

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JOHN 14-15

In the spring of 1942 General Douglas MacArthur was commanded by President Roosevelt to withdraw the American troops from the Philippine Islands.

A Japanese takeover seemed imminent.

But before MacArthur left for Australia he promised the Filipino people, "**I will return!**" At the time MacArthur was criticized by many Americans for egotistically phrasing his promise in the first person, "**I will return.**"

But that's not how the Filipinos took the General's personal promise. It boosted their morale throughout the enemy's occupation. They knew MacArthur was a man of his word, and he wouldn't break a promise.

Well, tonight we're going to study Jesus' farewell address to His disciples. He will be leaving them soon. But He wants to insure them He is going to return.

On the night before the cross, in the upper room, Jesus promised His followers, "**I will come again.**" And Jesus is a man of His word! Thus, His promise has boosted the morale of believers for the last 2000 years.

Like the Filipinos in World War 2 we also live behind enemy lines, and it's our General's personal promise that keeps us from losing heart! "**He will return.**"

By the way, Douglas MacArthur did return to the Filipino islands two-and-a-half years later. He kept His promise, defeated Japan, and liberated the Philippines.

And one day soon Jesus also will keep His promise!
He'll come again, defeat the armies that rally against Him,
and liberate our world from the influence of Satan.

In Chapters 13-17 Jesus is saying good-bye to His disciples. His words disturb them. In one night, Jesus turns their notions of greatness topsy-turvy. He points to Judas as a traitor. He reveals Peter's cowardice.

Four different disciples, Peter, Thomas, Philip, and Judas, are so distressed they ask Jesus questions...

The disciples are confused and desperate for encouragement, and Jesus provides it in Chapter 14...

John 14 begins, "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." Life on earth is about to get rough, so Jesus turns their eyes to heaven. They're going home!

Robert Frost once defined "home" - "as the place where no matter where you've been, or what you've done, when you arrive they have to take you in!"

Home is where you can let your hair down and be yourself. It's where you find love and acceptance.

And if you're a Christian you're headed home. Heaven is our home, and Jesus has a place for us.

In fact, He promises us a "*mansion.*" *But this may not be what you think.* When I envision a "*mansion*" what comes to my mind is the Biltmore House in Asheville, or the Hearst

Castle in California, but the Greek word translated "*mansion*" (*monai*) literally means "*rooms*."

It's from the root word "*to stay*." You could translate it, "*staying places*." A "*monai*" is simply a place to stay.

Realize, Jesus isn't promising us something you'd see on MTV Cribs. A swimming pool, a home theatre, an indoor gym aren't standard amenities in heaven.

When Jesus promises us a mansion, He's simply saying "*a place to stay*." He's comforting us with the assurance there's room for us in His Father's house.

Think about it, I might be more like hell than heaven if God stuck us in a huge, cavernous, stately mausoleum. Especially if part of our responsibility was to mow its 40 acres or wash all its floors and windows.

That's not my idea of heaven.

There's an old maxim, "*Home is a man's castle*." But an actual *castle* might be a *hassle*. I have no doubt, heaven will be comfortable, but I doubt it'll be gaudy.

Built into the outside walls of the Second Temple, the Temple of Jesus' day, were 38 chambers. These were dwelling places for the priests and Levites. At times they were allowed to stay right in the house of God.

In the Middle East today after Palestinian kids marry and have families, it's customary for them to move in with their Father. Drive through northern Israel and you'll see additions on tops of houses. When their children marry the Father adds another floor to his house to accommodate his child's new family.

And this is the imagery Jesus is conjuring up - not spacious, custom built estates - but intimacy and fellowship. In heaven we'll live under our Father's roof, and eat at our Father's table. We'll live with our Father.

On earth Jesus was a carpenter. Perhaps, the kind that built houses. Interestingly, in heaven He's involved in the same trade. And He's preparing us a place for all eternity. It's an addition to the Father's house. Today, Jesus is in heaven, working hard on us a place to stay.

He tells us in verse 2, "I go 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." This world is a beautiful place - and God created it in just six days. Well, Jesus has been working on our place in heaven for the last 2000 years.

We can only imagine the glories that await us!

There's an old hymn with the following lyrics, "Who could mind the journey, when the road leads home?"

When the road of life gets rough, and you run into potholes and roadblocks remember where the road ultimately leads. **We're headed home.** Jesus gave us His promise, and He doesn't go back on His word.

In verse 4 Jesus says, "And where I go you know, and the way you know." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Thomas asks for a roadmap - a GPS. He's thinking of a local, earthly destination.

But heaven will be *out of this world*.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Here's a basic tenant - Christianity is not a code of ethics, or a set of doctrines - Christianity is a person!

You don't become a Christian just by following Jesus' teachings, but by receiving Jesus Himself personally.

Jesus doesn't just show us the way... He is the way.

He doesn't just speak the truth... He is the truth.

He doesn't just give us life... He is the life.

God's way is revealed - His truth is received - His life is released - when you come to Jesus. He's the way that keeps us *going* - the truth that keeps us *knowing* - the life that keeps us *growing*. All we need is Jesus.

And notice too, **Jesus is not a way, or a truth or a life. He is the way, the truth, the life.** He's not one of many roads that lead to God. He is the only road.

Jesus puts it plainly, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." But you can argue, "*Sandy that sounds pretty narrow-minded.*" And you're right, it's very narrow. *Why would God want to be so exclusive?*

Ever noticed how the IRS is so open-minded?

This year, rather than copy my income off my W2 form I'm just going to estimate - *go low*... And when it comes to dependents I'm putting down our ten staff members... And when I figure my tax I'm not bothering with the tables, I'm just going to pay what seems fair...

And if you're an IRS agent, please, I'm just kidding!

Everybody knows the Internal Revenue Service has rules. They don't budge. It's black or white - right or wrong. Former heavyweight boxing champ Joe Louis was once asked, "Joe, who hit you the hardest during your ring career?" Joe Louis replied, "*Uncle Sam.*"

My point is there are a lot of issues in life - like the Tax Code - that aren't open to interpretation. You don't negotiate your way to heaven. The entrance is narrow.

You don't make deals with God. It's His way or the highway. You come on God's terms, or not at all.

In my early years as a Christian we'd hold up our index finger as a sign. It meant "*one way.*" There's still only one way to the Father and that's through Jesus.

Then He says in verse 7, "*If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.*" Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

Here's the longing of every heart - whether we're conscious of it or not - "*show us the Father.*" No one is satisfied until they know the God who made them...

"Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" Here Jesus asserts His deity.

He was God incarnate - or God in human skin.

Though three separate persons, the members of the Godhead are of one substance. That means to see Jesus was to see the Father. Both are fully God.

For three-and-a-half years Phillip walked with His Creator along the grassy paths of Galilee, and down the dirt roads of Judea; yet it never dawned on Phillip Who was really by his side. He had walked with God.

Verse 10, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” Both the words of Jesus and His works testified that He was God.

He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.” One of the reasons the disciples were so depressed over all this talk of Jesus' departure is they interpreted it as a setback for their movement.

Lazarus' resurrection and Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem sparked an interest among the masses. Momentum was building, *and now Jesus was leaving?*

This would be like loading the bases for Freddie Freeman, the Braves best hitter - yet instead of grabbing a bat Freddie leaves for another engagement.

The disciples are thinking, “*Why would Jesus leave us now? How can we possibly continue without Him?*”

Jesus had just said to them, "*Believe Me for the sake of the works.*" The disciples had witnessed wonder after wonder. Yet now Jesus is predicting that they'll perform even greater miracles. *How can this be?*

Yet read the book of Acts, and this is exactly what happened. In terms of quantity, 12 disciples scattered around the world, empowered by the Holy Spirit, will accomplish more works than one Man fixed in Israel.

And here's the promise, verse 13, "*And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.*" Here's a promise with one stipulation. God will do "*whatever you ask*" if you pray "*in Jesus' name.*"

Next Thursday I'll head to Augusta to attend the Masters. I'll go up to the gate with no money, no ticket, no right to be there in and of myself - only a name.

My son, Mack, works at Augusta National and his employment gains him tickets. At the gate, my name is unimportant. It's his name that unlocks the vault.

There're still rules that govern the ticket's use - and my agreement with Mack is to keep those rules - but I'd never get the tickets unless I came in Mack's name...

And believe me, this arrangement glorifies my son. In my family "*the little brother*" is much appreciated.

And this is the way it is in God's family, the Father wants to glorify the Son, so the tickets are in His name.

You're ticket - "*whatever you ask*" - is in His name, *not yours*. And knowing this determines how you come, even what you ask. You don't come to God's gate in a haughty, reckless way - with a hedonistic request.

There are still rules associate with the ticket's use.

But that all gets taken care of when you come humbly and trusting, knowing that your name is not what's important... And when the tickets are in hand, you know all the glory goes to the name that got them.

In verse 15 Jesus says, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*" Here's a good way to say thanks.

Remember it's not enough to love someone in ways that are convenient for you. True love always loves the other person in the way they want or need to be loved.

Thus, if you love Jesus, you'll show Him by doing whatever He commands, not just what's easy for you.

He says, "*And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever...*" In sports there are players who specialize in coming off the bench. In basketball it's the "*sixth man*." Football has the "*nickel back*." In baseball there's the "*pinch hitter*." These guys make a living as a substitute.

They're "*super subs*." And Jesus' also has a super sub. This is why His departure wasn't a setback.

He had a *supernatural sub* that took His place. Jesus will ascend back to heaven, but the Holy Spirit takes up where Jesus leaves off. He's with the disciples forever.

Notice the word, *“Helper.”* In Greek it's *“parakletos,”* which means *“to come alongside to assist.”*

In Greek courts the parakletos was the attorney appointed by the court to head up the case for the defendant. And likewise, the Holy Spirit is our court appointed attorney. Jesus is our advocate with the Father, whereas the Spirit assists in our representation.

He serves the vital role of co-counsel to Jesus.

Here's my best illustration of the Holy Spirit... He's like the White House secret service. Everywhere the President goes he has bodyguards. These guys are willing to take a bullet for their commander and chief.

If I looked through spiritual eyes I'd see you - then right next to you I'd see a guy wearing a dark suit and sunglasses. He has an earpiece, and He's packing.

He's the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is *our* bodyguard.

And notice Jesus calls the Spirit, *“another Helper.”* In the Greek it means *“another of the same kind.”* In other words, the Holy Spirit takes up where Jesus leaves off.

He has the same goals, same methods, same nature as Jesus. When the Spirit came no one put up *“Under New Management”* signs. Nothing really changed.

God intended for the disciples to have the same relationship with the Spirit they had with Jesus, without the physical constraints that limited Jesus on earth.

Of course, this would require the disciples to pray, and have faith, and live spiritually-oriented rather than physically-oriented. Certainly, the disciples are going to miss Jesus, but

the team is going to improve and continue to win with the Spirit coming off the bench.

In verse 17 Jesus *introduces* the “*Helper*” - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

The Holy Spirit is “*with you*” prior to your conversion. He convicts us of sin, and draws you to the Savior.

But once you embrace Jesus as Lord, the Spirit moves “*in you.*” God’s Spirit resides in *your spirit*. He’s the witness in our spirits that we are children of God.

The Spirit also... reveals the *presence of God*. He conveys the *peace of God*. He releases the *power of God*. He bestows the *gifts of God*. He generates the *fruits of God*. He brings the *comfort of God*. He administers the *correction of God*. He teaches us the *truth of God*... Thus, He’s called, “*the Spirit of truth.*”

Today, a believer has the same relationship with the Holy Spirit that the disciples had with Jesus... *But don't expect your unbelieving friends to understand*. Jesus says, “*the world... neither sees Him nor knows Him.*”

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is an enigma to our tangibly-oriented world. The material world is clueless.

But Jesus promises us in verse 18, “*I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*” Jesus was going back to heaven, but the Holy Spirit would be like a Father.

Becoming a Christian is like enrolling in a Big Brother program - expect the Holy Spirit to be your Big Brother.

He's there, 24/7. He takes you places. He helps you open up and talk. He shows you love and guidance.

Verse 19 Jesus says, "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me."

Remember, Jesus is coming back for them.

"Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." In Spanish one of the words for good-bye is "audios," but "audios" speaks of a permanent farewell. Whereas "hasta luego" is "see you later" or "hasta pronto" is "see you soon." Here Jesus isn't saying "audios" - He's saying "hasta luego" - "until next time."

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Notice the connection between obedience and revelation. He reveals His will to those who are inclined to do it. Those who really love Jesus, obey Him.

Verse 22, "Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him..." In Matthew 10:3 this Judas is also called "Thaddaeus."

And Thad has a question, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

The Jews expected Messiah to be a global leader. The Messiah would gain a worldwide audience.

This Judas is a thinker. He's wondering, if Jesus is Messiah why is He limiting the news of His ministry to twelve Jews,

many of whom were Galilean fishermen, rather than commanding a worldwide stage...

“Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” What a cool promise! Love and obey Jesus and the Father God will make **your heart His home.**

But how was this the answer to Judas’ question?

Jesus is saying to Judas, **He’ll reach the world one by one.** Before Messiah reveals Himself to everyone all at once, He first comes to each believing heart.

Verse 24 “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.” If you say you love God, but disregard His words who are you kidding?

“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” So much of what Jesus said to the disciples sailed over their heads. It was the Holy Spirit who brought it back to mind in the years that followed.

Thus, their writings relay such a thorough record.

And this is something the Holy Spirit does in our lives. He assists our memory with supernatural recall. At crucial moments He brings vital truths back to mind.

Jesus goes on to say in verse 27, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” What the world calls “*peace*” is merely the absence of conflict. It’s been said, “Peace is the brief interval of time when armies reload.” That’s true.

But the peace of Jesus is so much more. It’s a wonderful, all-encompassing assurance. It’s a harmony with God - an in-sync feeling between you and God.

It’s inexplicable rest. There's no fuzziness or static. There’s total clarity of spirit. There's nothing like it!

In this life, all our questions may not get answered, but if we have the peace of God we have enough.

Verse 28, “You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.”

Understand, when Jesus says, “*My Father is greater than I*” He's not denying what He said earlier that He and the Father are one. All three members of the Godhead are one substance. *God the Son* and *God the Father* are one God. What Jesus addresses in verse 28 is **chain of command**. The Father is greater in rank - not nature. Jesus was voluntarily submissive to the Father. It was the roles they both chose to play.

Think of a marriage. I’m the head of my home. Kathy is submissive to her husband. But anyone who knows us recognizes that Kathy is superior to me in just about every way imaginable - except maybe *jar-opening*.

If Kathy ever said, “*Sandy is greater than I,*” you’d know she was talking about *chain of command* or *jar-opening* - not attributes or nature. The same is true for Jesus. *He was submissive to the Father, not inferior.*

Verse 29, “*And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.*” In the hours ahead, a spiritual warfare the world hasn’t seen before or since took place. Satan came in the person of Judas to keep Jesus off the cross, but he had nothing that appealed to Jesus - nothing that would tempt Him.

And here’s a secret to our overcoming Satan. For a temptation to be successful it has to appeal to a desire inside us. Thus, guard your heart. *If what Satan has to offer is not what you want, his temptations bounce off.*

Notice one other point here. Jesus refers to Satan as “*the ruler of this world.*” When God created Adam He gave him dominion, or authority, over His creation.

When Adam sinned, he lost that dominion to Satan.

Satan has usurped the authority that once belonged to Adam. Today, the world is still controlled by Satan. Jesus admitted that Satan is “*the ruler of this world.*”

And this sets up the conflict that still rages today. “*The ruler of this world*” is going at it - battling for the souls of men - with Jesus “*the ruler of God’s kingdom.*”

Verse 31, “But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here...” which now ends the conversation in the upper room. The talk that follows in John 15-16 probably occurred as they walked from Mount Zion, across the Kidron Valley, and up the Mount of Olives, to the Garden of Gethsemane.

And the vineyards they passed were the backdrop for John 15 - one of Jesus’ most vital teachings. I call this chapter, “I Heard it through the Grapevine.”

Vineyards dotted the landscape all over Israel at the time of Jesus. In addition, on the doors of Herod's Temple were engraved a pair of golden vines.

OT passages like Isaiah 5, Psalm 80, Jeremiah 2, Ezekiel 19, Hosea 10 depicted Israel as God’s vine. God expected fruits of righteousness from His people.

Yet this fruitfulness never materialized. Israel was a barren vine that God promised to punish by uprooting from His vineyard. This is why earlier Jesus cursed the fig tree. It also was a symbol God’s rejection of Israel.

Judaism was on its way out. It was spiritually dead - incapable of producing good grapes. In its place God planted *a new vine - the true vine*. It may’ve been with the silhouette of that barren fig tree in the background, that Jesus identifies the true vine here in Chapter 15...

Verse 1, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” God’s initial plan was to graft the Gentiles into the vine of Judaism, yet Israel became barren.

Legalism, ritualism, hypocrisy choked out the vine.

A change was needed. God planted Jesus in Israel's place. That's why today, we become part of God's vineyard by being grafted into a person, not born into a family. In Christ, we're branches on God's Vine.

We have been merge with Christ, and now receive His life. The Father manages our growth and pruning.

Verse 2, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." We'll observe a progression in this passage - from fruit, to more fruit, to much fruit. Apparently, the gardener is after fruit!

He's not interested in leaves. He desires fruit.

Thus, if a branch refuses to abide in the Vine the Gardener cuts it off... Let me jump ahead to verse 6, here's what's done to the discarded branch, "He is cast out as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."

And folks respond to verse 6 by asking, "Wait a minute, doesn't the Bible teach eternal security?" And I say, "Absolutely, as long as you're abiding in the vine!"

If your faith is in Jesus - if you're *resting in His righteousness, looking to His love* - as long as you *chill in His will* - and *hang on to His grace* - then certainly, you are set forever - you are eternally secure in Christ.

But if there's no fruit in your life - *and it doesn't really matter if you never took root or your roots dried up* - if you're dead on the Vine, the Vinedresser is going to cut you off and cast you

away. He wants fruit. He can't waste sap on a branch that's not going to bear fruit!

Which brings up another question... "What is fruit?" And here's my best definition: "*Fruit is the byproduct of the Spirit's activity in my life.*" It's the evidence of faith.

And it includes love, joy, peace, kindness, patience, self-control - good works - even the power to witness.

As the sap in the vine pushes out - likewise the Holy Spirit pushes His power and influence out through our lives in a whole smorgasbord of wonderful ways.

But for a vine to reach its maximum yield, long before the harvest, it has to be pruned. To get the sap to the fruit, and not waste it on fueling the foliage, the dead wood and excess greenery has to be lopped off.

The pruning takes place in the winter, before the sap rises. When the cold weather beats the sap down into the roots the vinedresser cuts back the branch. *It hurts.*

If the vineyard could talk there'd be awful screams.

And when God prunes or disciplines us it too is painful. Our identity gets connected to old habits. Unnecessary busyness is addictive. So when God cuts back the distractions at first we think He's killing us.

Next time you're in the parking lot notice the crape myrtles by the front entrance ways. At this past work day they got pruned. I mean really pruned. Every green twig got lopped off. You think they're dead, but they're not. In fact, they're poised

for greater growth. If a plant wants to prosper it can't bypass the pruning process.

Sometimes when we're being pruned we think God is angry with us, but He's not. He only prunes where He sees fruit. He wants *more fruit*, and even *much fruit*.

The Rhine River Valley produces some of the best grapes in the world. In winter the valley is the coldest area in Germany. It's a wind tunnel that captures the cold northern air, and channels it through its vineyards. There's a saying in the vineyard, "**the colder the better.**"

The colder the winter the tougher the skins on the grapes, and the softer and sweeter its fruit. Remember that the next time God sends you through a harsh season, or a severe pruning. *God is after more fruit!*

Jesus continues in verse 3, "**You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.**"

The grapes in the vineyard were the cleanest in the spring, after the winter rains. And calendar-wise it was spring for the disciples. They were eating Passover.

But from a spiritual perspective it was also spring. Jesus is about to go to the cross and atone for their sin. They'll be made righteous through His sacrifice.

This will begin their growth.

In the vineyard the branches are cleaned in the spring, then all that's needed in the summer months for the growth to occur, is for them to abide in the vine.

As it gets hotter the sap rises and fruit blossoms.

This is why Jesus tells His disciples, “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.” The word “*abide*” means “to rest or stay.”

You never see the branches on a vine struggle or strain to grow. To bear fruit all they have to do is abide.

And the same is true for a Christian. It's not up to us to produce spiritual fruit. Our job is to just cultivate our connection to the vine. It's the vine that supplies life.

When I play golf, and really try to kill the ball I always hook it. It never flies straight. The key to a good golf swing is to let the club head do the work. Just meet the ball squarely - make good contact - and the ball will fly.

And this is good advice in the Christian life. Don't over-swing, and try too hard as if its up to you. And don't under-swing, and become lethargic or apathetic.

Just keep up good contact. Meet the Savior daily. Let His Spirit supply the power. In reality, a branch has little to do with growing grapes. Grapes just happen when the branch is properly connected to the Vine.

And we grow by trusting in our connection to Jesus.

Jesus says in verse 5, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

A *vine* isn't *pine*. Vine wood is too knotty and twisted to use as building material. All a vine is good for is bearing grapes...

And likewise without the Spirit rising up within us and bearing fruit our lives are worthless.

Verse 5 coupled with Luke 1:37 become two of the most important verses in the Bible. We read here what Jesus says, "*without Me you can do nothing,*" - then Luke tells us, "*with God nothing will be impossible.*"

That's the combination we need to remember.

Verse 6 "*If anyone does not abide in Me...*" Realize, you can start out in faith, but not continue in faith...

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

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." Notice, *abiding* and *asking* go hand in hand. The branch knows what it needs. It wants more sap. And likewise we can ask God for a greater outpouring of His Holy Spirit.

Verse 9 "*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.*" And here's the key to us loving God - just stay put - always absorbing His love for us.

And how do you stay in God's love?

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Spiritual growth is about abiding and obeying. Love and obedience go hand in hand.

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

I love the taste of sweet and juicy red grapes.

They're my favorite snack. Grapes are sometimes called "*God's candy*." And in this regard I'm just like Jesus. He too is most *joyful* when we're most *fruitful*.

Verse 12, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.” Jesus proved this the next day on the cross.

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” The Greek word translated “*friends*” was used to refer to the king's court - *his most trusted advisors*.

If you want to live close to Jesus follow His orders. Let's trust Jesus, but we also want Jesus to trust us.

Verse 15, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

Servants are hired hands - employees. They have no stake in the business. They're given a job, and when it's done they go home. They're told only what they need to know. But a friend is a co-owner. The owners confide in each other. He has a stake in the company.

Here Jesus promotes His disciples from mere wage earners to co-owners. He's upping the ante on their involvement in His kingdom by drawing them closer.

Verse 16, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.”

In the first century, Jews chose their own rabbi. But Jesus tells His disciples He’s the one who chose them.

And He tells them why... “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.”

Usually we’re surprised when we’re persecuted - *but why?* The world didn’t pat Jesus on the back, so why do we expect to receive any better treatment?

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Here, when Jesus uses the word “*world*” He’s not talking about the planet per se, but the ungodly, rebellious spirit of the age that shows up in our culture.

And Jesus says the world “*loves its own.*” It hates to be corrected. Thus, it grows fangs when it’s opposed.

“Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” If you choose to follow Jesus expect the world to treat you just like it treated Jesus.

“But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.” Throughout

history, the Church always considered it an honor to be persecuted for Jesus' *"name's sake."*

In the 1600s Obadiah Holmes of Rhode Island broke ranks with the state church of England. He held a prayer meeting in his home, and as punishment was ordered by the governor to be flogged. He was tied up in downtown Boston, and beaten so severely the only way he could lie down was on his elbows and knees.

Yet with the last lash Holmes shouted, *"Gentleman, you have whipped me with roses!"* As if His torture had been a trophy, received as an honor. Throughout history Christians have been honored by persecution.

Verse 22, *"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also."*

Reject Jesus and you hate the God in heaven.

"If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father."

But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law (and he quotes two Psalms, 35:19 and 69:4), *'They hated Me without a cause.'*

The Chapter ends, *"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning."* And these last two verses will be the first verses we discuss next week...