

Refreshed Intimacy with Jesus

By Scotty Smith

*The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. **Acts 4:13** (NLT)*

Lord Jesus, this simple story indicts and invites my heart. Two un-schooled, ordinary fishermen—Peter and John, were radically changed, all because of their real and robust relationship with you. What a great story; what a convicting picture.

I'm reminded that doing the right things *for* you isn't the same thing as spending life-giving time *with* you. Thinking great thoughts about you isn't the same thing as vital communion with you. Helping others understand the gospel isn't the same thing as drinking deeply from the well of living water for myself.

Lord, fuel, renew, and delight my heart-relationship with you. May your beauty be tantalizing to me; your love be astonishing and your peace be centering. Jesus, when I'm in fellowship with you, nothing else really matters. Problems assume their right size, fears flee, worries shrink, hurts heal, anger melts, and hope grows.

Indeed, who or what do I have in heaven but you? You make heaven heavenly, glory glorious, and wonder wonder-full. Being with you, my lusts are tamed, my idols fall, and my heart is filled.

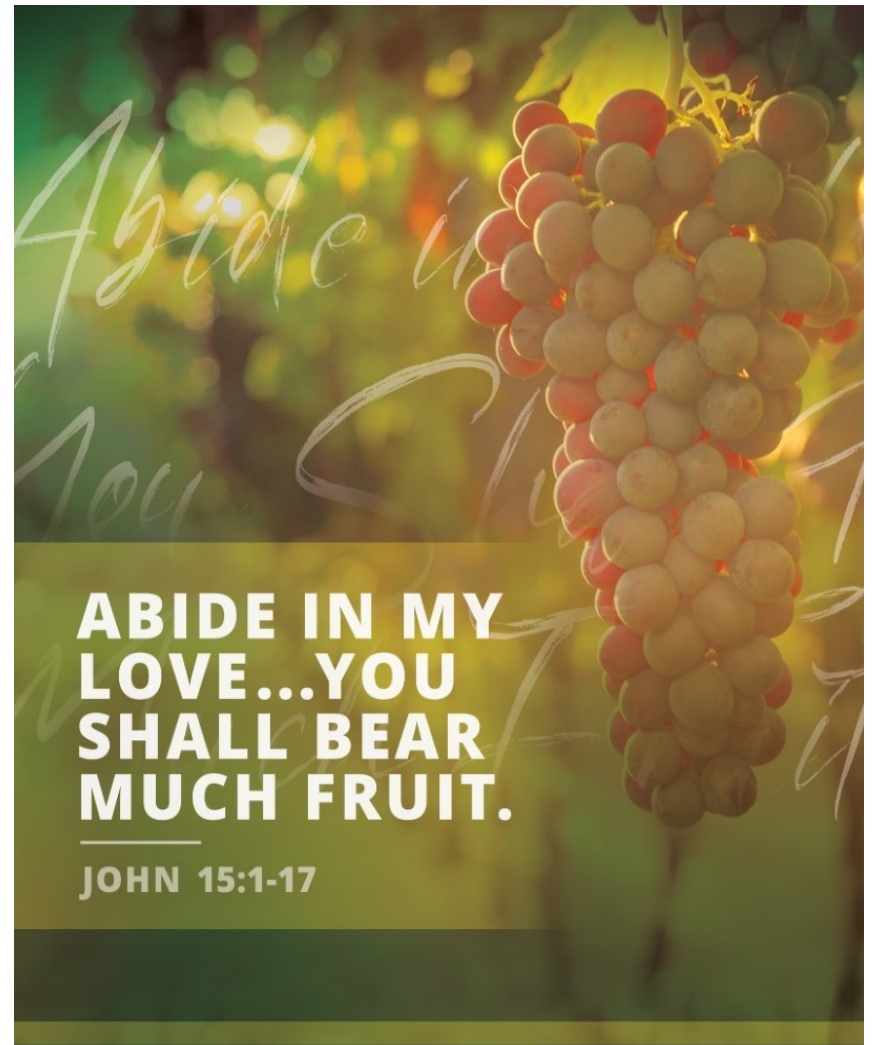
Absolutely *nothing* else thrills and satisfies my soul like you do, Jesus. My flesh and my heart will grow weaker, but you are the strength of my heart—my portion, banquet, and inheritance, forever. It is good, and it is enough, for me to be close to you—my sovereign Savior and loving refuge. So very Amen I pray, in your incomparable and compassionate name.



April 11, 2021

10:30 A.M.

Spiritual Intimacy with Jesus



Order of Service

Announcements

Welcome

Preparation for Worship

-----God's Greatness-----

Call to Worship

Hymns of Adoration

“O For a Thousand (Hallelujah)” Wesley/Hudson/Miller

“The Father’s House” Asbury/Hastings/Hulse

Prayer of Invocation

Affirmation of Faith: The Heidelberg Catechism

Song of Praise: “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

. . . Lemmel/Romanacce/Trout/Windbarger/Stiff

----- God's Renewal -----

Understanding Ourselves Rightly

Public Confession: Adapted from Luke 11:37-52

Silent Confession

Assurance of Pardon and Comfort: 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21

Song of Renewal

“The King in All His Beauty” Boswell/Papa

-----God's Grace-----

Scripture Reading: *John 15:1-17*

Prayer

The Sermon:

“Spiritual Intimacy with Jesus”

Words of Institution:

Celebration of the Lord’s Supper

Hymn: “I Love you Lord” Laurie Klein

Prayer of Approach

-----God's Blessing-----

Parting Hymn

“How Great is Your Love” Younker/Stanfill/Wickham

Benediction

God's Gracious Provision 4/4/2021

Attendance: 55

Offering: \$1653.40 Feed Pottstown: \$200.00

Your offering may be placed in the box at the Welcome Table.

2. Implications that come from “remaining” in Him

- Those whose lives are so in harmony with Jesus will find their prayers controlled by his word, and such prayers will be answered and bring added glory to God (15:7b; cf. 14:10–12). The branch produces what the life coursing through its limbs desires, that is, the “fruit of the vine.” But the outcome is not a mechanical productivity of fruit. The disciple steps into a relationship of love with both Jesus (15:9) and the Father (15:10), out of which a transformed life, a fruit-bearing life, will flow.
- Joy that is not merely a human happiness. Jesus desires “that *my joy* may be in you” (italics added). It is likewise a gift of the Spirit, a gift of Jesus dwelling within, that makes this joy supernatural and substantial. Jesus’ joy has come through his reliance on God and his obedience to his Father’s will. We inherit not only his joy but the capacity given through the Spirit to enjoy God in the same manner.

3. Life among the branches.

- For the second time Jesus has commanded his followers to love one another (cf. 13:34). This is the true test that will always put his followers in high relief (13:35).
- Jesus calls his disciples “friends” (15:14–15) to distinguish them from servants, who do not know the deeper thoughts of their masters.

Contemporary Significance

The believer is like a living branch attached to a living vine. It is the vine that gives life to the branch. Nourishment from the vine enables the branch to bear good fruit. *How one becomes attached is not the issue.* But that one must be attached, that one will bear fruit as a result of this attachment, means everything. One should be able to look at a branch, see its fruit, and say, “This branch is living, it is attached, it is vital and growing from the vine.”

What are the outcomes of this sort of life?

- The fruit Jesus expects from the branches is first and foremost love. It leads principally to a life that has features of Jesus’ life running through its veins. As Jesus enjoyed the Father’s love and reflected it to his followers, so now his love should fill their lives. Fruit then becomes a sign of spiritual life and vitality; fruit is not an evidence by which we demonstrate that we belong in the vineyard.
- Confident prayer described in 15:17 that is a byproduct of the intimacy with Jesus offered in 15:15–16.

¹Burge, G. M. (2000). *John* (p. 423). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

²Burge, G. M. (2000). *John* (pp. 424–425). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Jesus describes them as branches attached to himself, the one true vine. Something important has happened here. God's people are defined not as people now planted in the vineyard of Israel, but as people attached to Jesus. Now the vineyard consists of *one vine*, and the question for God's people is no longer, "Do I live in the vineyard?" but instead, "Am I attached to Jesus, the vine?"²

Exegesis

1. In his final "I am" saying in this Gospel, Jesus declares that *he* is the true vine (15:1).

- As in the Old Testament picture, God is eager to see fruit coming from his work tending the vines (15:2).. Vine dressers both trim branches so that they will produce more fruit and cut away dead branches that have no life in them. In each case the assumption is that fruit-bearing is the test of life-giving attachment to the vine.

There cannot be a no-fruit Christian. So, and we'll get into this in a minute, as I said, so what the Father does is he cuts off the fruitless branch because it is false. It has made an identification, but there is no reality there; there is no life there.

Secondly, the Father has a responsibility to the fruit-bearing ones.

That's Christians. What does He do to us? Well, He purges or prunes us to bring forth more fruit.

- The picture of attachment to Jesus as a branch is attached to a vine is an apt description of the interior spiritual life Jesus has described since chapter 14.
- The growing disciple in whom the Father and Son live (14:20, 23) through the Spirit (14:16, 25; 15:26) is one whose life is utterly dependent on Christ. Discipleship is not just a matter of acknowledging who Jesus is; it is having Jesus spiritually connected to our inner lives.
- The connection to the vine also means being "pruned" (15:2b). Those who remain in the vine (such as Jesus' disciples) are being readied for more fruit-bearing by the word Jesus is giving them.
- This comes as a warning (15:6). To fail to "remain" in Christ, to fail to find life in the vine (i.e., Jesus), risks separation from the vineyard and consequent destruction. There is only one evidence if a branch is truly alive: Does it produce clusters of grapes (15:5)?

Note: the metaphor is not saying. Fruit-bearing is not a test; that is, a branch does not have to demonstrate a level of productivity to be safe from destruction. Rather, fruit-bearing is a byproduct. "Apart from me you can do nothing" (15:5b). To be connected to the vine means that the life of Jesus is flowing through us, and this leads to fruitfulness. Fruitfulness will be the inevitable outcome of an interior spiritual life with Jesus (cf. Gal. 5:22–23).

Upcoming Events

Tonight 6-8 P.M. Youth Group meets at the home of the Deicherts for Bible Study and fellowship

Wednesday, April 14 6:30 P.M. Young Adults meet for Bible Study at the Deicherts

Thursday, April 15 7:00 P.M. Tactics Small Group

**Sunday, April 18 6:15-7:15 P.M. House of Prayer
GCC Prayer Gathering for youth and adults**
1300 High Street, Pottstown, PA

Friday, April 23 7:00 P.M. Sanctity of Life Concert presented by Genesis Women's Clinic at Berean Bible Church

Saturday, May 15 8:00 A.M. Men's Breakfast at the home of Pastor Rick and Barb. Bring a friend.

Saturday, June 5 6:00 P.M. Prayer Dinner at the home of Pastor Rick and Barb. The event will be largely outdoors so if it rains we will use an alternate rain date.

Everyone is invited to join with the elders in prayer every Sunday from 9:30-10:00 in the back of the gym.

David and Mindy Nelson

While our US leadership has not been able to travel for onsite visits over the last year, we have been meeting with the CCI team every month. Over the last five weeks, we have been meeting with country directors and missionaries from India, Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

Please Pray that every meeting will bare fruit.

Tim and Holly Howden

Pray that they will soon be fully supported financially.



Prayer/Praise.April 11, 2021

- Pray for Denny Bartchak, friend of Barb Knarr. Pray for a successful cancer surgery on his bladder on May 20.
- Pray for Jill Aument's granddaughter, Thea, who was diagnosed with Covid-19. Pray for healing, no complications, and that she would not be fearful.
- Pray that God would be gracious and "open doors" for Greg Aument to acquire a new position that has opened at Wegmans.
- Pray that God reveals Himself to Koreen's friend Amanda and her husband, John. Amanda's father is dying. Pray for support from John and peace and God's presence for the situation and for the father who does not know the Lord.
- Praise that Nic Collins landed safely in Quito, Ecuador. Pray that Nic will have many opportunities to share the love of Christ.
- Pray for Ashley, the niece of Lisa Frame's friend, Denise. She had her first chemotherapy treatment. Pray for continued healing and that Ashley can know the Lord.
- Praise that Dave Frame's dad was discharged from the hospital, but does need to have out patient hernia surgery.
- Praise that Baby Cypress' surgery went well. Pray that Christopher gets the help he needs, and that God would get hold of his heart, as he is still angry.
- Praise that Koreen's dad's pacemaker surgery was successful. Keep Gwen in your prayers as she cares for their dad at home.
- Pray for Debbie Breyer, friend of Donna Jenkins. After she was in the hospital, she was admitted to Pennsburg Manor again for physical therapy, and she is now on oxygen every day for COPD.
- Pray for Koreen Mace's brother-in-law, Jim, that God will speak to his heart and for salvation and healing for Jim.
- Pray for Tony Conte, the father of Mandi Yensan's friend, Christine, who is in the ICU. He has congestive heart failure. Pray for peace for Christine and her family knowing that God is holding her father in His Hands.
- Please continue to pray for healing for Jill Aument's sister, Gail. She is having muscle spasms and is not experiencing any relief from her back procedure.
- Pray for Tracy Spencer, niece of Donna Jenkins. Tracy is 31 weeks pregnant with her first baby, and there are issues with the baby's lungs. Pray for wisdom for her doctors and God's strength for Tracy, Justin, and their baby.
- Please continue to pray for Paul Maloney, brother of Barb Schultz, who is a resident at Pennsburg Manor. He is trying to regain the strength in his legs.
- Pray for Donna Plowfield's son-in-law, David, who is seeking employment.
- Pray for the family of Rhonda Clark. Her sister passed away from cancer, and her father is having a biopsy at the end of March to check for kidney cancer.
- Pray for Justine Schumaker, mother of Renee Schumaker. Justine started chemotherapy treatment.
- Pray for Jeremiah Mace, who is in a 9-month internship program. Please pray for continued healing for Koreen's family.

Message

Spiritual Intimacy with Jesus

John 15:1-17 (ESV)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. ¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Context

In this chapter (as in John 14) Jesus is speaking directly to the needs and experiences of disciples who will believe in him following his departure. It is important to recall his audience: He is surrounded by his closest followers. This provides the chapter with an immediacy and applicability for the church today. These words are guidelines for discipleship, instructions for how the disciple (and the church) ought to live out life in a world that is at odds with God's Word but nevertheless in need of it.¹

The vineyard metaphor.

The third vineyard theme, often left unnoticed, would have been explosive in Jesus' day. When Jesus employs the vineyard metaphor, he is touching one of the most-used images in Judaism to express God's relationship with his people. Instead of describing God's people as planted vines rooted in the soil of Israel,