which you may place it, human nature can never regard death as otherwise than a terrible thing. To pass away into the glory land is so bright a hope that death is swallowed up in the victory, but the death itself is a bitter thing, and therefore needs to be swallowed up in the victory, before we can bear it. Death is a bitter pill, and must be drowned in a sweet potion before we can rejoice in it. I am certain that no person, apart from sweet reflections of the presence of God and the heavenly future, could regard death otherwise than as a dreadful calamity. Even our Savior did not regard his approaching death without trembling; the thought of dying was not in itself otherwise than saddening even to him; witness the bloody sweat as it streamed from him in Gethsemane, and that manlike putting away of the cup with, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me;" As you think of that soul conflict let it increase your idea of the Godlike love which took the cup with both its hands resolutely, and persisted on, and never stopped its dreadful draught until the Lord had drank damnation dry for all his people, swallowing up their deaths in his own most comprehensive death. It is no light thing to die. We speak too flippantly of death, but dying is no child's play to any man, and dying as the Savior died, in awful agonies of body and tortures of soul, it was a great thing indeed for his love to do. You may surround death if you please with

¹Spurgeon, C.H. *Love's Crowning Deed* https://www.gracegems.org/Spurgeon/loves_crowning_deed.htm. Accessed July 2018.

luxury, you may place at the bedside all the dear assuagements of the tenderest love, you may alleviate pain by the art of the apothecary and the physician, and you may decorate the dying couch with the honor of a nation's anxious care, but death, for all that, is in itself no slight thing, and when borne for others it is the masterpiece of love. And so, closing this point of love's crowning action, let me say that after a man has died for another, there can be no question raised about his love. Unbelief would be insane if it should venture to intrude itself at the cross foot, though, alas, it has been there, and has there proved its utter unreasonableness. If a man dies for his friend, he must love him, nobody can question that; and Jesus dying for his people must love them: who shall cast a doubt upon that fact? Shame on any of God's children that they should ever raise questions on a matter so conclusively proven. Yet, as if the Lord Jesus knew that even this masterpiece of love might still be intruded upon by unbelief, he rose again from the dead, and rose with his love as fresh as ever in his heart, and went to heaven leading captivity captive, his eyes flashing with the eternal love that brought him down. He passed through the pearly gates, and rode in triumph up to his Great Father's throne, and though he looked upon his Father with love ineffable and eternal, he gazed upon his people too, for his heart was still theirs. Even at this hour, from his throne among the seraphim, where he sits in glory, he looks down upon his people with pitying love and condescending grace. "Now, though he reigns exalted high, His love is still as great; Well he remembers Calvary, Nor let his saints forget." He is all love, and altogether love. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

John 15:18-16:4

"And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us. But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Acts 5:27-32

The Name Above All Names

So often it feels like the world has turned upside down. Our world regards night as day and calls evil good. And just as darkness grips over all things at nighttime, the world tries to grip us to join in its sin. We are in Christ but we also live in the world. We are not kept from temptation but rather are targets of ridicule and scorn. We will face troubles in this life for resisting the pull of the world. The world aims its scorn at God by aiming at His people and as a result we often scatter and fall. However, God is unchanging through the ages. For the glory of His name, He promises to gather us back to Himself, give us new hearts and fill us with His Spirit. He does this not so we will be free in this world, but so we may walk in His laws and delight in His ways.

Think about this — God put on flesh and came into the world but the world rejected Him. We follow a crucified Savior. We follow a man who knew the cost of obedience to the truth. At the last supper, Jesus prepared His disciples for the blows which they would face. They would be His witnesses to bring eternal life to Jews and Gentiles. But there's another side to

this — the gospel does not just pronounce salvation but also judgement. The disciples were sent out under the banner of God to testify against the idols and sinful ways of the world. It was a daunting mission but they were not alone. God sent them the Spirit of Truth proceeding from the Father who bears witness to the Son. The same Spirit that empowered the first disciples empowers us today. By the grace of God, we are bound together by the Spirit and empowered to carry the name of Christ to the nations and to walk in obedience to His law. What will we do with this power that has been given to us?

Sermon Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. In what ways do we face resistance from the world?

2. How does this passage encourage us to persevere and not fall away from Christ?

Go

1. How does the Spirit help us in witnessing to non-believers?

2. What are some ways we can deal with the rejection that comes from sharing the gospel?

Group Discussion Questions

1. When have you experienced hate from others because of your faith? What were the circumstances? How did that make you feel?

2. Jesus warns us that those who follow after Him will be hated and persecuted. How does that make you feel?

3. Jesus gives this warning “to keep [His followers] from falling away.” How might this warning serve and encourage us today?

4. Where in your life are you currently experiencing persecution? How can your group pray for your heart?

5. In other parts of the world, our brothers and sisters in Christ are experiencing great persecution. Spend some time praying for the persecuted church and for our gospel partners in these areas. (If you want more information about the persecuted church, go to the Voice of the Martyrs webpage at www.persecution.com.)

Additional Reading

from John Calvin's Commentary on John 15:16 thru 16:21 ¹

18. *If the world hate you.* After having armed the Apostles for the battle, Christ exhorts them likewise to patience; for the Gospel cannot be published without instantly driving the world to rage. Consequently, it will never be possible for godly teachers to avoid the hatred of the world. Christ gives them early information of this, that they may not be instances of what usually happens to raw recruits, who, from want of experience, are valiant before they have seen their enemies, but who tremble as soon as the battle is commenced. And not only does Christ forewarn his disciples, that nothing may happen to them which is new and unexpected, but likewise confirms them by his example; for it is not reasonable that Christ should be *hated by the world*, and that we, who represent his person, should have the world on our side, which is always like itself.

You know. I have translated the verb γινώσκετε in the indicative mood, *you know*; but if any one prefer to translate it in the imperative mood, *know ye*, I have no objection, for it makes no change in the meaning. There is greater difficulty in the phrase which immediately follows, πρὸ τοῦ κόσμου, before you; for when he says that he is before the disciples, this may be referred either to time or to rank. The former exposition has been more generally received, namely, that Christ was hated by the world before the Apostles were hated. But I prefer the second exposition, namely, that Christ, who is far exalted above them, was not exempted from the hatred of the world, and therefore his ministers ought not to refuse the same condition; for the phraseology is the same as that which we have seen twice before, in John 1:27 and 30, He who cometh after me is preferred to me, (ὅτι πρὸς μου ἔν,) for he was before me.

19. *If you were of the world.* This is another consolation, that the reason why they are *hated by the world* is, that they have been separated from it. Now, this is their true happiness and glory, for in this manner they have been rescued from destruction.

But I have chosen you out of the world. To choose means here to *separate*. Now, if they were chosen out of the world, it follows that they were a part of the world, and that it is only by the mercy of God that they are distinguished from the rest who perish. Again,

¹ Calvin, John. Commentary on John 15:16 thru 16:7 - <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.v.iv.html>

by the term, *the world*, Christ describes, in this passage, all who have not been regenerated by the Spirit of God; for he contrasts the Church with the world, as we shall see more fully under the seventeenth chapter. And yet this doctrine does not contradict the exhortation of Paul,

Be at peace with all men, as far as lieth in you **Romans 12:18**

for the exception which he adds amounts to saying, that we ought to see what is right and proper for us to do that no man, by seeking to please *the world*, may give himself up to its corruptions.

But there is still another objection that may be urged; for we see that it commonly happens that wicked men, who are *of the world*, are not only *hated*, but accursed by others. In this respect, certainly, *the world loveth not what is its own*. I reply, earthly men, who are regulated by the perception of their flesh, never have a true hatred of sin, but only so far as they are affected by the consideration of their own convenience or injury. And yet the intention of Christ was not to deny that *the world* foams and rages within itself by internal quarrels. He only intended to show, *that the world hates* nothing in believers but what is of God. And hence, too, it plainly appears how foolish are the dreams of the Anabaptists, who conclude, from this single argument that they are the servants of God, because they displease the greater part of men. For it is easy to reply, that many who are *of the world* favor their doctrine, because they are delighted at the thought of having every thing in shameful confusion; while many who are *out of the world* hate it, because they are desirous that the good order of the state should remain unbroken.

20. *Remember the word*. It might also be read in the indicative mood, *You remember the word*, and the meaning is not very different; but I think that it is more suitable to read it in the imperative mood, *Remember the word*. It is a confirmation of what Christ had spoken immediately before, when he said that he was hated by the world, though he was far more excellent than his disciples; for it is unreasonable that the condition of *the servant* should be better than that of *his master*. Having spoken of persons, he likewise makes mention of doctrine.

If they have heard my word, they will keep yours also. Nothing gives greater uneasiness

to the godly than when they see the doctrine, which is of God, haughtily despised by men; for it is truly shocking and dreadful, and the sight of it might shake the stoutest heart. But when we remember on the other hand, that not less obstinate resistance was manifested against the Son of God himself, we need not wonder that the doctrine of God is so little revered among men. When he calls it *his doctrine* and their *doctrine*, this refers to the ministry. Christ is the only Teacher of the Church; but he intended that *his doctrine*, of which he had been the first Teacher, should be afterwards preached by the apostles.

21. *But all these things they will do to you.* As the fury of the world is monstrous, when it is so enraged against the doctrine of its own salvation, Christ assigns the reason to be, that it is hurried on by blind ignorance to its own destruction; for no man would deliberately engage in battle against God. It is blindness and ignorance of God, therefore, that hurries on the world, so that it does not hesitate to make war with Christ. We ought, then, always to observe the cause of this conduct, and the true consolation consists in nothing else than the testimony of a good conscience. It should also excite gratitude in our minds, that, while the world perishes in its blindness, God hath given to us his light. Yet let it be understood that hatred of Christ arises from stupidity of mind, when God is not known; for, as I have often said, unbelief is blind; not that wicked men do not understand or know anything, but because all the knowledge that they have is confused, and quickly vanishes away. On this subject I have elsewhere treated more largely.



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