

Walking ONE

By Dan Bumstead

Introduction

IN 2007 MY FAMILY AND I SPENT THE MOST HEAVENLY 10 days imaginable. We came to visit a missionary family sequestered in a desolate area of Northern Mozambique. They had been there for 3 years and we were the first visitors! A small sign in their yard christened their home – “The Resting Place”. No electricity, a draw well in the yard, the only interior door to separate rooms was a curtain, mom and dad and 6 worshipping children. During the days we were putting up block walls for what was to be their orphanage. Dinner was magical! As the candlelight glowed on our gathering, “the twins” – 17 year sisters who basically started the mission and invited their family to join them – served each plate with loving devotion – a small portion of roasted peanuts, two small African bananas, and a cooked sweet potato – every night the same. But the passionate love for Jesus pervading that room was palpable. As plates were cleared and water drawn for cleaning dishes we would retire to our rooms. As the girls cleaned, they released their pent up passion for Jesus in soft song and dance, which the candlelight would transfer to our sheet “door”. In that “Resting Place” I witnessed lives that were transcendent. And I was infected with a hunger for a continual life of intimacy with Jesus I had never imagined. I can remember as if it were last week, getting up early for a chance to find time alone with God – I would sneak outside in the early dawn’s light and walk among the fields of grass that towered over my head, watching the small black birds with tails as long as the rest of their bodies, flitting among the swaying grasses, and my spirit was souring! For the first time in decades my heart was overflowing with passionate love for Jesus that I felt I could hardly contain! The joy overflowed my bodily container all day, and every moment seemed misted by Heaven’s atmosphere. And when our time came to leave that magical place and we returned to our “normal” life, I realized – I had been altered. I had fallen in love! I had tasted a life that I was made for, and I would never be the same. This became the goal of my life – to live in unrequited passionate love with Jesus, every day of my life. It was not an outward goal, but an inward impulse.

I want to compose this booklet to build a pathway for some hungry pilgrims like me to begin to experience a constant, vibrant fellowship with our Lord, and in such, that we may live the exceptional Life promised. This is the Abundant Life envisaged throughout scripture, but most clearly and repeatedly by the One who modeled it perfectly – Jesus of Nazareth. When you look at the Life of Jesus you can learn many lessons for living, but in the last decade of my life, there is one message that seems to stand out the above the others as the central theme of His life – **that one may live in constant, unbroken Oneness with the Father, and in that connection may find a remarkable life.**

The bulk of Jesus’ “teaching” came not in words, but actions. Note the constant references Jesus made in his daily walk to this living partnership with Father: his works and words emanating from Father (Jn 14:10; 5:20f, 36; 10:32-38) , his ability to see and hear the Father (Jn 5:19; 6:46) , his reciprocated love with the Father (Jn 5:20; 3:35; 10:17; 17:23-25), his being one with the Father, being sent by the Father (Jn 5:37; 6:44, 57; 8:18; 8:42; etc) , being dependent on the initiating directions and power of the Father (Jn 5:19). He

says things like, “I live because of the Father” (Jn 6:57), or “This charge I have received from my Father.” (Jn 10:18), or “I know Him for I come from Him” (Jn8:43), or “the Father loves the Son and shows him all things He Himself is doing.” (Jn 5:20) or “The Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (Jn 14:10f). And finally, Jesus promises that his disciples can have the same relationship with the Father that he himself enjoyed (Jn 14:18-20; 16:17; 17:21-23). The Pinnacle of this teaching – this revelation of what life would be like when Jesus is not alongside, but inside – is found in Jn 17:22 – *“The glory you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be ONE just as we are ONE- I in them and you in me- that they may be completely ONE...”*

All of these passages provide a volume of understanding of Jesus’ mind. Jesus is never recorded as addressing God as “God”. Always it was “Father” or “my Father”, or “our Father” or even “your Father”. And Mark, who was a personal witness of Jesus passionately praying in the Garden the night before his death, immortalized that scene by using the Aramaic term that Jesus probably always used – “Abba” – the familiar, “Daddy”. He never gave a sermon on “The Concept of Intimacy with God” – his life was a sermon. His Abba was in the air he breathed, in his thought and self talk and overflowing passionate love every moment.

And he envisioned the same for his followers! Let’s walk slowly thru these words to find this life. Let’s not settle for less.

Especially in the last days of Jesus’ life on earth he was persistently drawing his disciples back to this theme of their continued interaction with Him and His Father *after* His bodily departure. He was going away, but He would not leave them as orphans. No! He would be there for them, with them, IN them, and they in Him. The parable of the True Vine in John 15 gives us his most explicit teaching of the life the disciples could expect to live. It is filled with almost unbelievable depth and power. Combined with the example of Jesus’ own life, we find a vista of unending peaks of powerful living – each with the possibility of scaling and conquering.

In these few verses of John 15, Jesus is calling his followers of all ages to engage fully in an “extra-ordinary”, “super-natural” Life. “Ordinary” and “natural”, because it is something designed and available for the ordinary man to find; “super” and “extra” because it is not commonly lived, nor attainable without an intentional break with the nearly irresistible gravitational pull of this world.

My desire is that this book may be a practical guide for those who hunger for this deeper way. These boxes of color will be practical pauses – a time to put into practice the things we are learning. Give yourself time to search within yourself to find Truth that convicts and teaches. The booklet should be slowly walked thru with Father at your side. There is no delight in heaven over truth acknowledged, until it is applied to life. Go slow and deliberate. This may be the most important lesson in your life. Make it count.

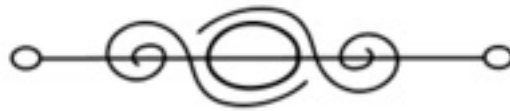
May I ask you personally, do you desire a deeper intimacy with Jesus? Do you want to fall in love again? Or perhaps for the first time – to really, truly feel and experience the passion for Father that draws you through the day?

If so, right now let's build an altar.

Jesus, I give you my heart – my affections, my intellect, the core of who I am. I place it on the altar. And I ask you, in faith, to light the fire. Adjust my life forever. Make yourself visible to me. I want to hear your Voice. I want to partner with you and be your hands and feet. But most of all I want to know you and love you – like you love and know me. I want to be one with you, as you, Jesus, and Father are one. Amen.

Chapter 1:

OVERVIEW



I had been a pastor for several years, working hard every day to bear fruit. Every cell in my body was committed to making something sweet and powerful for God. That Monday I was going to have some “fun” with my family. The only problem – I was just no fun! I saw my wife and three young kids out playing in the sand box, so, with every good intention, cup of coffee in hand, I went out to be with them. As I lounged beside them on the grass, cavernous yawns that went down to my toes kept sweeping over me every few minutes. A deep tiredness and exhaustion settled on me that I just could not shake. I was trying to be a good dad and husband, but I could sense the disappointment from my wife. I was totally consumed and eaten up with my work. I was a working machine that barely knew how to be human. Devotions were necessary of course, and I would try to spend what time I could. But my mind would quickly bring me back to the “important” matters of the day. I just could not grasp that my devotional life was truly the most important matter of the day!

Yet, hidden from my eyes, all of my effectiveness hinged on that hour.

The quality of our secret life determines the quantity of fruit in our public life.

Take a moment now and evaluate your devotional life.

1. Do you have a special place where you can find quiet solitude with God?
2. Do you meet with Father every day, regardless of the busyness or the inconvenience?
3. Do you spend time in adoration? In listening? In unspoken love? Do you allow your heart to soar and connect into Oneness with Father and Jesus?
4. Do you find Living Words coming from the scriptures to answer your daily needs?
5. Do you have some secrets between you and Father that are so personal and precious you cannot tell another?
6. Do you find a Living love song following you thru the day? An Echo or fragrance that continues to follow you thru the day?

Now is the time to take control of your life and prioritize the things that are of most importance. Is this area not the most important thing you can do every day? And if so, does it not deserve your best effort and investment?

Abiding and Fruit

Read carefully thru the following passage, and note the dual theme: Abiding, and Fruitfulness. Nine times Jesus refers to the potential of intimate union with Him, and seven times talks of fruit bearing. Abiding = Fruit Bearing. These two issues are vitally connected. We *cannot* have any life impact apart from intimacy with Jesus. Fruitfulness only flows from deep fellowship of Life with Jesus.

John 15:1-16 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.... 16. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

In this passage lies the outline of Jesus’ teaching of Oneness, which provides the outline of this booklet:

1. The Great Gardener, our Father, is carefully tending us to insure we are getting full access to His life-giving sap. Love is always the forefront of his mind. Some he cuts off... Others he prunes. The result of his careful attention is an extraordinary crop of people making a difference in this world.
2. Jesus Abiding in us. Jesus makes a point of noting the two sides of the Heavenly Coin: Him abiding in US, and We abiding in Him. This chapter focuses on the first. We will examine clues to inviting Him to make his home in us.
3. Remaining – there is a double meaning to the Greek word “meno”: 1. To reside, dwell, make a home in. 2. To remain, continue. Both meanings apply. This chapter talks about how to keep Jesus remaining in our thoughts and spirit all day, every day.
4. Us Abiding in Jesus. This chapter will unlock the truths of the other side of the Heavenly Coin: Us making our home in an ever active and moving Jesus, walking with Him, being his Hands and Feet and Voice in this world. We will learn how to obey and walk in the Spirit.

5. Fruit that remains is the highest level of fruitfulness. This results from a life of complete consecration, Oneness with Him.

Jesus is showing his disciples, as he is preparing them for his departure, that their lives will continue to be vitally connected with Him. They will be worried and feel lost when he is gone – but no need! He is still with them – in even a more powerful way than they imagined! He is One with them! And as they discover how to align their lives with him, their lives will have a powerful impact on the world, just as Jesus' own life did.

Chapter 2:

THE FARMER TENDS TO THE BRANCHES



V1 > “I am the True Vine and my Father is the Vinedresser... (v5) you are the branches...”

Throughout this entire parable there is a living interplay between these three characters. **Father** is overseeing our lives with care and manipulating events as needed to keep us healthy; **Jesus**, The Vine, is providing all the nutrients we could ever want; and **we**, the Branches, are being acted upon and empowered thru our willing participation in this vital circle. How sublime and powerful is this! Let’s bask in this commitment from heaven’s legislative, judicial and executive powers for our benefit!

Jesus’ use of the word “**True**” expresses his awareness of conflicting sources that masqueraded as Vines of Supply, but are an empty mirage. Our hearts yearn for fulfillment, for significance, for love, for a cause greater than us. We think these things in themselves will satisfy our thirsty souls. We look to man for affirmation. We look to accomplishments for validation.

In 2008 my wife and I cast off from our life of pastoral ministry to become missionaries in Africa. We entered a training school full of young, zealous world shakers. We were the old ones. We were also the ones from the “old establishment” church world – not highly sought after for wisdom. And we were white – in a world where any other skin hue would be preferred. At the end of our training we went on “the mission trip from hell”. I was not leading the team – not even in the inner few. I was not trusted to drive – I sat in the back. For the first time in my life, I was a “has-been”. I can remember feeling like a teen-ager – should I tuck in my shirt? How should I comb my hair? What’s cool? I was in agony. One night the Lord gave me a horrible dream of the team causing me to do some terrible blunder, then all ridiculing me. I woke up furious! And so shamed. As I sat on the porch that day God did a work in my heart that broke me from my dependence on the approval of men because of His superseding approval. He led me thru Is 49 – did you know God knew and spoke of my name before I was born? He was bragging! He passed out cigars! Then He carefully caused all the circumstances of my life to shape me into the person that He wanted to display His Splendor! Some may look askance, but “I am honored in the eyes of

the Lord”!!! And someday, perhaps even in this life, “kings will see me and rise up, and princes will see me and bow down.”

Who needs man’s approval? Jesus is our only “*True*” Vine. If we are nourished by Him, we need nothing more. The neuroses of life divulge a soul’s cry for a Father’s affection. When that hole is plugged, only then can life begin to find it’s true purpose. The primary issue of my identity has been resolved. Jesus, Father and Spirit are 100% on my side! “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” As the Message states, “*And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—-who was raised to life for us! --is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us.*”

Abiding in Love

Jesus ~ “*...remain a in my love.*”

Love creates Oneness. And Oneness creates Life. When we deeply love the One who created us for His enjoyment, we become One with Him; and in that Oneness we are infused with Life that cannot be contained. It pours out of our daily lives in tangible ways and creates fruit for Jesus. Abiding equals Fruitfulness. Love has a greater objective than an endorphin rush and a satisfied demeanor. Intimacy was invented for bearing children.

When my wife and I had first fallen in love I can remember how my thoughts would somehow swirl around Regina constantly. I couldn’t *stop* thinking about her if I tried! One time she was gone for a couple months to another state, and I remember the agony of loneliness. Something terrible was missing in my life. As soon as she returned - there was a glow again that suffused my days and affected every part of my life. This relationship altered my personality, my self-confidence, my creativity, vision for the future, interest in others – everything was beautified because of this love coursing thru my veins. And now, after over 40 years of Oneness with this woman, I can say, it has not diminished.

This passionate love between a man and woman is part of the Divine image in the human spirit. It was created to be the same tie that binds our hearts unceasingly to our Lover King. As Solomon was inspired to write, “*...your love is more delightful than wine... Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers..*”

Love conceives passion, which brings forth a continued connection and spirit communication between the two. If we dream of continuing in constant fellowship with God thru the day, we cannot reduce it to a discipline to an idea or a principle. It must touch the passions of heart.

Brother Lawrence has become a household name – showing us that it is possible to “practice the presence” of Jesus abiding with us throughout the day. He writes, “*I cannot*

imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of GOD. For my part I keep myself retired with Him in the depth of center of my soul as much as I can; and while I am so with Him I fear nothing; but the least turning from Him is insupportable.”

Let us never “do devotions” to fulfill our ritual obligation to God. Rather, we are allowed to daily enter into the chamber of our Father and become One with Him. Love is a force that is unleashed in the secret place for a world unawares. This is no cloistered dreamy soaking in love envisioned. This is active walking as Jesus walked – in works powered by Presence!

Let’s start out every day with an hour in that All Consuming Presence, pouring out our heart and thoughts, drinking in His Love and Grace, listening quietly for His life-shaping affirmations, mulling and entering into participation with His written Words. Is it possible to come out unscathed? Would it not make practicing His Presence throughout the day a natural outflow of love? “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me because He has anointed me...” Sit under the anointing oil being poured out by Father onto your head. Be filled, be saturated, be drenched with the oil of heaven this morning, and it will permeate your soul for the entire day.

What is Fruit?

I didn’t often take time to garden, though I’m sure, when I get to heaven I will be a farmer. But one time I did determine to take some time regularly to work with my wife on her garden. I was confident that with my help she could significantly improve her outcome. More compost and manure was the answer, I was sure. And sure enough, those tomato plants looked as we had never seen them before! But we waited and waited for blooms. None ever came!

Were we satisfied that we had made the best-looking tomato foliage on earth? No. And neither is God. We can grow foliage with hard work and much talent and persuasion. Your family, ministry, business, lifestyle, position, acclaim – all of these can be built by talent, determination and dedication. We have all known people with very exquisite foliage, but with rotten fruit. I have had the opportunity to meet some international Christian leaders with amazing ministries, but sadly some of them evidenced an uncharitable character and their families were confirmation of their emptiness. My own early years of ministry could probably be categorized as predominantly foliage.

Fruit is a secondary outcome of our essence – our root - that we cannot control. Some good home school families take amazing pride in the stair-step beauty and creativity of their perfect children. They all wear home sewn clothes and have their pies in the County Fair.

They play cello and flute to perfection. But you can control the product for only so long. Eventually, if there is something rotten in the plant, it will manifest itself – and oh how tragic that can be! Fruit is that uncontrollable, secondary by-product that reveals the essence of the branch it came from.

Abiding deeply in The Vine is the only sure way to produce good fruit. Living close to Jesus molds our inner essence so that what proceeds from us will have a power and a quality greater and purer than our own natural efforts can produce.

Abiding is the active word; Fruit bearing, passive. We will study later in the lesson how we may learn to Abide. But to bear fruit is not in our control. Fruit is the unconscious result that springs from our life lived. Too often we focus our energies on the one thing we cannot control, and ignore the one thing we can. We are responsible for the Abiding; we simply watch in amazement at the fruit that springs from such a life. May we at the outset of this study, compel our will to obedience to the call to Abide, regardless the cost or sacrifice needed.

If you are a church leader in this Christian climate of high achievement and powerful ministries, successful pastors and growing church programs, we would do well to slow down and get on our knees to ensure that our grand foliage actually bears buds of reproductive Life. Are your programs producing numbers or disciples? Are your children reflecting your values or your behavior? Are your relationships deep in white hot truth? Do our people see us operating more like a CEO or a Guru? Where does our source of ministry come from – our great talent and effort, or the Spirit of God?

Increasing fruitfulness

Now note the ascending plateaus of fruitfulness which spring from increasing intimacy:

V2 - “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away...”

The first level of association with Jesus is bearing fruit. “*Every* branch in me” is expected to bear some degree of fruit. It doesn’t take spiritual greatness to begin making an impact. As the sinful woman wept over Jesus’ feet to the disgust of her inquisitors, she was bearing fruit for eternal life. When Limpo in Zambia’s primitive village first knew the life changing seed of God had invaded his heart, and in joy went to tell his friend, fruit was springing up. Merely by virtue of being “in Him” Life starts poking it’s beautiful head out of the ground.

V2 - “and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

The next rung of the ladder is “more fruit”. It comes thru pruning. Which reminds us of Heb 12:10 “*For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*” Remember, fruit comes from intimacy, therefore we understand that discipline is designed to bring us to a deeper experience of God’s presence, “that we may share his holiness”, as the same writer to the Hebrews reports.

V5 - “The one who remains a in me and I in him bears much fruit. My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples ...”

The third rung is “*much* fruit”. This greater infusion of Life comes as we “*abide in Him, and He abides in us*”. This is a practice of the Presence of God in our daily life that exudes Him at every turn, thus “*show(ing)*” that we are from Him and of Him.

V16 - “You did not choose me, but I chose you a and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains”

The fourth rung is “*fruit that remains*”. This comes from the choice and appointment of God to go. A vessel that has been pruned and has learned to live and Exchanged Life, trusting and living fully in God, will be powerfully used by him in ways he or she may never have imagined. We read of stories of Hudson Taylor, Amy Charmichael, Charles Moody and so many other heroes of our faith. They were such people chosen, consecrated and appointed to bear fruit that keeps on replanting itself. And so can each of us as well.

We will dig into these phrases and nuances more, but for now, reflect on the ascendancies of our walk in the Light and how they result in fruit bearing in our lives. Determine to never be slack to remain at your current plateau when Life calls you deeper and higher. Ask Jesus to show you what level of fruitfulness you are at – do you need pruning for “more fruit”? Are you experiencing the “much fruit” from living the Exchanged Life moment by moment? Or does your fruit appear to “remain” in spite of overwhelming obstacles, because you have devoted your life on His alter of service? Allow the Spirit to test your branch and listen to His counsel in your life right now.

The withered life

V2 > “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he cuts off... v6 > If 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.”

Immediately as we begin this path to a deeper life we brought up short with the lesser life. The withered life. The capillaries have constricted and dried. The flow of communion and joy of union has evaporated. The picture is grim – cut off, thrown away, burned in the fire... Is this eternal judgment?

I believe this is the picture of the carnal Christian who will undergo the fire of God's discipline in this life, "*so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.*" (I Cor 11:32) Paul warns worldly believers about this discipline, this fire, that explains "*...why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.*" (I Co 11:29f) This is the loving kind of judgment that Peter says will start "with the house of God" (1 Pt 4:17). This kind of cutting away has nothing to do with our eternal state, because Jesus confides that even these withered ones are "*in Me*". These are withered Christians who have entered into the discipline of God.

This is the lot of the one who "*does not abide in (Jesus)*". The deeper life, the fruitful life is not an optional life for the Christian. It is not the exceptional Christian life. If one does not enter into the fruitful life of abiding, he will wither and be cut away.

The church today is full of withered believers who can hardly be called disciples. They may not even consider themselves cut off from the flow of Life, withered on the Vine, weak and sick. They have never known the pleasures of the Father's Table, the joy of sacrificial suffering, the adventure of radical obedience. They may have never have learned that "inviting Jesus into my life" means nothing less than giving Him control of His residence.

Christian, does your life reflect the joy of Jesus' Presence with you in your daily affairs? Do you hear his voice daily? Do you practice obedience to that Voice, speedily, with joy, and especially when it involves a cost? Are you familiar with his serenity when the storms are raging? Do you have secret instructions from Him that no one would understand if they knew? OR are you unknowingly withered?

Does stress reign in your life? Does strife from an unbridled tongue cloud your past? Do habitual sins continue to push you around? Are you ambivalent towards giving of your time and money for the poor or God's Kingdom? If this is so, then perhaps in reading this, the Spirit may quicken a hunger for the Connected Life that will resuscitate the dead branch.

Being pruned

V2> "He cuts off every branch that does not produce fruit in me, and he cuts back every branch that does produce fruit, so that it might produce more fruit." ISV

I chose this translation to show the similarity of the Father's action between the withered branch and the moderately fruitful branch – he “cut's off... cuts back”. In the original language there is the same wordplay. The cutting of the withered branch and the cutting of the living branch is not ostensibly different. The intent of the farmer, the condition of the branch, and the consequence of the cut, are the distinctive issues.

The farmer of course is distressed over cutting off the withered branch. His heart is broken like a Father, waiting for a prodigal son, but knowing he is cut off and withered. But for the living branch, even though He knows his cut may bring temporary pain, His cut is full of hope and vision for the future abundance it will bring forth.

The branch that is withered will hardly notice the cutting – his life is already without any of the abundance and sap that make for a spiritual existence. He never hears God's voice, never sees his warming glances, and so he does not realize that the sudden sickness or difficulty or unbelief which has overtaken him could proceed from the hand of a grieving Father. He sees only with the world's eyes and knows not the hand of God upon him for his good.

But for the branch that is living, the cut, though painful, is received in humility and repentant resignation. He determines in his heart to *“not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves...”* (Heb 12:5-6) *“...that it may bear more fruit!”*

The very root of the original word “to cut” is also “to cleanse”! Isn't this sublime! The *“Sun of Righteousness”* who *‘shall rise with healing in his wings’*, (Mal 4:2) is the same one who *“is like a refiner's fire and like fullers 'soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord.”* (Mal 3:2f) Notice that his fire is also a soap that cleanses!

So would you now take some moments to bow your heart before the Light to convict and prune? The more fellowship we have with the Light, the more we will find the need of repentance and brokenness of heart (I Jn 1:7). Are there any difficulties or problems in our path that may reflect the hand of discipline that we can embrace? Is there a healthy fear of God in our minds, or have we embraced the carnal mind that claims that God would never impose discipline that actually hurts?

Chapter 3:

JESUS ABIDING IN US



Now we come to the most sublime and profound mystery of the New Covenant. Let us tread carefully and linger long over these phrases to glean the deepest truths from them.

V 4-7> “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me... Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing... If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you... Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love...”

Here we are entering upon the third rung. As a result of being in the Vine we bear fruit. As a result of being pruned we bear *more* fruit. As a result of Abiding in Him and He in us, we bear *much* fruit. It is this place of much fruit that glorifies our Father (v8), for which we are created.

A double abiding

So many pass over the meat of this verse by not distinguishing two slightly different phrases – the two sides of the Heavenly Coin! Seven times in this passage we are taught about us abiding in Him (v9, 10 “in His love”), while only three times is mentioned Him abiding in us (v7 “my Words”). The emphasis is always on us abiding in Him.

This is not just an exercise in semantics – Jesus is opening up here the secrets of a life of Oneness that few have entered well. Yet it was his daily bread, the air he breathed. He could not live without this intimacy and continual cooperation with His Father. He is in this word-picture coming upon the closest words can describe of this powerful mystery.

Jesus abiding in us is passive on our part: we are receptive of his coming. We are like hatchlings in the nest – all we can do is squawk and open our beaks wide, for the mother to feed us. We must be willing and sensitive to His coming. In order to fellowship well there are many things to learn. It is not difficult – and yet it is counter-intuitive. In the end, He is the aggressor, and we the receptor.

But us abiding in Jesus is active on our part: we must follow him and participate with what he is doing. Greylag Geese will “imprint” (attach themselves, as to a parent) to the first moving object they encounter soon after hatching, and follow that object obediently. In the movie Winged Migration, the pilot of an ultralight, wearing a yellow jacket and honking incessantly, guided birds who had previously imprinted themselves to him, into migratory flights. They were hatched in captivity and had no sense of their natural migratory routes without him. In the same way, as we Abide in Jesus, we are imprinting ourselves on Him, and follow His every move.

We may see the distinction better like this:

I (Jesus) abide in you	You (Disciple) abide in me
V 4, 5, 7	V 4, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10
Passive on our part	Active on our part
Receptive	Participative

We see this dual Abiding so often in the life of Jesus. One moment he is on the mountain receiving the instruction, empowerment, encouragement of the Spirit; and the next he is in the valley abiding still with the Spirit, doing His works and responding to His movements. There must be infilling before there can be outpouring.

Let us quickly respond to the stirring in our spirits when we read these words of a life of intimacy – we hunger for this, we thirst for more of God. We cannot live without intimacy. We kneel as Esau before Isaac and beg with desperate, unabashed fervency to our Father for this blessing to be poured on our open, dry spirits. Spring up O wells of Living Water, Spirit of God and hear our hungry hearts cry for a Living vibrancy within that is our rightful inheritance. We stand right now as a willing lightning rod to be struck by You. And then that we may continue, as we get up from our knees, to walk in Abiding Presence.

Jesus, come.

V4-7 Msg>”Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you.... I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant.... But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon.”

Making Jesus at home in our lives is the first order in this life. Before we learn to *do for* Him, He calls us to “*learn from*” Him (Mt 11:20), yoked, as a pair of oxen, side by side – learning from the gentle pressure of his movements, getting every signal of direction and speed, caring only about our smooth cooperation in the yoke and nothing about our production. This alone is our rest. Friedrich von Hugel, the veteran of prayer, said it well, “*The most fundamental need, duty, honor, and happiness of men is... adoration.*” In adoration we do nothing more than enjoy the deep presence of God, feast at the table set before us, and lavish our love on Him.

Frank Laubach, a pioneer missionary to the Muslim Moros of the Philippines, writes in his spiritual journal, “*I feel simply carried along each hour, doing my part in a plan which is far beyond myself. This sense of cooperation with God in the little things is what astonishes me. I seem to have to make sure of only one thing now, and every other thing takes care of itself, or I prefer to say what is more true, God takes care of all the rest. My part is to live in this hour in continuous inner conversation with God and in perfect responsiveness to his will. To make this hour gloriously rich. This seems to be all I need to think about.*”

Like a “*weaned child*” (Ps 13:12) we must learn how to allow Him to reside in us. In our fast paced materialistic world, have we lost the ability to “center down” as the Quakers say, and get into that daily, hourly, continual place where all is still and powerful?

Let's right now take time to sit and Fellowship with Jesus. Friend and Lord, we sit in your presence and adore you. We invite you into our thoughts – speak there. We invite you into our conscience – search us and try us. We invite you into our past – cleanse and heal those dark areas that lie behind the veil of secrecy. We invite you into our guilt – wash our hearts like new fallen snow. We invite you into our ambitions – subdue them in your purposes – Your will be done. We invite you into our relationships – help us to forgive where needed, to invest where needed, and cut off where needed. We invite you to make us completely One with you. Lord and Friend, be at home in our lives. Adjust and shape us as you will. We love you.

The Secret Place

“Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” (Rev 3:30)

The illustration of Jesus knocking at the door to our Home is profound. This verse was written to a church that was withering from unused, calcified arteries. They were not making room for the daily Light in their cluttered homes. Our Life Source is awaiting our invitation of an open door, a space, a posture expectant of Him to speak to adjust, correct,

direct and comfort. As Thomas Kelly said, “Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return.”

In the last small opportunity with His disciples, before the Cross separated them, Jesus tried to comfort them. Men became boys – confused, fearful orphans. His words are spoken with such gentle love. Three chapters in the book of John (14-17) are devoted to Jesus painting a picture of what life would be like with Jesus *inside*, rather than *alongside*. This most urgent message starts out with a picture of a home:

(Jn 14:1-4) “Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me. There are many dwelling places (gk- monai) in my Father’s house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to (gk - ina) make ready a place (gk - topos) for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too.”

The Greek noun “monai” is a stopping, or resting place along the side of the road (not a mansion as the the KJV mistakenly transliterates). Origen understood the use here to refer to stations on the road to God. The verb form of this same word, “meno”, is the word used in Jn 15 describing the branch “remaining or abiding or residing” in the Vine.

Jesus here is not telling the disciples that someday he will come back to earth and take them to heaven to be with God forever – and *that* will be their “home”. He is inviting them to enjoy the “many *dwelling places*” in His Father’s *House* by daily, constantly finding Him and dwelling with Him, along the way. Everywhere they look they will find “resting places” where they may enjoy intimate fellowship together. “Father’s House”, of course is not heaven, but His Kingdom, which surrounds us all.

The very purpose (gk “ina”) of Jesus’ going is to make this profound exchange from being “along-side” to “inside”. This is the very “tent of meeting” (Ex 33:7-9) that Moses would spend hours getting electrified in; it is the “tabernacle of David”(Ps 27:5) where that troubled soul would pour out his heart and find such revelation and power; it is the “secret place of the Most High” (Ps 91:1), the “inner closet” (Mt 6:6) the “fortress and high tower” (Ps 18:1ff) that is always spoken of in God’s passionate pictures to us of His heart’s desire for a “dwelling-place” (Ps 132:3-13) among men, and “our dwelling place” with Him (Ps 90:1), that will only in Eternity be fully consummated (Rev 21:1-3).

Issac Penington, an early Quaker preacher, wrote, “keep yourself where you have felt the Lord visit you that he may visit you again and again – every day – teaching you more and more the way to his dwelling place, drawing you near to the place where there is righteousness, life, rest, and peace – forever! ... O dwell in your habitation and feed on the food which God brings into this dwelling place. It is pure and alive, and it will cause your souls and spirits more and more to live in and to God as you eat and drink thereof.”

This house is not far off or up a steep hill to climb that takes so much effort. It is near you at every moment! Why do we so neglect this sacred place of fellowship with the Almighty? It is a breath away at any moment of the day!

The Celtic Christians of St Bernard's day mandated that each believer have a literal secret place in a natural setting in which to find daily communion with God. I believe this is one of the main reasons that their movement had such a transformative effect on a nation – normal followers of Jesus learned to spend time with God!

Let's discover this place at all costs! Define it, experience it, beautify it, decorate it, invest in it. Let us allow our imagination to guide us to making this "place" a significant, daily reality for us. Close your eyes and imagine the "door" that Christ is knocking on; the cottage or palace or bedroom that you are waiting in; the furniture and stillness and sound of His Voice calling to open. Allow your spiritual and intuitive vision to picture you welcoming, and interacting with your Visitor / Master. What messages are you getting? Without breaking your focus on the moment, write out what you hear and see. Allow Him to flow thru your pen and your vision in His Message to you. Allow the Truth to shape your heart in pliant conformity. Experience what cannot be recorded in words. This is the Place Christ has gone to prepare for you, that where He is, you may be also. Now, once you have made your abode here for a time, determine you will come again often.

The Voice

As a missionary, I sometimes return to my hometown for an short visit. One such time I was blessed with a motorhome in which to live, all equipped with my necessities, including a coffee grinder, two bags of name brand coffee beans and a French Press. I was elated! Looking forward to my first cup of superb coffee for a long time, I anticipated that first grinding of the fresh beans and the wafting aroma! But the first morning, upon grinding, I was disappointed that there was no welcoming aroma. And when I pressed the coffee I was disheartened with an absence of powerful flavor. I thought I must have mixed too few grounds. So the next morning I made the needed adjustments, but with the same disappointing result. I am a very frugal person, so I continued to imagine I was doing something wrong, and each day would modify my approach slightly. This procedure went on for a full week with similar results. Soon a month had gone by with no improvement. Finally one morning the thought crossed my mind, "I wonder if these are **lentils!**" - upon which I immediately threw the beans out and went to the store to replace them with good smelling beans.

The question troubles me: have we settled in with lintels for our devotional life for so long that we don't remember that an amazing flavor is there to be had?

Jn 15:7> “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you...” Here is a slight twist in the pattern – a fruitful life requires not only *Jesus* to abide in us, but *His Words*. We sense that in that Heavenly Mind there is no difference. The Light cannot be present without His Words impregnating. Look again at Rev 3:20 “...If any man hears my Voice and opens the door...” Hearing His Voice is the crucial element of entry.

Have we lost the Living Voice? Can we normal Christians honestly say that His Words abide in us? Can we confirm experientially Jesus’ words, “My sheep hear (present tense – continuing action – ‘are hearing’) My Voice”? Have we substituted knowledge of the scriptures for the vitality of the Living Oracles of God to our great loss? Watchman Nee was once asked why his teaching was superior to so many others of his day, to which he replied, “Most teach out of their knowledge of the scriptures. I teach only what has been opened to me by the Spirit out of the scriptures.”

This Voice is the birthright of God’s children that we must zealously guard, lest it slip thru our fingers!

Jesus’ life was, if anything, a demonstration of this one salient fact – that He constantly heard the Voice of His Father, and lived in it. Comfort, direction, instruction, his very life’s bread was found there. And it was his last impassioned message to his followers as he was nearing his exit – that they too would have a guiding, comforting, instructing and convicting Voice within them at all times, resulting in a life so intertwined that it would be impossible to distinguish or separate one from the other – “... so that they may all be one. Just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me.” (17:21)

Listening for the Voice begins with an attitude of the soul. Like Elijah in the cave, God’s Words cannot be hurried or manipulated. He speaks in His way and His time. Stillness and rest are the incense that fills the Holy Place within. Drawing whispers of affection quicken the heart and deepen the breathing. A hushed expectancy pervades. Christ is slumbering in the boat, ready to be awakened. The glory of the Shekinah silences our cluttering words and fills us with a deep knowing that may not even take shape into words for sometime in the future, but God has impregnated us with His Word. At times it may be just a word or a concern – but the gradual uncovering of the depth of that word may alter our histories.

Mary Geegh, in her delightful little booklet God Guides, tells of her introduction to missionary effectiveness: “When I went to India and started to work in a village, I ... preached to the people; I prayed for them, but I did all the talking... Nothing seemed to happen.” Then one day another missionary came and he simply announced to the people that if any had a need they could meet him in the Prayer Hall. One notorious sinner came and poured out his troubles. The man said, “Let us be still – and wait on the Lord. He has the answer for every problem.” They sat together in silence. Some clear convictions came to the man, he began to repent, and soon he surrendered his life to Christ, obeying Him, waiting and listening and obeying. “Then the people said to me, ‘See, you have worked so hard here for over a year, but none of us has changed. This man came here one week and all of us have changed. He taught us how to have the power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.’” His secret? “The first step is to wait – be still and listen. Then be definite about your

sins – daily; work with a notebook and write down the things the Holy Spirit speaks to your mind; determine to obey.” The rest of her book is just story after story of doing this and finding God speaking and adjusting and leading her on ridiculous journeys of simple obedience that turn out to be tremendous testimonies of God’s power.

Is 50: 4 “The Sovereign Lord has given me a well- instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.” Oh to have a “well instructed tongue”! This is not the result of years of instruction, like getting a PHD in how to speak well. Rather it happens “morning by morning” as He “wakens my ear to listen”. One can be steeped in the teaching and training of the Christian life, yet not have the aroma of the good brew that happens by sitting before the Teacher in the morning and being instructed.

How many times do we cast off into some venture, consulting only our reason, our bank account, our schedule and our wife? These are flimsy and unworthy directors for life. And we mistakenly rest our psychological well-being on the encouragement and approval of human beings rather than our Creator and Lover, when only one Word from His lips may align our twisted soul. We cast our burdens hither and yon; we easily live in slum dwellings of daily living experiences; we wish for, but rarely enjoy, miraculous interventions, holy secrets, or visions of our tomorrow. Why is this, when the strong aroma of the Kingdom is ready at hand?

Let’s bow our hearts in this Secret Place and know that He is present. Know that His Words are Life. One Word may direct your week or year. One phrase may adjust your destiny. One sentence may heal your life-long dis-ease of heart. Wait in quiet anticipation for His movement upon the waters of your soul. Breath deeply of His salient joy and freedom. Feel the pressures of the day fall away from your shoulders and your posture is lightened with the ease of His yoke. The King, your lover, is coming! You hear with greater clarity the sounds around you, but as if in another dimension of reality – they do not touch you or disturb your tranquility. And then the Voice comes and you soften down into it’s truth. ”Pray for my people.” Or “Forgive that one.” And Knowing deeply has in a moment opened our life to a more profound answer – to a question you perhaps did not even know was crying out. But now all is clear and the Voice does not leave, but lingers and abides. And the world has changed.

Steps to listening and hearing

When our children were young they went to King’s Kids meetings where they would all sing and worship together, then after instruction they would sit on the floor and “listen to God”: a verse, a word or phrase, a picture... Then after several minutes each one would tell what he or she had heard and it would be written on the board. When they would review the collection of Words they had heard, they would decode a unified message of what to do –

“Go find a person driving a red convertible who needs healing in her leg.” And often enough this resulted in a wonderful ministry experience as they went out to find that person! Other times it would be a message of encouragement or direction for one of them in the room.

Our children learned early that it is natural to hear the Spirit. I wish I had such an early introduction. Many Christians, like me, brought up as Western materialists, would be benefited by concrete lessons in listening to spirit, to intuition, to heart, to God. We have learned from childhood to disregard these things. It was said that a mother once witnessed her 4 year old, peering into the crib of his baby brother, saying, “Tell me little brother what God looks like. I can hardly remember.”

Our first step is to be convinced that God’s intention for every believer is just what Jesus said in such a simple and profound way, “My sheep hear my Voice.” The Biblical believer should expect to experience God in the same way Jesus did – He was our model in the spiritual life. He was able to, and *we* should be able to: hear God (Jn 10:27), to see him (Jn 5:19; 14:21), to have dreams (A 16:9) and visions (Lk 1:22; 24:23; A 9:4,10; 10:11) and prophetic words (Lk 1:67). We should be taught deep truths by the Spirit (Jn 16:13) - so profoundly that it can be said that we have no need of any other to teach us (1 Jn 2:27). We can and should be led by the Spirit in mundane matters (Ro 8:14f; A 16:6-10) and empowered by the Spirit (A 1:8), resulting in extraordinary behaviors (A 2:4) or great boldness (A 4:8,31), inspired speech (Mt 10:19) or miraculous powers (A 13:9). We can confidently know things (1 Co 2:9-16) – even deep things of God. We can look into hearts with discernment (A 13:9f; Mk 2:6-8) and see future events (Jn 16:13). We can be filled with such a powerful experiencing of the fellowship with Life, knowing Jesus Himself is right with us (A 23:11), strengthening and comforting (2 Co 12:8f), or filling with such joy that it overwhelms our soul as if drunk in love (A 2:4,6,12; 4:31; 19:6; 10:44-46). This is the Biblical Christian inheritance.

If we are not acquainted with these spiritual experiences we are living a sub-standard Christian life. Thomas Kelly, a Quaker who finds little company with either Catholic or Protestant streams, complains that though Catholics have treasured such a mystical union, they have quenched it under a weight of ecclesiastical authority. And though the Protestants started out well under Luther, they have grown increasingly rationalistic and leave little room for direct inspiration because of a closely guarded regard for scripture being the only Source of our spiritual insight. Without the Voice of God we cannot rightly digest the Word of God. *This* is our daily Bread. It is not emotionalism or lunacy – it is Biblical normalcy.

The second step is to expect by faith that I can and shall indeed hear God. Faith is required to listen well. Then a greater level of faith to trust that those things that enter our minds could actually be from God and worthy of obedience! We must learn to discern, but first we must learn to believe.

Jesus spoke to the heart condition of people who just could not trust that His words were true: “*If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God...*” (Jn 7:17). Do you really, above all else, desire to *do* God’s will? Then it will be easy

for you to believe that what comes to you is from God. A friend once gave me this nugget that I always hold onto: “I don’t so much trust in my ability to hear; but I trust in His ability to get thru to me what He wants.”

The third step is to sit quietly and listen for thoughts God may give to you, and write them down.

Mary Geegh, in the second post in her little book (I mentioned earlier her first post), tells of her first trail run of listening to God. She was determined to practice what she learned from her friend. So when a lady came to her for counsel, pouring out her burdens concerning a son’s crime, Mary directed her to sit and listen for God to give her a thought. She writes, “We sat and listened for 15 minutes. The thought came to me to ask her if she had ever told a lie. ‘Has any thought come to you?’ I asked. She said no. Then I told her I had the thought to ask her if she had ever told a lie.” The lady was terribly insulted and left the room. Mary was stricken, but trusting that God would turn it to good – whether she had heard right or wrong. Thirty minutes later the lady came back and told Mary that her whole life was one lie after another. She repented; confessed to her son that his problems were actually her own fault; the son confessed his criminal behavior to the authorities; eventually he was pardoned and the mother and son rebuilt their broken relationship on the ground of truth!

Mark Virkler, in his Communion with God course, gives a very practical method of journaling God’s words. One is taught to allow God’s Words to flow thru his pen – auto journaling the words just as they are entering the mind, without the restraints of reason slowing one down. The result is often a striking message of God’s heart for us. This simple method allows us to bypass those bulwarks of inner defense, and tap into the subterranean Light of Truth.

And in a similar way, one is taught in this course to unleash spiritual Vision that we so often disregard as mundane. As we close our eyes, while focusing our soul towards the Light, we will occasionally see glimpses of Vision that can carry a transformative Seed. The glance at a spiritual reality may last a nanosecond, but the message of that implanted Seed may take hours or weeks to unpack, and may grow into a vocation – IF there is faith to examine that stone to find the diamond inside. How many diamonds that could have made us rich have we stepped over carelessly?

The aroma of one brief opening of the veil into Heavenly treasures will linger for many days. As these moments of truly eating of “the table set before us, in the presence of our enemies” impact our mortal life, piling up one upon the previous, we begin to know a lifted life of joy and overcoming.

Now we are ready. Let's find our secret place, with notepad or journal ready, sitting in a straight upright position to allow maximum circulation to the brain and a comfortable position to remain for some time.

We break off any thoughts from self and the enemy and declare this place and this moment free from the enemy's distractions. We trust that in this place and time the thoughts that enter our mind will be guided and sifted by the Light.

Now sit in silence, in adoration, in hungry anticipation of God's manifest presence. There is a time for pouring out our hearts and requests to God. There is a time for repentance and brokenness. There is a time for thanksgiving and praise. Then there is a time for listening and waiting for Him, looking and searching for Him.

Allow your vision to see His face as He looks at you. Open the eyes of your heart, long blindfolded by rationalism. See Him walking with you. Perhaps a picture will suddenly appear in your mind's eye that is laden with a trove of messages for you, though visible for only a second.

Open the ears of your spirit, long muffled by reason. Listen and wait for His voice. Perhaps words will come to your mind, or a single word, but you will know that behind it is a library of truth. Now begin to write the thoughts as they tumble out over your pen. Be a conduit of God's message as He uses your mind to form sentences you are writing – not originating or filtered on earth. You are now sitting in heavenly places with Christ, hearing His Voice, knowing His Thoughts. Now sit in silence and allow your heart to soar in adoration with no words. Communion is happening, as real as the eating of the bread and wine.

Chapter 5.

REMAINING IN HIM



There are two meanings of the word “abide”. One is to *dwell* – to have a certain address as your “abode”. The second meaning is to *remain* – to continue in that place for a period of time. One carries the sense of location; the other of duration. One speaks of inviting Jesus in; the other speaks of keeping Him there.

Both of these meanings are intended in Jesus’ command to his disciples. It can be translated, “Dwell in me, and I will dwell in you.” Or, it could be stated, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you.” We have looked at the process of inviting Jesus to come and dwell within. Now let’s look at how we can live in such a way that He remains.

Turning Our Thoughts

Is it possible to live with our level passion at a constant plane? I think not. This kind of hungry, all consuming love (for Jesus or a spouse) will inevitably be weighted down with the gravity of earthly living. Love has not diminished; but passion – that inner, compelling reflex – has. Love is an act of commitment. Passion it’s helper. Both must be stirred up, nurtured, and strengthened with intentional commitments.

In Frank Laubach’s journal entry of Jan 20, 1930 he writes, *“Two years ago a profound dissatisfaction led me to begin trying to line up my actions with the will of God about every fifteen minutes or every half hour... But this year I have started out trying to live all my waking moments in conscious listening to the inner voice, asking without ceasing, “What, Father, do you desire said? What, Father, do you desire done this minute?”*

In March of that year, again he writes, *“I compel my mind to open out toward God. I wait and listen with determined sensitiveness. I fix my attention there, and sometimes it requires a long time early in the morning to attain that mental state. I determine not to*

get out of bed until that mind set, that concentration upon God, is settled. It also requires determination to keep it there. After a while, perhaps, it will become a habit, and the sense of effort will grow less. But why do I harp on this inner experience? Because I feel convinced that for me and for you who read there lie ahead undiscovered continents of spiritual living compared with which we are infants in arms."

And again, "We can keep two things in mind at once. Indeed we cannot keep one thing in mind more than half a second. Mind is a flowing something. It oscillates. Concentration is merely the continuous return to the same problem from a million angles. So my problem is this: Can I bring God back in my mind-flow every few seconds so that God shall always be in my mind as an after image, shall always be one of the elements in every concept and precept? I choose to make the rest of my life an experiment in answering this question."

Is there any pursuit in life more important than practicing the Presence of God thru the day? Any pursuit more challenging to our self-centeredness? Or with more potential to elevate us into godliness and abundant living? Every advance I take in this pursuit fills my life with inexpressible treasure.

On the other hand, is there any excuse adequate to disqualify any from this pursuit? You are too busy? Are you kidding?! Are your daily affairs so critically important that you do not have room to continually seek God's face? Serious?!

Recently I was at an extended retreat in the Oregon Mountains where there was limited reception. At the same time my daughter was overdue to give birth to her second fabulous child, so I was on standby, awaiting the call. So three times a day I would walk up and down the gravel roads searching for the signal. There are three status indicators on my phone: No Signal, Searching, and Connected (with various levels of connection). As I would walk up and down the roads I would feel a panic and frustration when it would signify, "No Signal". At least "Searching" means it is not resigned to it's solitude – it's at least trying! "No Signal" has just given up. The opportunity might be there, but it's not even receptive to it. What if I am walking right thru a spot of signal and it's just resigned?! And how many times do we walk thru the day with "No Signal" on our spiritual antennae? Much rather to be "Searching" – or better yet – "Connected".

More than 50 times scripture calls us to be searching after Connection with God. "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near..." (Is 55:6).

Jesus lived such a life of continual communion. Paul bragged that he prayed in the Spirit more than any other, and challenged his disciples to "pray without ceasing". John Woolman's Diary reveals a modest appraisal of his fellowship with God in every detail of life. And who can forget – Reptevia, from the movie Fiddler on the Roof – how he rolled his eyes upward to include Heaven in every thought and conversation.

Thomas Kelly writes, *"This practice of continuous prayer in the presence of God involves developing the habit of carrying on the mental life at two levels. At one level we are*

immersed in this world of time, of daily affairs. At the same time, but at a deeper level of our minds, we are in active relation with the Eternal Life."

I find that often God gives me a song percolating within when I first wake, bearing a special message from Father for me, which, if I nurture it along, can carry me the whole day. I also find that a Word or phrase from scripture is used by God to awaken me to heavenly realities, that, with determination, may feed me throughout the day. At times, if my day is very active or public, I will set my phone with a timer to give a chime every 20 minutes thru the day to remind me of my upward orientation. One may make a mental alarm in so many ways – every time you walk, Connect; every time you hear a phone ring, listen; every time you touch your head, bow your heart...

Let's start today. Determine right now to keep Connected all day – alternating frequently between your outward life and inward. You must start with engaging your heart in love. Touch Him with your worship and adoration. Be filled with His goodness and overflow in song. This will engage your heart to love, which will be a great advantage in keeping you closely connected with God. Now walk thru the day and regularly bring your compass back to True North. As you are talking with others, include Him silently. As you drive the car, sink down into silence and communion. When you loose your temper or give into the flesh, quickly look in the face of your Companion for correction and strength. Every moment you are remaining in Him and He in you will be a strengthening of your spirit man. Pray in your spirit in ways your mind does not fathom. Groan in your spirit over the broken world. Allow the Spirit of God to just now use your faculty to pray through. Allow your mind to be used to meditate on heavenly things today.

Chapter 6

Abiding in Jesus.



AT ONE OF OUR ANNUAL FAMILY retreat talent shows I wanted to perform the song, “If I were a Rich Man” from the movie “Fiddler on the Roof” - but I didn’t know the words. So I downloaded the song onto my phone, and with one inconspicuous ear-bud in my ear, and my phone concealed in my pocket, I marvelously sang the song – simply singing along with the hidden artist. The family heard only the vocals, while I was hearing full orchestral background. Of course I had to include all the dance and gestures as I could see in my memory of Reptevia dreaming of a better life. As I navigated thru the song, the family was spellbound at my abilities!

When Jesus performed his breath-taking feats before his enemies and admirers, he claimed he was also only lip-syncing. Jn 5:19 *“I tell you the solemn truth, the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.”* And again in Jn 8:27, *“I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak just what the Father taught me”*

Nothing on his own initiative – all of his speeches, his healings, his movements around the country, the way he interacted with certain people - all were just following cues from the Spirit within him. This is what it means to “walk in the Spirit” – to walk connected to the Spirit’s direction and power and grace – to have the ear-bud secretly giving “real-time” heavenly inputs.

Jn 15:4-9 BBE “Be in me at all times as I am in you. As the branch is not able to give fruit of itself, if it is not still on the vine, so you are not able to do so if you are not in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: he who is in me at all times as I am in him, gives much fruit, because without me you are able to do nothing. If a man does not keep himself in me, he becomes dead and is cut off like a dry branch; such branches are taken up and put in the fire and burned. If you are in me at all times, and my words are in you, then anything for which you make a request will be done for you. Here is my Father's glory, in that you give much fruit and so are my true disciples. Even as the Father has given me his love, so I have given my love to you: be ever in my love.”

When we invite Christ to abide in us, we are the passive receptors, and He the active one – moving around our attitudes and priorities and motivations in life. For us to abide in Him, our role is reversed. We take on an active role – following hard after an ever-moving Master. Allowing Jesus to inhabit us is done as we sit before the early morning fire, with our feet up and head bowed. But putting our habitation in Him is done during the day as we see what He is doing and participate in it.

Either side of this coin is powerful in itself. But combine the two, and you have dynamite! Jesus being fully welcomed to come into me and change all my furniture around: then, in broad daylight, allowing Him to use my body for His glory. *This*, my friends, is where we bring forth “*much fruit*”.

One of the most hilarious scenes of the movie *Men in Black* is when the alien gets inside the skin of the white trash farmer and with jerky movements and distorted speech, works out his agenda of conquering the world thru the farmer.

Jesus claimed that the works he did, that seemed so full of creative genius, were simply copying what he saw his Father doing. It's not he, but his Father, who was the genius! And his words were simply lip-syncing.

Let's put in our spiritual ear-buds now. Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, we want to listen and obey today. Show us today where to go, who to talk to, what to say, how to pray. Lord of my daily routine, adjust my plans according to yours. We want to walk in you, act in you, speak in you, love in you today. As we go thru the day, Father, we will be watching for your action before us, and we will walk into that action and allow you to use us there. As we see the eyes of that hurting person in the grocery store, use us to intercede or speak a message; as we see the weariness of our spouse, use us to bring your encouragement; as we see the dysfunction of this world, intercede thru us and begin to move a mountain.

Walking in the Spirit

This life of walking in direction and inspiration from an inner sanctuary is what produces the power of God in our daily lives and results in “much fruit”! Look at the interchange in Luke 5: As Jesus was preaching to the eager, pushing crowds, he saw with God's eye one man, standing behind him on the shore – Simon the fisherman – disinterested, cleaning his nets after a long night's work, wanting only to go home to bed. Jesus saw that the Father was putting His Finger on this man's life, and, regardless the man's outward appearance, Jesus followed Father to turn from his preaching to do a miracle for the man and bag a disciple! Continuing preaching would have been fruitful. But Abiding in his Father resulted in “much fruit”.

One day as I was walking thru our Zambian villages I was impressed to spend some time talking to a young man named Edward. We sat together and shared our “faith stories”. He

knew about Jesus from childhood, but never knew of a personal relationship with him. I invited him to surrender his life to Jesus and within a week he was wonderfully born again. He went and found his friend Parity, and soon the two of them were going up and down the villages telling people about relationship with God. Soon Ignatius, who was on death's door, was healed and radically changed. Now Edward and Parity are pastoring one church and Ignatius is pastoring another.

One small act of being directed by an impression of the Spirit resulted in a tremendous breakthrough in reaching an unreached people group. Edward was a "person of peace" that unlocked a whole village. No wonder Jesus' directions to his disciples (Lk 10) as he sent them out to villages to find those persons of peace, was first to pray – to ask the Father for workers for the harvest. He was not envisioning some seasoned missionaries coming from the outside; but they were to pray that Father would lead them to those specific people who may become the influential workers to open up villages for the gospel.

Let us begin today, in whatever occupation we are engaged in, to expect God to guide us into fruitful opportunities, and to work thru us in powerful ways. We will be His hands and feet today. We will speak with his power. We will love with his compassion and fire. We will go where we had not planned. We will do the small thing we know to do, trusting by simply obeying the little we know, that He will do the rest. Let's determine right now, in this quite moment, to be a vessel. To "remain in Him", listening and responding quickly to all directions.

Radical obedience

As we sat in that meeting, listening to the African preacher tell story after story of the war in Liberia and the children cast aside in the heap, our hearts just broke. I looked over at my wife weeping, and she looked at me in the same state and our hands met in the middle as we held on for dear life. Our tears were not only for the orphans. Unconsciously we were grieving for our carefree life that could never be the same. A cross had been laid on our shoulders. At that moment, long before the rational wrangling with all the ramifications, we were casting off a mooring that was safe and predictable. A life with an income, a home and a position. A family to care for. A Church of likeminded friends to share life with. In that moment, with our hearts broken in love for Jesus and His broken world, we died. "All thy waves and they billows are gone over me" (Ps 42:7).

Jn 12:24-26 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me.."

To follow is to trust. Jesus, in his passionate commitment to grow us up into His likeness, will inevitably ask us to do things that will to us seem very difficult. Even as he asked the rich young ruler to do the one thing that was critical for freedom from self-rule, so He is no different with us. Many people sidestep His searing inspections or instructions and remain in a shallow relationship. Only the Day will reveal their true status. But for those who will be ruled by Him, we must go thru obedience.

Jn 15:9-10 "Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

Jesus lived a life keeping his Father's "commands" – not just the moral law of scripture, but the "real-time" directions. He was a man under authority. He was ever obedient. Even when asked to pay the ultimate cost – loose his life, his ministry, his ability to influence the world with his Life giving message – he asked for another way, but surrendered to his Father's choice.

Sometimes obedience is scary. Mary Geegh writes that one day she got word that a child in the village had died and she was asked to come and pray with the family. So she went and, as was her custom, asked to have a "quiet time of listening prayer" with the family so that they might receive direct comfort and guidance from the Great Comforter Himself. As they were quiet, a thought came to Mary, "Get some Antiphlogistine (a clay used for pneumonia) and cotton." She quickly sent one of the boys for it and explained to the parents that the Lord sees there is yet a spark of life in the child. So they took the little one out of the coffin, took him into the kitchen, and after warming the clay, wrapped the body and the clay with long strips of cotton cloth. Then they waited. Can you imagine the wait! 5 hours they waited. Finally the child opened his eyes! That child grew to be a godly man.

To live in obedience we need to cast down our worship at the feet of reason, sensibility, and our bank account. Those three schoolgirls, who were meant to be our servants, have too often become our gods. While it is prudent to consult them, we will find as we venture this walk of obedience, that we cannot hold their opinion above that of our inner leading.

While in her quiet time, a thought came to Mary Geegh that she should give a single egg to her neighbor! How strange. Too strange to trust, so she put it off – until a chicken came in to her house and laid an egg on her table! She could ignore it no longer – so she took that egg. That single incident was the catalyst that cemented her relationship with that neighbor for years to come.

In Norman Grubb's classic book, *Intercessor*, about the life of Rees Howells, he tells of the time Norman was walking with some friends when the Spirit told him to go knock on the door of a house. He argued with God for quite a while, but the sense of it just increased. So he turned around and, with a friend, went to the door. He was met at the door by a little girl who immediately let him in. There in the living room was a woman laying sick in bed, who, upon seeing him, raised her hands and let out a whoop of praise. She had been expecting him. For weeks now she knew she was dying and going to hell unless she could somehow find God. She had asked God to please send that Mr. Howells to show her the

way. An Anglican priest came, but she turned him away. Only this man would do. And our Amazing Father guided Rees right to the door!

My friend, do you want to live an amazingly fruitful life? Then give yourself to radical obedience. Imagine yourself as the rich young ruler with the invitation before you to sell all and follow. Sink down into that thought and weigh it out. What if you could re-write the story. What if you could say yes, and begin a journey of living fully dependent on the provision of God while sitting around the campfire every night with that amazing man Jesus? What if all the affairs of life that seemed so important before became small and insignificant in comparison to living the Now to the fullest? Now with that picture in mind, cast off your line and allow yourself to drift into the current that you cannot control, that is dependent only on God. Tell him now you are willing to obey whatever the cost.

Chapter 7

Fruit that Remains!



“You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and appointed you, that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that remains.” ~ Jesus

“There are plenty to follow our Lord half-way, but not the other half. They will give up possessions, friends, and honors, but it touches them too closely to disown themselves.” ~ Meister Eckhart

A person does not choose to become a CIA operative. He is chosen. Recruiters are scanning the horizon for the brightest and best at everything, with a certain profile that would dispose them to adventure and allegiance to higher principles. An interview and long induction process follows where he is tested and prodded in extreme situations. When his orientation is complete he must make a serious choice– “am I all in, or not?” That means all family ties become secondary to allegiance to this calling. All personal goals and ambitions are set to the side. All personal security is handed over. Money means nothing. Desire for recognition or acclaim must die. Complete subjugation of my own will to the will of my superior, must be a settled fact.

We have seen the steps of ascension in the life of intimacy and fruitfulness. 1. *“Every branch”* in Jesus bears some fruit – it may be small and sickly, but if there is Life, there will be some fruit. 2. The Master lovingly *“prunes”* and disciplines his branch and draws him closer to his side. Sure enough, “more fruit” springs up. 3. Jesus opens the heart of the disciple to a deeper life of prayer and intimacy – the door is opened for Jesus to *“abide”* and *“remain”* in his inner house – adjusting attitudes and filling the vessel with overflowing Abundance of Life. 4. The disciple is trained by the Spirit how to *“abide in (Jesus)”* – taking the continuing interactions with Jesus into his world, walking in continual cooperation with the ever active Spirit of Christ, redeeming the world to Himself. 5. And finally we are shown how the man or woman is set apart for a life of service and the anointing on that life results in fruit that remains for generations!

This is person who is “*chosen... appointed, that (he) might go...*”. We call this consecration for a life of service.

Many believers have the idea that there are a certain few special people who are called to be “ministers” – like pastors and missionaries – who we call “reverend” or “pastor” or “priest”. This notion does not come from the New Testament however. In the NT Church there are only gift bearing believers – each with a unique calling. All are priests; all are ministers. Some are pastors, some are apostles, some are helps or administrations or teachers. But those who led the church were expected to equip every believer to do the ministry – not to do the ministry himself. It’s not that there were no priests. All were priests. There was just no laity.

Being “chosen” and “appointed” to “go” is not only for a few apostolic individuals. It is the mantle of every believer – each in his or her own unique way.

Let’s say it out loud to ourselves, “I have been appointed and chosen to go.” Have we heard the call? Have we been listening? Could it be that the things that we hold in our hearts as concerns – for the poor, for the HIV orphan, for the trafficked women of the world, for the welfare of the third graders in Sunday School, for the pastors wives of the community – whatever that special concern you have – is it possible that that concern is actually the Voice and Calling of God? Let’s take a few minutes right now and listen to our hearts and the Heart of God within us. Lord, will you bring into the Light the callings you have for my life? I am set apart for you Jesus. Willing to spend and be spent. I want to bear fruit for you – fruit that will last for generations. Show me what you are calling me to for this season of my life.

A Calling

Quakers call it a “concern” – when they sense a leading from God to give themselves to a certain task outside their normal circle of influence. The community takes these very seriously and does not discourage the person based on the danger or expense or impossibility of the vision – only if God speaks a word of caution to another person’s spirit. The called one may be a youth or elderly, may be encumbered with many children or a dedicated profession – but none of these will sway the finding. If God gives a concern then He will also enable a person, though it cost him all he has, and even his very life, God will be enough.

I will include a lengthy passage from the Journal of John Wolman, a 18th century Quaker, that is instructive of the discernment process for such a leading:

“At Philadelphia in the 8th month, 1761, on a visit to some Friends, I fell in company with some of those natives who lived on the east branch of the river Susquehanna at an Indian town called Wyalusing, about two hundred miles from Philadelphia.... At times I felt

inward drawings towards a visit to that place, of which I told none except my dear wife until it came to some ripeness.

And then in the winter 1762 I laid it before Friends at our Monthly and Quarterly, and then at our General Spring Meeting, and having the unity of Friends and being thoughtful about an Indian pilot, there came a man and three women from a little beyond that town, to Philadelphia on business; and I met with them in town. Now after some conversation I, by the concurrence of Friends in that place, agreed to join them as companions in their return. Now as this visit felt weighty and was performed at a time when travelling appeared perilous, so the dispensations of divine Providence in preparing my mind for it have been memorable, and I believe it good for me to give some hints thereof.

After I had given up to go, the thoughts of the journey were often attended with an unusual sadness, in which times my heart was frequently turned to the Lord with inward breathings for his heavenly support, that I might not fail to follow him wheresoever he might lead me. Thus I parted from my Friends, expecting to set off the next morning.

That night, after I had been asleep a short time, I was awakened by a man calling at my door. These Friends informed me that an express arrived and brought news that the Indians had taken a fort from the English and slain and scalped English people in divers places, some near the place I was planning to go. So I, going again to bed, told not my wife till morning. My heart was turned to the Lord for his heavenly instruction, and it was a humbling time to me.

When I told my dear wife she appeared to be deeply concerned about it, but in a few hours time my mind became settled in a belief that it was my duty to proceed on my journey, and she bore it with a good degree of resignation. In this conflict of spirit there were great searchings of heart and strong cries to the Lord that no motion might be in the least degree attended to but that of the pure Spirit of Truth.

So I took leave of my family and neighbors in much bowedness of spirit..."

Let's learn lessons from this example of radical obedience:

1. His first "inward drawings" were noted in his mind, told to his wife, and put on a shelf for further reflection. Only more than a year later did he even mention them further. As a man of many ideas – *good* ideas I might add – it impresses me that it is important to not publish too quickly the latest apparition that wafts thru the atmosphere. But on the other hand, it is equally important to mull on them long and hard, even if it is possibly dangerous or costly.
2. He *did* tell his wife! Good man. This is Marriage 101, lesson #1.
3. More than a year later he told his church – not just one meeting, but three ascending levels of authority and accountability. He processed the impression with them and they discerned with him, giving him approval.
4. It was another 6 months before he met up with some people who seemed to be that "open door" – they could pilot him through the wild. So he determined this was the outward confirmation needed.
5. How sensitive he was to the feelings that reflect the inner proceedings of spirit – "felt weighty", "attended with unusual sadness", "conflict of spirit", "searching of the heart and strong cries to the Lord..." When our spirit is grappling with God's Voice we must carefully sense what emotions arise from our human fears, and which are messages from God. How insensitive we fast paced and high powered people are to

the subtle leadings and promptings and sighs of our spirit man. We would do well to take time to tune in.

6. His utmost pledge was “*that no motion might be in the least degree attended to but that of the pure Spirit of Truth.*” He didn’t want to listen to his fears, his ambitions or desires, his worries of what others would think if he backed out. He wanted only to know what God’s will was for him. He believed that if he could get his heart settled down under this pure pledge, then and only then could the flesh be separated from the spirit, and his way would be made clear what he should do. He centered into God until it came clear.
7. He obeyed.

Lord, today we want to do your will and hear your voice. Open our ears and our hearts to obey no matter the word. Break fear from us. Break the fear of man – what others will think. Break the fear of loss our own self – our loss of health or wealth or reputation or position. Allow our hearts to be single – one eye, focused on one thing alone – that of doing with full measure, your will. Allow us to hear clearly that Word, that Sword of the Spirit that divides between the soul and the spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

That they may be completely One

One of our young African disciples was just growing in the Lord and learning to spread his wings. We had not taught him much about spiritual things, but God was teaching him. One day he came and asked to take a few days off work because he said God had told him to go see his family in a remote village. So off he went. On the way God began to impress on him that something big was going to happen when he got there so he should prepare himself by much prayer. So all the way he prayed. After 2 days on the bus and another day of walking he arrived. Sure enough, when he arrived the whole family came out to greet him, and his sister was gravely ill. He told her to sit down and he was going to pray for her. He put his hands on her and began to pray fervently. He said that after a while he realized he was praying in a language he did not know, and did not even realize he had been praying in this manner for some time. His family was dumbfounded. And his sister – totally healed!

I love the power of the message of the Resurrected Savior – the Great Commission – found in each of the gospels as well as Acts. “I conquered sin and death; I have shed my sacrificial blood that all the world might be saved. So GO into all the world and bring them this Life!”

But before the Great Commission, comes the Great Ignition. Before you go to Light the world, you must be lit yourself! The power of the indwelling Spirit is the power of your witness. Don’t try to do it in your own strength. “*Wait until you are clothed with Power from on high!*”

Jesus, in these last days and weeks before his departure is trying to give the Disciples a clear picture of what life will be like without him by their side. He will be in them. He will be with them at every turn. He will make them fruitful. He will speak to them and teach them and show them himself and things to come. He will comfort them and counsel them. And the final apex of Jesus' painting of this picture he gives the most unbelievable portrait – His Disciples will “be completely One” with God.

Jn 17:11 “Holy Father, keep them safe in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one... 21 that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me... 22 The glory you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be one just as we are one- I in them and you in me- that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me... 26 so that the love you have loved me with may be in them, and I may be in them.”

When I stick a piece of chewing gum in my mouth and chew on it, it is *in me*. But when I eat a piece of steak, at first it is just *in my mouth*, and then *in my stomach*. But eventually it becomes *One with me*. We cannot be separated. Even a surgeon could not dig into me and extract the steak. It is part of me, and I am part of it. We are ONE.

This is the incomprehensible mystery of the Life in the Spirit. Paul says, “*With Christ, have I been crucified; and, living no longer, am, I, but, living in me, is, Christ,-- while, so far as I now do live in flesh, by faith, I live..*” (Rotherham Gal 2:20) You and I are living no longer. We cannot be separated from Christ. He has been digested fully into us, and we have been digested into Him. It is His very person that motivates my fingers as I type these words. My body is simply a house for Him to work thru on this earth. And my spirit is with Him as well – where He sits with Father in Heavenly places, there I am! We can hear them talking together. We can feel the burden of their intention. When we grasp that salient fact it will radically adjust the way we live. Hudson Taylor called it the Exchanged Life.

Jesus said the same glory that marked His life and set him in a different class than any other human – that “glory” of Oneness with the Father – will now be the possession of every disciple. Glory means something that shines and sparkles – that is seen by others. Let your glory shine!

This, more than any other, is the thing that convinces people of the truth of Jesus' message. Several times in this last prayer of Jesus, he is looking out to the world and the mission of these few timid disciples to convince it and win it over to the Light. The thing that will convince the world is people who are living that extraordinary Exchanged Life every moment and in every reflex and comment and glance. A logical argument will not convince. But words birthed by the Spirit within will. Mighty miracles in themselves will not convince – but works done by the initiative of Jesus within will. Sacrificial living will not convince – but a person who does not even look at the cost of an action, but single-heartedly living in obedience to an inner impulsion from God, will powerfully convince.

This call to Oneness is not anything we can do something about. It is an established fact. “Everyone who has been fathered by God does not practice sin, because God’s seed resides in him, and thus he is not able to go on sinning, because he has been fathered by God.” (Jn 3:9). Our only course is to believe it and walk in it. If every morning as we rise we align our soul with the reality that we have been digested by God and we have him fully digested into us – that we no longer live, but Christ lives in and thru us – and then we go out into the world and Walk One – that is our story!