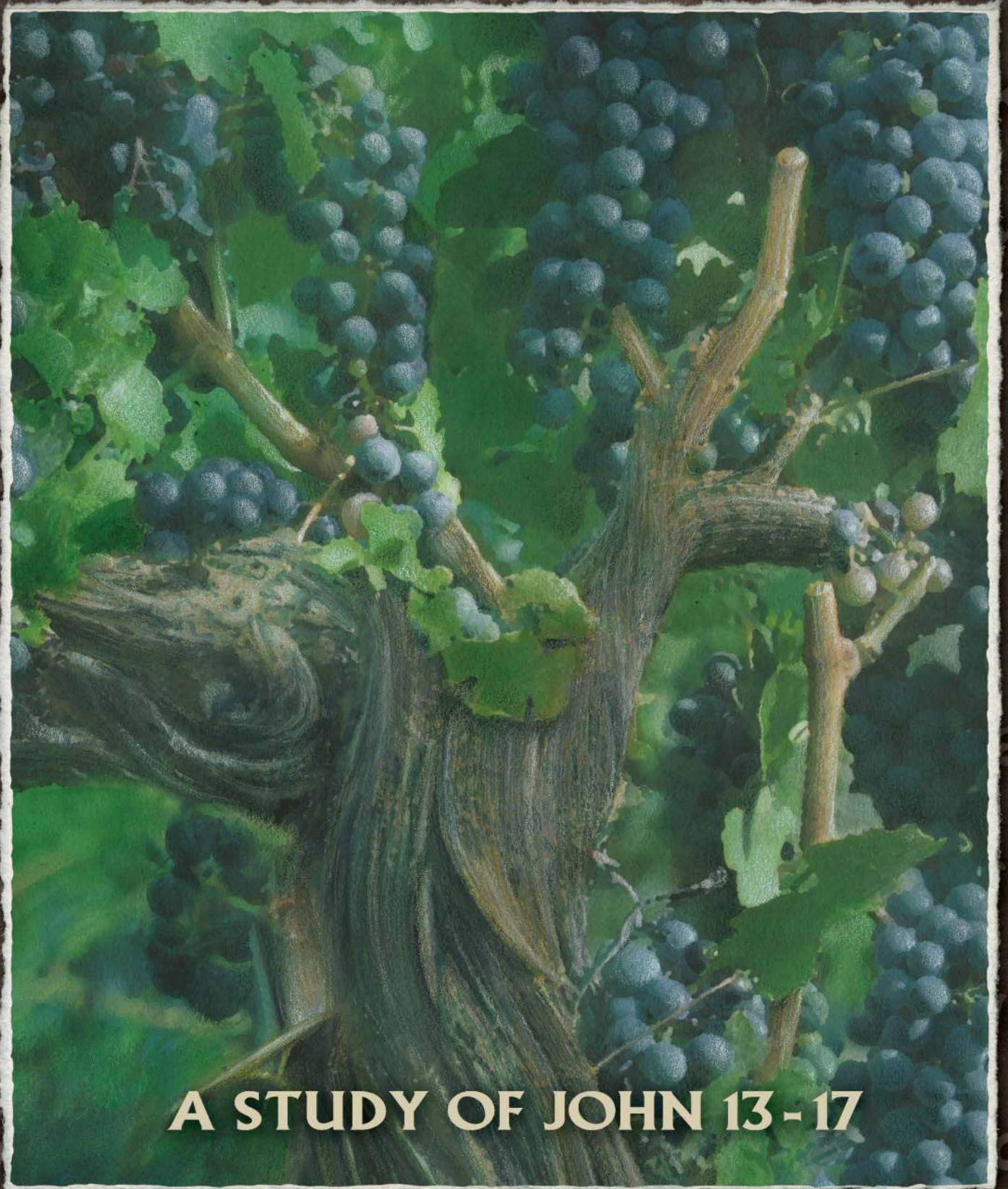


IN THE UPPER ROOM



A STUDY OF JOHN 13-17

WRITTEN BY TOM KELBY

In the Upper Room

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Original illustrations, layout and design by Mark Yaeger



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I dedicate this book to my daughter Emma. Your bright eyes, quick wit, and ready smile bring joy to my heart. "Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary ..." (Isaiah 40:30-31). Wait for the Lord, Emma. He is your strength. I love you.

- Dad

I dedicate this book to all the guys in the IFI program at Lino Lakes. You guys have been a blessing to me in countless ways. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28). Thanks for allowing God to work through you.

- MY

ABOUT THE COVER

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”
- John 15:1-2

The cover illustration for this study was created with the 15th chapter of the book of John as the inspiration. This is the first illustration for this study series that I’ve done for Tom that I thought needed little explanation. It’s a grapevine with some branches that have been pruned. There are also a great deal of grapes that are either ripe or are ripening. Simple enough, right? Well, not exactly. Illustrating this vine has made me examine the relationship between the Vinedresser and the branches more carefully. Let me try to explain my conundrum.

Jesus is the “Vine” and if you are not connected to the vine then you will not bear fruit. You will wither up and die and be thrown into the fire. I’ve understood for quite a while that it’s only through Christ that we are saved - without Him we are condemned to an eternity apart from God. I also understand that the branches need to be pruned, or cut back, to produce more fruit and that God is the “Pruner.” I like this illustration in theory and I know it to be true, but I’m not always a willing participant of it in practical applications. I’ve been pruned several times by my Father because fruit wasn’t being produced in me as well as it could be. This process can be painful and humbling - albeit necessary.

Here’s what’s a bit troubling: why are some branches pruned and prepped for more fruit bearing, while others, it seems, are lopped off and thrown into the fire? Based on this thinking, a branch (believer) can lose its connection to the vine (Jesus) and be cast aside. Is this implying that someone can lose their salvation? Or is it saying something else? I discovered an interesting fact in my research: the phrase “takes away” in Greek can also mean “to lift up” - *aero*. Maybe the branches that “he takes away” in John 15:2 are really being lifted up. A good gardener will lift (prop) up the bare branches toward the sun enabling them to start producing. Could this passage be saying that God “lifts us up?” Maybe he pulls unproductive branches closer to the “Son” to help us be more productive. I don’t know.

Here’s where I’ve landed on this matter: I trust that the Holy Spirit will teach me all that I need to know as I study the scriptures. We must stay connected to Jesus at all times, which means that we must stay in the word.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God - John 1:1

I also know that I must trust in God to do the good works in and through me.

... for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. - Philippians 2:13

It’s God’s fruit - I get the pleasure of watching it grow, ripen, and multiply.

My prayer, and belief, is that God will reveal wonderful truths to you as you participate in this study and that He will produce an abundance of fruit in your life. Thank you, “Vinedresser.”

MARK

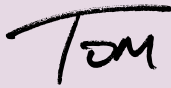
Mark Yaeger

INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to consider the amount of attention the Holy Spirit led each of the gospel writers to devote to the Last Supper (and the conversations following the supper itself). Matthew devoted 11 verses to this time period.¹ Mark described the same period in ten verses.² Luke, the wordiest of the three synoptic³ gospels, used 25 verses.⁴ John, however, far surpassed all three writers put together, using 155 verses to describe the same time period.¹ And, while there is a great deal of overlap within the accounts in the three synoptic gospels, there is very little overlap between the events recorded in the synoptic gospels and those recorded in the book of John. The Holy Spirit, in his wisdom, moved John to record events the other writers were not moved to record.

John's account of this supper may be found in chapters 13 through 17 of his gospel. Thus, while the first 12 chapters of John encompass a time period of approximately three years, the five chapters we will be examining encompass, at most, a time period of just a few hours.

May God bless you as you study these chapters. May you, like so many other Christians, find great help, strength and comfort in the words recorded here.



Tom Kelby
February 5, 2007

¹ See Matthew 26:20-30.

² See Mark 14:17-26.

³ This is the term commonly used to describe the first three gospels. It means, "presenting or taking the same or common view; specif, often cap : of or relating to the first three Gospels of the New Testament" (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary). Sometimes, the first three gospels are referred to as the "Synoptics".

⁴ See Luke 22:14-38.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

There are four parts to this eight-week study: Scripture reading, study questions to answer, study notes to read, and a weekly journal to record insights the Holy Spirit has taught you. All four are important. You will not get nearly as much out of this study if you skip any of the four. Also, do the lessons in order. Jesus builds on his arguments in each verse. We need to follow the process he follows, for we will miss basic truths that are foundational to our understanding if we jump ahead.

Here's how I would recommend using this book:

On day one of each week, read the appropriate verses in John we have printed in the book. We have printed the actual verses in this study book for three main reasons. First, we believe you will be able to more freely write notes and questions in the margins, which is something you may not be comfortable doing in your "everyday" Bible. Second, most Bibles break down the verses for the reader, even titling the different sections. We have printed the verses without these breaks as it is important that you dissect the passage for yourself. Finally, many Bibles include study notes. These are helpful, but they can keep you from "wrestling" with the passage yourself.

Read the passage slowly. Once you have read through the passage, read it through a second time. God has a great deal he would like to show you in his word. As you read, ask the Lord for wisdom. Why is this passage significant? What is the truth Jesus is trying to get across in this passage? How do the thoughts in this passage relate to those in the verses before it? We have printed the passages with enough spacing so that you have the room necessary to write your thoughts and questions regarding the passage, however, do no writing your first time through the passage. Simply read the passage slowly. Your second read-through of the passage should be different. This time, pay close attention to the themes Jesus is developing. Circle repeated words or phrases. Underline major themes. Break the passage down into smaller sections and title these sections. Write down other verses that relate to truths Jesus is teaching in this passage. Avoid the use of a Bible commentary or the notes in a study Bible at this point. Do the work yourself. The Lord will give you wisdom.

On days two through five, answer the study questions. The questions will often bring you to other passages that will further illuminate the verses you are studying.

On day six, read the study notes. These notes will give you my perspective on the passage. Oftentimes in the notes you will find verses referred to, but not printed. These verses are important. Please take the time to look these verses up. It will help you in your overall understanding of Scripture.

Finally, after you've read the notes, write down any truths the Holy Spirit has taught you over the previous week.

You will find an additional section for notes in the back of this book.

Week One

JOHN 13:1-17

WEEK ONE

John 13:1-17

DAY ONE

Read *John 13:1-17* through twice. The first time through these verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

JOHN 13:1-17

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹²When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?"¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

DAY TWO

Read *John 13:1*

1. The events in this chapter took place during a special feast referred to as "the Feast of the Passover". What did this feast commemorate, and how often were the Jewish people to celebrate this feast? *Exodus 12:1-28*

2. What name did John the Baptist call Jesus in *John 1:29* and *36*? Based on the verses you have just read, why do you think John referred to Jesus as he did? What was he expecting Jesus to do and to be?

3. What did Paul call Jesus in 1 Corinthians 5:7?

4. Jesus died at the same time the Passover lamb was being sacrificed at the temple. Do you think any of those present at the crucifixion saw any correlation between these two events? What about those who were at the temple? What about the disciples? (In reference to the disciples, see also John 2:18-22)

5. Basing your answer on the verses you have just considered, what do you think God's purpose was in having the Jews celebrate this feast every year?

6. In setting the stage for this chapter (and the ones to follow), John mentioned that Jesus "knew that his hour had come". What do you think "his hour" refers to? Why do you think John mentioned this fact in this verse? See also Matthew 26:17-18

7. How do you think this knowledge affected Jesus' actions at this time period? How would it have impacted his actions or the words he chose to speak to the disciples at this time?

8. What awareness did Jesus have of "his hour" earlier in his ministry? What does this tell you about his "mindset" as he ministered? John 2:1-5

WEEK ONE

John 13:1-17

9. John 8:20 also refers to Jesus' "hour". What, if anything, does this verse teach you about God's sovereignty?

10. The statement in John 13:1 regarding Jesus *knowing* that his hour had come is connected to Jesus *doing* something in relation to the disciples. What action did he take based on his knowledge that "his hour had come"?

11. John used verse one as an introduction to the chapters we'll be considering in the weeks ahead (John 13-17). Basing your answer on verse one, what motivated Jesus' words and actions in these chapters, and what did his words and actions demonstrate?

DAY THREE

Read **John 13:2-5**

12. What was the setting for the supper referred to in verse two? *Matthew 26:17-19*

13. John did not record all the events that took place during this supper. What additional events do you find recorded in the other three gospels?

Matthew 26:17-29

Mark 14:12-25

Luke 22:14-23

14. In verse three, John focused on two things: Jesus' awareness of certain facts and Jesus rising from supper. What was Jesus thinking about as he rose from supper?

15. Why do you think John mentioned this fact? What did this have to do with the events that followed?

16. Luke recorded a significant event that took place during this supper (John did not record this event). What was it? Do you think this had anything to do with the action Jesus took at this time?
Luke 22:24

DAY FOUR

Read **John 13:6-11**

17. Why do you think Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet? Do you think he was the only disciple who was uncomfortable with the situation?

18. According to Jesus, why was it necessary that he wash Peter's feet?

19. Peter's response in verse nine was still not what Jesus had in mind. Why do you think Peter had such a hard time understanding and obeying Jesus?

WEEK ONE

John 13:1-17

20. In verse ten, Jesus explained why washing the feet was sufficient for the disciples. What was the reason he gave?

21. What do you think Jesus meant by saying, “you are clean” to the disciples (the “you” in this verse is plural)? What was he referring to? What might this say about the spiritual condition of the disciples at this time?

22. Presumably, Judas’ feet were washed by Jesus. Yet Jesus said, “Not all of you are clean”. What made Judas unclean? How was he different from the rest of the disciples? What did Jesus’ foot washing do to change Judas’ inward condition?

23. Do you think this was a one-time event, or do you think Jesus still desires to wash the feet of his followers? If so, when and how do you think this happens, and what is the purpose of this foot washing?

DAY FIVE

Read **John 13:12-17**

24. In this chapter, Jesus gave two reasons why he washed the disciples’ feet. The first reason is found in verse eight, and the second is found in verse 14. What are these two reasons?

25. According to Jesus, who were the disciples to do this for? *John 13:14*

26. What do you think this foot washing is meant to accomplish in the lives of those whose feet are washed?

27. What do you think this foot washing accomplishes in the lives of those who are the washers?

28. Would those who know you the most intimately say that you make a habit of doing this?

29. What is the promise for those who obey Jesus' command here? *John 13:17*

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter 13:1-17

30. Read the study notes and then complete the following sentence. This week the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

JOHN 13:1-17

John 13 begins with a sort of umbrella statement under which the rest of chapter 13, along with all of chapters 14 through 17, rests.

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. John 13:1

The phrase “he loved them to the end” may also be translated, as the NIV renders it, “he now showed them the full extent of his love”.¹ The events and words recorded in these chapters were a demonstration to the disciples of the full extent of Jesus’ love—a love he demonstrated to the very end of his life.

1 How can we account for the difference between the ESV and NIV? The preposition and noun used here to describe the manner in which Jesus showed his love to the disciples is, as Leon Morris says, “ambiguous, meaning, both ‘to the end’ and ‘to the utmost’.” It is likely that here we have a typical Johannine double meaning, with both meanings intended.” Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), 614.

WEEK ONE

John 13:1-17

An important fact is revealed in this first verse: “Jesus knew that his hour had come”. This fact explains a good deal about the evening’s activities. Birds change their behavior when the time comes for them to fly south. The same may be said of Jesus’ actions on this night.

Early in the book of John, we read that Jesus was very aware that his hour *had not yet come*, and this knowledge, even at that stage of his ministry, directed his actions.

And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” John 2:4

In later chapters, we read, again, that his hour had not yet come.

So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. John 7:30

These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. John 8:20

Here, just the opposite is true. Jesus’ hour had come. And his actions in chapter 13, and his words in chapters 13 through 17, were directly related to that fact. Now that the hour had finally struck, Jesus changed his interaction with the disciples. No longer did he act as one who is waiting for his hour. The hour had come.²

THE SETTING

In their gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke focused a great deal of attention on the meal Jesus shared with his disciples this evening. John, however, referred to the meal almost in passing.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him ... John 13:2

For several reasons, this was no ordinary meal. First, there was a betrayer present at the meal. This, no doubt, served to change the atmosphere at the table. But we will, as Jesus probably tried to do for much of this night, ignore Judas’ presence for the time being. The time will come when he can be ignored no longer. A second reason this meal was extraordinary was the nature of the meal itself. It was actually a special feast called the Passover. The Jews were commanded to keep this meal on a yearly basis³ in commemoration of the Lord’s passing over the people of Israel during their captivity in Egypt.

“You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” Exodus 12:24-27

Scholars have spilt much ink trying to explain how the meal Jesus shared with his disciples on this night could be called the Passover (as it clearly is called in Matthew 26:17-18) when it also seems clear the Jews would be celebrating the Passover meal *the next night* (which would be several hours after Jesus was crucified), as the following verse makes clear.

Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor’s headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor’s headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. John 18:28

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?” He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” Matthew 26:17-18

2 Matthew 26:17-18 also shows Jesus’ acute awareness that his hour had come. Notice the words the disciples were to speak to the man in the city:

3 As 2 Chronicles 30 and 35 both indicate, the command to celebrate the Passover on a yearly basis was more consistently disobeyed rather than obeyed during the O.T. period. By the time of the N.T., the feast was celebrated on a yearly basis.

One possible solution is that *both nights* were appropriate nights to celebrate the Passover. Some commentators suggest that there were two calendars being used by the Jewish people at this time: one calendar called for the celebration of the Passover on Thursday evening, while the other calendar called for the celebration of the Passover on Friday evening.⁴

Whether two calendars were in use in Israel at this time is not clear. What is clear is that the disciples celebrated the Passover on this particular night.

The meal was celebrated in a large upper room (see Luke 22:12-13). The furnished room would have included a table large enough for all 13 men. There were no chairs around the table. Instead, the men “reclined” at the table.

*And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. Luke 22:14*⁵

This was, as the *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* explains, the normal way of eating at a banquet in the first century.

In the NT the phrase “to sit at meat” (*katakeimai*, lit., “to lie down,” “recline”) indicates that the banqueters lay on mats or couches around a central tray or low table (Mk 7:28). One supported himself on his left elbow, his right hand free for eating, his legs stretched out away from the table. Only this posture can explain how Mary could anoint Jesus’ feet (Jn 12:3) or how the unnamed disciple could lean on Jesus’ breast (Jn 13:23, 25).⁶

The fact that Jesus and the disciples ate the meal while reclining is quite significant, as it is one more proof that this was the Passover meal which Jesus and the disciples were sharing. According to F.F. Bruce, eating while reclining only took place at “special meals”.

The verbs for ‘reclining’ (*anakeimai* in verse 23 and *anapiptō* in verse 25, as earlier in verse 12) suggest that, although this meal fell ‘before the (official) festival of the passover’ (verse 1), it was nevertheless treated by the participants as a passover meal. The normal posture at table was sitting, as rabbinical sources indicate clearly enough; reclining was the posture reserved for special meals, such as parties, wedding feasts and the like – apart from meals taken in the open air, where seats were not available (cf. 6:10 f., where both *anakeimai* and *anapiptō* also occur). The passover supper ranked as a special meal where reclining was *de rigueur*; it was to be enjoyed in a relaxed and unhurried manner, in a deliberate contrast to the haste with which their ancestors ate it in Egypt, staff in hand and ready for the road (Ex. 12:11).⁷

The table at the Last Supper was not set with utensils. The disciples would have used their hands. The *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* provides additional help here regarding the eating of a banquet.

At a banquet attendants brought bowls for washing the hands again after eating, since in biblical times no tableware was provided. Everyone ate out of the common bowl or platter with his fingers (Prov 26:15; Mk 14:20). Wine was usually not provided until the food had been served and eaten (Gen 27:25). At the Last Supper this order was followed as Jesus first broke the bread and then passed the cup.⁸

THE FOOT WASHING

Sometime during the evening, the disciples began arguing.

A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. Luke 22:24

We are not told what started this argument. It may have been due to the places the disciples were given at the table. Seating order at a banquet such as this designated one’s importance. Judas, as we will see next week, was probably seated in the place of honor, to Jesus’ left. John was seated to his right. How the other disciples were situated is not known, however, it is not unlikely that some

4 See, for instance, F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 278-279. See also Merrill C. Tenney, *John - Acts* (TEBC 9; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1981), 135.5 See also Matthew 26:20 and Mark 14:18.

6 Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, and John Rey, eds., *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 620.

7 F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 289.

8 Pfeiffer, Vos, and Rey, eds., *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, 626.

WEEK ONE

John 13:1-17

of the disciples were disappointed by the unimportant places they were given at the table and made their grievances known.⁹

John did not record this argument. However, it is possible that Jesus rose from the table while the dispute continued on.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. John 13:3-4

Jesus rose to wash the disciples' feet. Foot washing was a necessary task because the streets were dirty, and the people wore sandals. But it was servant's work. Evidently, there were no servants present when this meal was served, so this task was left undone. With the disciples lying on their left sides facing inward, it is easy to imagine their dirty feet extending outward from the table.

Jesus saw the 24 unwashed feet, heard the angry words, and he thought about ... himself. It is significant that John directly links the washing of the disciples' feet to Jesus' awareness "that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God". At first glance, these thoughts do not seem related in any way to the foot washing. But, to Jesus at least, the foot washing and his own greatness were very much related. Jesus' knowledge of his own authority, greatness and majesty compelled him to rise from the table and prepare to wash the disciples' feet.

Jesus didn't ask to wash the disciples' feet. If he had asked, he would have been refused. He used his divine authority, the authority he had over all things, to take the job of the lowest servant.

I imagine the disciples' dispute continuing as Jesus rose from the table. It may have taken some seconds for the room to grow quiet. One by one, the disciples noticed what Jesus was doing. One by one, they fell silent.

He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. John 13:4

By using the plural to describe the outer garments that were removed (as he also did in 19:23-24), John may have been indicating, according to Leon Morris, that "Jesus stripped to a loin cloth, just like a slave."¹⁰

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. John 13:5

One by one the feet were cleaned. How the foot washing happened is not explained. It may have been that Jesus walked around the table, washing the feet of each man as he lay with his head toward the table and his feet extending outward. If this was the case, the disciples didn't come to him to have their feet washed. Jesus came to them. None of the men spoke. All that could be heard was the dripping of water. It was strange ... unnatural ... almost repulsive. It was also, as F.F. Bruce's description of the event makes clear, the perfect revelation of Jesus' servanthood.

John's graphic description illustrates the statement of Phil. 2:6 f., that he who subsisted 'in the form of God' took 'the form of a servant' – and by doing so manifested the form of God on earth more perfectly than would otherwise have been possible. The form of God was not exchanged for the form of a servant; it was revealed in the form of a servant. In the washing of their feet the disciples, though they did not understand it at the time, saw a rare unfolding of the authority and glory of the incarnate Word, and a rare declaration of the character of the Father himself.

Nearest the throne of God must be
The footstool of humility.¹¹

⁹ Jesus discussed this type of situation in the Parable of the Wedding Feast. See Luke 14:7-11.

¹⁰ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 615.

¹¹ Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, 280.

This display of the heavenly majesty in all its glory was too powerful for the disciples to bear. None of them dared to speak. None of them, that is, except for one—the one disciple who was never at a loss for words.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” John 13:6-7

Peter was offended by Jesus’ actions. He was, or he imagined that he was, quite willing to humble himself before Jesus. But he was not willing for Jesus to humble himself before Peter. This didn’t surprise Jesus. Jesus knew that Peter didn’t understand what he was doing. To help him accept the foot washing, Jesus told Peter that “afterward” he would understand. In saying this, Jesus clearly indicated that there was much more involved in this foot washing than the cleaning of feet. After all, there is not much to understand about ordinary foot washing. It simply cleans the feet. But this foot washing was different. It was representative of something far greater. But Peter didn’t want understanding of this foot washing. He had already made up his mind.

Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” John 3:8

Peter’s words to Jesus are even more emphatic in Greek than they are in English. In Greek, a double negative doesn’t equal a positive. Instead, when a double negative is used, it greatly strengthens the negative. And this is what we find in verse eight. Peter was saying to Jesus, in the strongest way possible, “you will never, never, never wash my feet.” Do you hear the emotion in Peter’s voice here? I imagine, as he was saying this, that he also pulled his feet away from Jesus.

Jesus did not move to the next set of feet. Instead, I imagine him shifting his gaze from Peter’s feet to his eyes.

Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” John 13:8

Peter’s options were clearly presented: either he would allow Jesus to wash his feet and he would have a “share with” Jesus, or he would choose to go his own way ... dirty and alone. There were no other options.

Forced to choose between A and B, Peter, in typical fashion, chose C.

Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”
John 13:9

Peter may have changed his perspective about the foot washing, but he was still trying to control the process.

Jesus did not listen to Peter’s advice. Rather, he corrected Peter’s misunderstanding about the type and extent of the washing that needed to occur in his life.

Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean ...” John 13:10

The application of Jesus’ words here seems to be that after the initial cleansing from sin we receive at salvation (compared to “bathing” here), we do not need to be cleansed in that manner again. We have been cleaned. However, as we continue to live in this world, we still happen to sin. If we are to maintain fellowship with Jesus, these sins need to be “spot-cleaned” by Jesus. This “post-salvation” cleansing is what the foot washing symbolized. This “spot-cleaning” is also the cleansing referred to in 1 John 1:9.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

WEEK ONE

John 13:1-17

When Jesus told the disciples “you are clean”,¹² he was telling them that they, in a spiritual sense, had already had a bath. They were not born again in the New Testament sense yet, of course, for Jesus had not yet died and risen from the dead. But they were saved in the Old Testament sense. Their faith was in God. This is why Jesus called them clean. In the foot washing, then, he was demonstrating how this cleanness was to be maintained so that they might remain in right fellowship with him.

But one of the disciples was not clean. He had never been bathed.

... but not every one of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.” John 13:10-11

Jesus knew that Judas had not had a spiritual bath. He had always known this fact.

Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him. John 6:70-71

Judas had never put his faith in Jesus. He was not a saint. It was not dirt located outside his body that made Judas unclean. It was inward filth and his unwillingness to come to the only one who could clean him. The fact that Judas would soon betray Jesus demonstrated his inward condition. Even though Jesus may have washed Judas’ feet, the foot washing was not for Judas, and it had no effect upon him. Foot washing is reserved for those who have bathed. Its purpose is continued fellowship with Jesus.

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

The foot washing symbolized Jesus’ role as the humble Servant who washes sins from the saints so that they might walk in fellowship with him. But that is not the only thing Jesus wanted the disciples to learn from the foot washing. There was another reason behind his behavior this night.

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” John 13:12-15

The second reason Jesus washed the disciples’ feet was to provide an example that they might imitate. Since Jesus washed their feet, the disciples *ought* to wash one another’s feet. Notice, Jesus was not referring to the disciples’ need to wash *everyone’s* feet. He instructed them to wash “one another’s feet”. His example was to be imitated *by* the disciples *for* the disciples.

The Master was a foot washer. In spite of his great dignity—or, rather, because of his great dignity—he humbled himself before the disciples so that they might walk in fellowship with him. This set the pattern for the disciples to follow.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” John 13:16-17

Deliberately humbling oneself to meet the spiritual needs of another believer is not easy. It may seem, when we do this, we are losing all dignity. This is not the case, for Jesus lost no dignity when he humbled himself. Humbling himself was his dignity. It was, for him, the path to the very highest honor, as Paul made clear in his letter to the church in Philippi.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

¹² The “you” in this verse is plural, indicating that Jesus had shifted his attention from Peter alone to all of the disciples.

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:3-11

We do not lose any dignity when we humble ourselves. We lose it when we do not humble ourselves. Our greatest dignity is as a follower of Christ. He humbled himself; therefore, as his follower, I will also humble myself. And I will gain great blessing when I do this.

“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” John 13:17

What blessing goes to those who humble themselves before their brothers and sisters? In a word, grace.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 1 Peter 5:5

Wouldn't you like a little more grace in your life? It is not something you grab for yourself. It is something God gives. It is a blessing given to those who serve as Jesus served. *Blessed are the foot washers, for they shall receive grace.* Surely, an attitude of humility toward one another must be part of everything we do.

But did Jesus expect us to imitate more than just his *humility* in the foot washing? Did he also expect us to imitate his *purpose* in the foot washing? According to W. Robert Cook, author of a helpful book entitled *The Theology of John*, it would appear that he did.

The Master always set a pattern of service for His servants. But His act of foot washing also illustrated a deeper theological truth. Just as one who has walked through the hot, dirty, unpaved streets of an Oriental city could not enjoy his meal until the dirt was washed from his feet and their feverishness was assuaged by the application of cold water, so one who would fellowship with Christ and His people must be prepared in mind and heart. It is a healthy thing for the church when one member assumes a place of humility in order to perform a ministry of cleansing. Since no believer has any personal power to cleanse spiritually, the most obvious way to exercise this ministry is by the application of the Scriptures to a fellow believer's life (cf. John 15:3; 17:17; see Gal. 6:1-3).¹³

As Jesus washes our feet, let us, in turn, wash one another's feet. One example of how this happens may be seen in the following verse.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Galatians 6:1

The “spiritual” are to help the brothers who have been “caught” in sin. That is, we are to administer the water of the word and Christ's love to our brothers, helping them to repent. There are, of course, many ways in which we might wash one another's feet.

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

The foot washing on this night was not a spur-of-the-moment event. It was, as W. Robert Cook outlines below, carefully orchestrated to produce the greatest effect.

Any event or statement related to the death of a notable person is marked with special importance, but in the case of Jesus the importance is magnified to the degree of infinity. His death, and all that surrounded it, was planned in infinite detail in the counsels of eternity (see, e.g., John 12:27-36 together with 13:3). If one allows for the fact that the supper was an integral part of the experience, Jesus used all five senses as teaching tools

¹³ W. Robert Cook, *The Theology of John* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 110.

WEEK ONE

John 13:1-17

on this occasion: taste and smell—the meal (v. 2); touch—the application of water and the wiping of the feet (v. 5); sight—Peter’s intent observation of Jesus’ activity until He came to him (vv. 6-9); and hearing—the accompanying instruction (vv. 7-10, 12-20). By drawing such graphic attention to the truth that He was thus illustrating, Jesus marked the experience indelibly on the minds of those present. It is quite obvious that from our Lord’s standpoint no extremity, even death, should preclude the exercise of loving service to a brother.¹⁴

As I reflect on this passage, I must say that I am envious of my first century brothers. On this night, they shared sights, sounds and feelings I will never experience during this lifetime ... or will I? For I have experienced, many times, the strangeness of knowing my Savior, dressed as a servant, is kneeling before me, wanting to wash my dirty feet. I have heard the water splashing in the basin, knowing its application will bring sweet fellowship. I have felt, as Peter did, the awkwardness of that situation, wanting Jesus to go away from me and my dirty feet, rather than touching them with his clean hands. I have experienced joy when he did touch them, washing the dirt away. I have experienced the wonder of other foot washers as well; foot washers who have seen Christ’s example and have humbled themselves and ministered his life to me, drawing me to deeper fellowship with him. And I have, I hope, shared in the washing of others’ feet.

... That said, I still wish I was there on that first night.

¹⁴ Cook, *The Theology of John*, 111.

Week Two

JOHN 13:18-38

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

DAY ONE

Read *John 13:18-38* through twice. The first time through these verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

JOHN 13:18-38

¹⁸ “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ ¹⁹ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

²¹ After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” ²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. ²³ One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus, ²⁴ so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶ Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” ³⁷ Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” ³⁸ Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.”

DAY TWO

Read *John 13:18-30*

1. In verse 18, Jesus said, “I know whom I have chosen”. How much did Jesus know about Judas when he selected him as a disciple? *John 6:64,70-71*

2. Describe the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ selection of the 12 disciples. *Luke 6:12-16*

3. Why do you think Jesus chose Judas as a disciple? *See John 13:18*

4. What was Judas' position among the disciples? Who do you think put him in this position? Knowing what he knew about him, why do you think Jesus allowed him to remain in this position? *John 12:4-6*

5. What Old Testament Scripture did Jesus quote in John 13:18? What benefit would doing this bring to the disciples? *See also Matthew 26:23-24*

6. Why did Jesus tell the disciples about the upcoming betrayal *before* it took place? *John 13:19*

7. Based on verses 28 and 29, do you think any of the disciples suspected Judas?

8. What do you think the mood was in the upper room after Judas' departure?

DAY THREE

Read **John 13:31-32**

9. In verse 31, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified". The name "Son of Man" was frequently used by Jesus in reference to himself. How is the "son of man" described in the book of Daniel? *Daniel 7:13-14*

10. What, then, was Jesus saying about himself when he used this name to describe himself?

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

11. What did Jesus mean when he said that he was glorified? Using a dictionary or Bible dictionary, look up the word “glory” and write out the definition below.

12. Why do you think Jesus said that he was glorified “Now”? After all, as God the Son, wasn’t Jesus always glorified? What do you think he is connecting his glorification to?

13. What do the following verses teach us about Christ and his glorification?

John 12:16

John 12:23

John 12:27-28

John 13:31-32

John 17:1-5

13. What impact do these verses have on your understanding of Christ’s sacrifice?

14. What do these verses teach you about the relationship between the Father and the Son?

DAY FOUR

Read **John 13:33-35**

15. In verse 34, Jesus gave his disciples a “new commandment”. How did this new commandment differ from the other commandments the disciples had heard concerning love? *See Matthew 22:36-40*

16. Who was this love to be directed toward?

17. How is it possible for the Christian to obey this command? *John 17:26; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22-23*

18. What will obedience to this command result in? *John 13:35*

19. Would people know this based on your behavior?

20. How might Jesus’ commandment concerning love be connected with his words in verse 33?

DAY FIVE

Read **John 13:36-38**

21. Based on verse 37, Peter vastly overrated his own spiritual strength. Do you think Jesus was surprised at Peter’s weakness? And if he wasn’t surprised, why did Jesus ever choose Peter as his disciple?

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

22. John does not record the entire exchange between Jesus and Peter. What new information do you find in Luke 22:31-34?

23. Concerning this passage in Luke, it's important to know that the two words translated "you" in verse 31 are plural but the two words translated "you" in verse 32 are singular. Does this, in any way, change your understanding of this passage? If so, in what way?

24. Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. What confidence did Jesus have that his prayer would be answered?

25. Jesus' intercession is not for Peter alone. How does Paul describe Jesus' role as our intercessor? See *Romans 8:34*

26. What confidence should this give to the Christian?

27. Did Jesus seem overly concerned about Peter's upcoming denial? Why or why not?

28. How was Peter's denial different from Judas's betrayal?

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter 13:18-38

29. Read the study notes and then complete the following sentence. This week the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

JOHN 13:18-38

A TRAITOR AT THE TABLE

After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus "put on his outer garments and resumed his place" (John 13:12). The foot washing had done them good. There was sweet fellowship in the air—the quiet kind of fellowship that always accompanies the humble Jesus' washings. But the sweetness, at least on this night, was not destined to last long. Like a letter from the IRS, Judas' presence could not be ignored forever. Jesus had already hinted that a traitor was among them, but now he deliberately turned his disciples' attention toward that fact.

"I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'" John 13:18

Those reading through the book of John should not be the least bit surprised by Judas' betrayal of Jesus. John had called his reader's attention to Judas' nature in 6:71, 12:4-6, and 13:2. Jesus himself alluded to it in 6:70, when he said that one of the disciples was "a devil", and in 13:10, when he said to the disciples, "And you are clean, but not every one of you." As verse 11 goes on to say, Jesus "knew who was to betray him". But while Jesus knew that Judas was a traitor, the disciples did not know this fact. They considered him one of their own number. But his masquerade was coming to a rapid close. Judas was about to be unmasked.

Jesus had never been under any illusions regarding Judas's character. He purposely chose him. He chose him in spite of what he knew of him. Or, perhaps more precisely, he chose him because of what he knew of him.

"Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." John 6:70

Obviously, Jesus was forced to keep this knowledge to himself. If he had revealed his knowledge regarding Judas to the other disciples, they would never have allowed him to stay with Jesus.

However, in saying that Jesus chose Judas, it is clear that he was not chosen in the same way the other 11 disciples were chosen. They were chosen for special fellowship with Christ. Judas, however, was not chosen for that reason. He was chosen to fulfill Scripture.¹ On this night, Jesus pointed his disciples to just one of the Scriptures Judas fulfilled.²

"But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'" John 13:18

These words are taken from Psalm 41:9. David wrote this Psalm concerning a friend who had turned against him. It is quite possible that this friend was a man named Ahithophel.³ He was David's counselor and a trusted friend, but he defected to David's son Absalom during Absalom's rebellion against David. The parallels between Ahithophel and Judas are striking. Both betrayed one with whom they had shared bread. And both hanged themselves.

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

- 1 The Greek text in verse 18 is literally translated, as the note concerning verse 18 in the ESV reads, "But in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled ...".
- 2 In Acts 1:15-20, Peter refers to two other texts that Judas fulfilled.
- 3 Ahithophel's story is recorded in 2 Samuel 15-17.

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

Jesus knew, from this prophecy, that he would share bread with Judas. And he told his disciples this ahead of time, so that they might believe in him.

“I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.” John 13:19

Notice how Judas’ evil actions were transformed by the Master into something good. First, in verse 18, we saw that Judas’ selection as a disciple was no victory for Satan. Instead, it was so that the Scripture may be fulfilled. Second, we see Jesus using Judas’ upcoming act of bread-sharing for the express purpose of increasing his disciples’ faith in himself. What a God we serve! Surely, he works *all things* together for good for those who love him. He is in total control. How frustrating this must be for Satan. He never wins.

The phrase translated “you may believe that I am he” at the end of verse 19 demands a little consideration. Who is the “he” Jesus is talking about here? It seems likely that he wanted his disciples to believe that he is *the Christ*. Based on his choice of words here, however, it is also possible that Jesus was hinting at something more. F.F. Bruce explains this possibility as follows:

The Greek words *egō eimi* (‘I am’) ... are sometimes used in the most everyday sense, ‘it is I’ (as in John 6:20; 9:9), but in this Gospel especially (cf. John 8:24, 28) they tend to be used with overtones of the Ineffable Name of Ex. 3:14 or even more, of the affirmation ‘I am He’ of Isa. 41:4, 43:10, 13, etc. ... in such a way as to hint at the speaker’s oneness with the Father.⁴

It is not at all unlikely that Jesus meant his disciples to arrive at both of these conclusions. He is the Christ and he is the great “I am.” After all, ambiguity was one of Jesus’ specialties. He often left people wondering exactly what he meant by his statements.

Notice the ebb and flow of the conversation. Jesus moved from thoughts of Judas and his betrayal to thoughts of the other 11 and their oneness with himself. These men, while confused at this point, were not traitors. Rather, their lives were so intertwined with Christ’s life, that it could be truly said that those who welcomed the disciples were actually welcoming Christ himself.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.” John 13:20

The introduction of the Father here, referred to by Jesus as “the one who sent me”, is significant. Jesus was teaching his disciples something about their relationship with the Father and how the relationship between the disciples and the Father was connected to the disciples’ relationship with Jesus. This teaching is amplified in chapters 14 through 17.

But, as long as Judas was in the room, Jesus could not dwell on these happy topics for long.

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” John 13:21

If you have ever questioned the humanity of Jesus, do so no longer. He was a man like us,⁵ and Judas’ upcoming betrayal greatly disturbed him. Surely he could not hide these feelings as he spoke to his disciples. But while they could read his pain, they could not identify it. They had no idea who the betrayer was.

The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. John 13:22

The disciples looked at each other, hoping to uncover the man. Perhaps his actions would be a giveaway—a shifty look in the eyes, or maybe a clenched jaw. Evidently, however, Judas had learned to hide his emotions. He escaped detection. But the disciples didn’t just *look* at one another. They also began to question one another.

4 Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, 288.

5 See Hebrews 2:17-18.

6 The Greek particle used in this verse—*mēti*—is used in questions expecting a negative answer.

7 The fact that Peter motioned to John (rather than whispering to him) perhaps indicates that Peter was not seated very close to John and thus was seated in one of the less important seats.

And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this. Luke 22:23

Soon, the disciples turned from questioning each other, to questioning the Lord.

And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?” Matthew 26:22

Based on the phrasing of the question here, each disciple was expecting a negative answer to his question,⁶ almost on the lines of, “it’s not me, is it?” How long this questioning continued is not known. But it wasn’t answering the question as quickly as some would have liked. Peter, never the most patient disciple, couldn’t stand this process-of-elimination game for long. He motioned to John,⁷ telling him with a few subtle (or not-so-subtle) gestures exactly what he wanted him to do.

One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” John 13:23-25

Remember, the disciples were reclining at the table, lying on their left sides. John must have been located to Jesus’ right. This position allowed him to lean against Jesus’ chest and whisper into Jesus’ right ear. Jesus’ reply was quite specific, although John alone might have heard it.

Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” John 13:26

While John was lying to Jesus’ right, Judas may very well have been lying to Jesus’ left the position of honor. In any case, he was near enough to Jesus that Jesus could dip the bread in a dish and hand it to him. Merrill Tenney explains the significance of this action.

“Bread” in this context does not mean the modern spongy loaf used in most Western nations. It was probably a piece of flat bread, somewhat leathery in consistency, which could be used to scoop bits of meat taken from the pot in which they were cooked. For the host to select such a tidbit from the main dish and give it to a guest would be a mark of courtesy and esteem. The disciples, seeing this, would conclude only that Jesus regarded Judas as a friend he had confidence in.⁸

This was the critical moment in Judas’ life, for before he took the piece of bread, Judas was making decisions for himself. But when he took the bread from Jesus’ hand, Satan himself entered into him, no doubt driving him to betray Jesus.

So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. John 13:26-30

Immediately upon taking the bread, Judas went out. It is significant to note that Jesus was not looking to prolong his own life. He didn’t try to stop Judas. To the contrary, his words *encouraged* Judas in his betrayal—“What you are going to do, do quickly”. Jesus *wanted* to be betrayed! He was eager to fulfill the mission for which he came to earth.

The final four words in verse 30 are poetic and powerful.

And it was night.

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

Perhaps John saw the door open as Judas walked outside. He saw the darkness through the open door. He saw the darkness in Judas. He sensed the darkness in the very air, for there had never been a darker hour. Satan was on the edge of a great victory. Little did he know that the victory was not to be his.

GLORY

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once." John 13:31-32

I love the writing in the book of John. The night of verse 30 is immediately followed by the glory referred to in verses 31 and 32. The two go hand in hand, for this glory will not come but through the deepest darkness. Notice the emphasis Jesus placed on glory in these two verses. He connected his death and resurrection to being "glorified". More than that, he connected his death and resurrection to the Father being "glorified" in him. More than that, he connected the Father being glorified in him to the Father glorifying Christ in himself. W. Robert Cook explains the connection between Christ's passion and glory in the following way:

In Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and return to the Father, the splendor of God's character was manifested in a way it could not have been otherwise.⁹

Jesus was not saying that his glorification comes from mankind seeing the worth of his death and resurrection and thus glorifying him for it. This glorification had nothing to do with man glorifying the Son, as if it hinged upon man's acknowledgment of the worth of Christ's death. This glorification was in the display of Jesus' majestic worth for all to see, whether they acknowledged it or not. This was his crowning moment. It was also the display of the Father's glory *in Christ*. This was not the day of darkness. It was the day when God's glory was made known.

The glory of both the Son and the Father are often tied to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Consider, for example, Jesus' comments in John 12 and John 17.

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." John 12:23

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." John 12:27-28

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." John 17:1-5

John, in his narrative, used the phrase "when Jesus was glorified" (John 12:16) to refer to the time after Jesus' resurrection. His wonderful nature was fully displayed at this point, his perfections unveiled for all to see. I love how R.V.G. Tasker describes this event.

The moment when Judas left the upper room and Jesus made no attempt to bring him back, but expedited his departure, is the moment which brings supreme honour to Jesus Himself, for He is now irrevocably committed to the death which Judas has gone out to make certain. Hence He can say *Now is the Son of man glorified* (31). It is also the moment when God is supremely exalted, for the passion of the Son of man is the most splendid expression that the world can ever see of God's love for mankind; and that passion has now virtually begun.¹⁰

⁹ Cook, *The Theology of John*, 75.

¹⁰ R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. John* (TNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 160.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

Jesus turned his attention from himself and his Father to his disciples, whom he called little children.

“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’” John 13:33

Like a parent leaving on a long journey, Jesus was leaving the disciples. He was going away, and his disciples could not come with him. And as with a parent leaving final instructions for his children, Jesus’ instructions here were meant to set the course for the disciples during his absence.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

Up through chapter 12, the word “love” has been used just three times in the book of John. But it is used 16 times in chapters 13-17. Love, it seems, is the primary thing the “little children” need to demonstrate while Jesus is away.

I have often wondered about the newness of this command. After all, the disciples had already been commanded to love their neighbors as themselves.¹¹ The newness of this command seems to be in the *direction* of this love. The disciples were to love *one another*. They were to use the actions of Jesus as a pattern for their love. As he had loved them—that is, in the same manner in which he had loved them, so they were to love one another. He was leaving. But he didn’t want his love to leave as well. He wanted his disciples to do as he had done. They were to love—to the point of death—their fellow disciples.

How are you doing in regard to this command? Do you love those within the church? Or do you find it easier to love those outside the church? We are to love all people, but we are commanded to show special love toward those within the church. F.F. Bruce provides a wonderful example of the extent to which the early church obeyed Christ’s command.

... Tertullian reports the pagans of his day (a century after this Gospel was published) as saying of Christians, ‘See how they love one another!’ And it was no merely superficial love that they spoke of, for they went on: ‘How ready they are to die for one another!’¹²

May the same be said of you? The pattern Jesus set in John 13 is to be followed by us. We are to “wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). We are to “love one another” (John 13:34). This—our love for *one another*—is the demonstration that we are truly Jesus’ disciples. We’ll hear much more about this in John 17.

PETER AND THE ROOSTER

Peter was not particularly concerned with Jesus’ command to love. In fact, he may have missed the command altogether. He was fixated on Jesus’ announcement that he was going away.

Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.” John 13:36-38

It is interesting that, even at this point, Peter had no idea where Jesus was going. He was not alone in his ignorance, for in just a few moments, Thomas would also display his own ignorance of this fact.¹³

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

11 See Matthew 22:36-40.

12 Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, 294.

13 See John 14:5.

WEEK TWO

JOHN 13:18-38

Jesus' reassurance to Peter, while it was largely ignored, was, nonetheless, wonderful: "you will follow afterward". Jesus would not be leaving Peter as an orphan. Peter would, one day, go to the same place that Jesus was going. He had his word on it.

Peter, however, was not satisfied with a delayed departure. He wanted to go with Jesus "now". In fact to prove his readiness to follow Jesus, he stated that he would lay his life down for him. Peter did not know the future. He also did not know the limits of his own strength. Jesus knew both of these things. In fact, he displayed his absolute foreknowledge of Peter's denial by his words, "the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times". Here, as we saw in John 13:8, a double negative is used. Remember, in Greek, a double negative doesn't equal a positive. Instead, when a double negative is used, it greatly strengthens the negative. Jesus' was saying to Peter, in essence, "the rooster absolutely positively will not crow until you have denied me three times."¹⁴

The Lord knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Peter was going to deny him. But Jesus did not dwell long on Peter's upcoming denial. He immediately moved on to some of the most beautiful verses in the New Testament. In fact, it appears Jesus only brought the subject of Peter's denial up because of Peter's strong statement that he was ready to die with Jesus. Can you see Christ's love for his disciple here? He didn't, like a dog's master, want to rub Peter's nose in his mess. He loved Peter in spite of Peter. The Bible calls this grace.

¹⁴ This relates to a current debate within the church. Some have argued that God does not know the future decisions we will make. Here, we see that Jesus most definitely did know the future decisions Peter would make, for he told Peter that the rooster absolutely, positively would not crow until Peter denied him three times. Jesus knew exactly what Peter was going to do.

Week Three

JOHN 14:1-14

WEEK THREE

JOHN 14:1-14

DAY ONE

Read *John 14:1-14* through twice. The first time through these verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

JOHN 14:1-14

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

DAY TWO

Read *John 14:1-3*

1. In verse one, Jesus told the disciples, “Let not your hearts be troubled”. Basing your answer on John 13, what, specifically, might have contributed to the disciples having troubled hearts at this time?

2. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do about their troubled hearts? *John 14:1*

3. In verses two and three, Jesus discussed heaven. Why did he address this topic at this time? See also *John 13:33, 36*

4. Jesus referred to heaven by a unique name here. What is it? Why do you think he called it by this name at this time?

5. Based on verse two, what would Jesus be doing when he left the disciples?

6. According to verse three, how were the disciples to get to heaven? Whose faithfulness did the disciples' eventual entry into heaven depend upon?

DAY THREE

Read **John 14:4-6**

7. In what way is Jesus the way? Use additional scriptures to support your answer if possible.

8. In what way is Jesus the truth? Use additional scriptures to support your answer if possible.

9. In what way is Jesus the life? Use additional scriptures to support your answer if possible.

WEEK THREE

JOHN 14:1-14

10. What does the second half of verse six say about the truthfulness or efficacy of other religions or ways of life aside from Christianity?

DAY FOUR

Read **John 14:7-11**

11. Jesus and the Father are not identical yet in verse nine Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." What do you think he meant by this statement?

12. Based on verses seven through 11, what is the relationship between the Father and Jesus?

13. Jesus spoke of the Father quite frequently. What do the following verses in John say about Jesus' relationship with the Father? (Select four of the following passages.)

John 1:1-2, 18

John 4:34

John 5:19-29

John 5:30-47

John 6:27-40

John 6:43-44

John 6:57

John 7:16-18

John 7:28-29

John 7:33-34

John 8:12-30

John 8:38

John 8:42

John 8:49-55

John 10:14-18

John 10:25-38

John 11:4

John 11:38-44

John 12:27-32

John 12:44-50

WEEK THREE

JOHN 14:1-14

WEEK THREE

JOHN 14:1-14

14. In what ways have the verses you have just considered changed your understanding regarding Jesus and the Father?

DAY FIVE

Read John 14:12-14

15. What is the promise Jesus made in verses 12 through 14?

16. To whom does this promise apply?

17. Why can the Christian have confidence that Jesus will keep this promise? *John 14:13*

18. How, specifically, did Jesus say that this promise will be kept? *John 14:13-14*

19. What did Jesus want those who had seen the miracles he performed to believe? In other words, what was the main objective behind the great works Jesus performed? *John 14:11*

20. What, then, is the objective behind the “greater works” described in verses 12 through 14? What does Jesus want those who see these “greater works” to believe?

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter 14:1-14

21. Read the study notes and then complete the following sentence. This week the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

WEEK THREE

JOHN 14:1-14

JOHN 14:1-14

THE FATHER'S HOUSE

Jesus' last words in chapter 13 were anything but encouraging. In verse 33, Jesus told his disciples that he would be with them just "a little while" longer, and that he was going to a place where they could not come. And as if that wasn't enough, Jesus then informed Peter that he would be denying Jesus three times within the next few hours. It is easy to imagine the gloom settling in on the disciples. But Jesus wasn't ignorant of his disciples' feelings. And he knew the answer to their discouragement.

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." John 14:1

The disciples needed to make a choice regarding their troubled feelings. And that choice wasn't, as so many of us are apt to do, to wallow in them. It was to trust God and to trust in Jesus. To do that, however, the disciples needed a little more information. And that is what Jesus set out to give them in these next verses information that would enable his disciples to trust in the Father and in himself.

"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." John 14:2-3

These are some of the most often quoted verses in the Bible. They are beautiful, and they are definitely faith-building. Each phrase provides a hook the disciples (both then and now) can hang their faith upon. Let's look at these phrases one at a time:

"In my Father's house are many rooms." – Jesus wanted his disciples to know where he was going, and he wanted them to know that there was plenty of room for them in that place. It is significant that Jesus chose the phrase "my Father's house" to refer to heaven. Heaven was not some impersonal place to Jesus. He thought of it as it truly is—his own Father's *very large* home.

You may have noticed that the ESV uses the word "rooms" in this verse rather than "mansions", which is the word found in the KJV. Randy Alcorn, in his wonderful book *Heaven*, explains why.

Perhaps you're familiar with Christ's promise in John 14: "In my Father's house are many mansions. ... I go to prepare a place for you" (v. 2, KJV). The Vulgate, the Latin Bible, used the word *mansiones* in that verse, and the King James Version followed by using *mansions*. Unfortunately, that rendering is misleading if it makes us envision having massive lodgings on separate estates. The intended meaning seems to be that we'll have separate dwelling places on a single estate or even separate rooms in the same house.¹

¹ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 2004), 321.

WEEK THREE

JOHN 14:1-14

“If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” –Apparently, Jesus had told the disciples at some earlier time that he was going to prepare a place for them. He wouldn’t have told them this if his Father’s house did not have many rooms just waiting to be filled. But it did have many rooms, and Jesus was, after his death and resurrection, going to roll up his sleeves and prepare a place within that large house for his disciples.

Of course, this would not be the first time Jesus turned his creative attention toward heaven. The first time was when he created heaven itself. If you have never given any thought to this, consider the following verses:

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. John 1:3

For by him all things were created, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. Colossians 1:16

Remember, Jesus is much more than just the Redeemer. He is also the Creator. He made everything that has ever been. And he is making everything that will be. Randy Alcorn describes his work in this way:

In the same way that God paid attention to the details of the home he prepared for Adam and Eve in Eden, Christ is paying attention to the details as he prepares for us an eternal home in Heaven (John 14:2-3). If he prepared Eden so carefully and lavishly for mankind in the six days of creation, what has he fashioned in the place he’s been preparing for us in the two thousand years since he left this world? ²

The streets of gold, the 12 gates made of 12 giant pearls, and the tree of life bearing a different kind of fruit each month³ are not symbolic images useful only among the unsophisticated readers of children’s Bibles. They are real descriptions of Christ’s handiwork—handiwork I will one day see with my own eyes and touch with my own hands.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” – Here is a wonderful promise indeed. The disciples wouldn’t have to muddle their way to Jesus. Jesus would come to the disciples, and he would take them to himself. Their separation would not last long. And when it ended, the disciples would once again live, walk, and eat with their Master.

It is important to see that Jesus did not place the responsibility for the disciples getting to heaven on the disciples themselves. He took the responsibility on himself. *“I will come again and will take you to myself”*. Their performance was not the criteria for their entrance into heaven. It was his faithfulness. And when he did come again, then the fleeting days of joy the disciples had known with their Master (which had always been mingled with a good deal of trouble, sadness and discomfort) would be replaced by endless days of joy. The joy of Jesus’ bodily presence, which was theirs to enjoy for just a little while longer, would one day become their permanent possession.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

Jesus had already told his disciples everything they needed to know. He told them where he was going—the Father’s house—and he told them how to get there—he would bring them there. He was the one they needed to rely on if they were to ever arrive in the Father’s house. The disciples needed to know this in their hearts. Their reliance on keeping the law or performing good works wouldn’t bring them to the Father’s house. They needed to know that he was the way to the Father’s house.

“And you know the way to where I am going.” John 14:4

Jesus’ words must have been met by blank stares. The disciples were utterly confused by now. Jesus was going away. That much was clear to them. But they didn’t know where he was going

² Alcorn, *Heaven*, 233-234.

³ See Revelation 21 and 22.

(even though he had just told them). And now he said that they knew the way. But how could they know the way to this mysterious location when they didn't know where it was? Thomas, never one to shrink from displaying his own ignorance, spoke what they all must have been thinking.

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" John 14:5

Jesus looked Thomas in the eyes, yet he spoke to far more than just this one man. His words have carried from the upper room to the farthest corners of the earth.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

Thomas didn't think he knew the way. But, according to Jesus, he did know the way. In fact, "the way" was looking him straight in the eyes. But Jesus wasn't just the way for Thomas and the disciples. He is *the* way for all man. Notice the article "the" here, for it is quite significant. Jesus is not "a" way, as if he were but one of many avenues to the Father. He is "the" way—the only way. That is why Jesus was able to say, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

It is worth pondering the other two descriptors Jesus applied to himself ("the truth" and "the life"), for, by using them, Jesus was clearly saying much more about himself than simply reinforcing the fact that he is the way to God.

"I am ... the truth" – When Pilate asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), little did he know that he was looking at the truth. Jesus is the perfect revelation of God, which means he is also the perfect revelation of truth. He is completely reliable, for there is no falsehood in him. Knowing him is to know reality. Seeing him is to see clearly. We can trust him with our lives, for he is the trustworthy one. He is, as John 1:14 says, "full of grace and truth". And because he is full of truth, his word must also be truth.

"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

"I am ... the life" – Jesus is the source of our eternal life. But this fact, while true, does not fully explain Jesus' statement here. He is much more than just the source of our life. He is our life. Consider the following verse:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Galatians 2:19-20

If you are a Christian, have you realized this truth? Jesus is more than your Savior. He is your life. His strength is your strength. Paul understood this truth and relied on Christ's life within him, and this, as may be seen below, was the secret of his great success.

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Colossians 1:29

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

This is a truth all Christians must learn. For when we try to live the life only Christ can lead, we inevitably fail. Christ's life can only be led by Christ himself. This truth has radically changed my understanding of how the Christian life is to be lived. Christ is not expecting perfection out of us. He is expecting it out of himself! It is impossible to place our faith in ourselves and in our performance, for we have failed so many times. But placing our faith in Christ is easy, for he has never failed. And this—simply trusting in him—is what he wants out of us.

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." John 6:29

WEEK THREE

JOHN 14:1-14

If you are still trying to live the perfect Christian life, it's time you gave up the fight. Put your trust in Jesus, and watch him live his life through you.

THE EXCLUSIVITY OF CHRIST

Many truths are logically connected to the fact that Jesus is “the way, and the truth, and the life”. One of them may be seen in the last sentence of verse six.

“No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

This statement, of course, offends modern man. It strips other religions and methods of coming to God of all their “dignity” and “worth” and exposes them as frauds. As “the truth”, however, Jesus has no interest in preserving false hopes. He did not come to preserve the “dignity” of man. He came to save him.

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

JESUS AND THE FATHER

It is important to notice the emphasis Jesus placed on his Father throughout these chapters. Jesus emphasized this relationship throughout the gospels, but it is particularly focused on in these chapters.

“If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” John 14:7

Jesus and the Father are so intimately connected, that a relationship with Jesus truly equals a relationship with the Father. To really know Jesus is to really know the Father. But the disciples did not know Jesus in this way ... at least yet. Their view of him was fuzzy. They didn't see him clearly enough to see the Father in him. However, they would not remain ignorant of the Father for long. “From now on”—that is to say, from this time forward—the disciples would know the Father and see the Father. The word “now” is significant. Remember, Jesus used the same word in John 13:31 when he said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified”. In that verse, he spoke as if he had already been glorified, even though the process had just begun. The same is true in this verse. Now that the process of his death and resurrection had begun, Jesus was able to speak as if it were already completed. His death and resurrection would lead to great change in the disciples' lives. The Holy Spirit would come to reside in them and they would see things they had never seen before and know things they had never known before. The process that started on this night would lead to their knowing himself and God the Father in a new way.⁴

This explanation did not satisfy the disciples.

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” John 14:8

It is important to understand that this was not an inappropriate desire on Philip's part. Jesus did not rebuke him for asking this question. In fact, it may be said that all true disciples have a yearning to see the Father, for that is the cry of the Spirit within us.

... you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”
Romans 8:15

However, Philip was asking Jesus to do something that he had already done. He had already shown them the Father.

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who

⁴ Of course, this knowledge of the Father wasn't reserved for the disciples alone. Jesus speaks to us in the same way. We see the Father when we see Jesus. We know the Father when we know Jesus.

dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.” John 14:8-11

Jesus wasn't trying to keep the disciples from the Father. Rather, he wanted them to see him. And that is why he said what he said and did what he did. His words were the Father's words.

“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” John 12:49-50

And his works were the Father's works.

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.” John 5:19-20

If the disciples could not believe his words at this point, they could believe in his works, for they clearly testified to the Father's presence in his life. This wasn't the first time his disciples had been told that the works Jesus did demonstrated the connection between the Father and Jesus. Earlier, he had told the Jews the same thing.

“If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” John 10:37-38

The works testified to the Son's unity with the Father. They were done so that those who saw them might know and understand this relationship between Christ and the Father. They were done so that those who saw them might, as John 5:20 says, “marvel”. What a wonderful word! When we see Christ's works our mouths are to drop open and we are to be rendered speechless. What are we marveling at? Jesus! Not Jesus apart from the Father, but Jesus in unity with the Father.

Obviously, the disciples did not understand the oneness of the Father and Son at this time. But Jesus knew that, after his death and resurrection, they would understand. They would not be asking to see the Father again, for after his death and resurrection, they would know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that they had seen and known the Father in Jesus.

GREATER WORKS

The promises in the next three verses are staggering. But they must be seen in context. As you read these verses, think of the verses we have just considered.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” John 14:12-14

These verses are directly connected to the verses we have been considering. Remember, Jesus' works demonstrated his oneness with the Father. But what would happen to this testimony concerning Jesus' unity with the Father after Jesus left this earth? Would it diminish? No! It would continue and even increase *through* “whoever believes in [Jesus]” (John 14:12). It's important that we consider the type of belief to which Jesus was referring. In context, the belief that Jesus called for here must be seen as the same belief Jesus called the disciples to exhibit in verse 11: “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me”. Do you see it? The faith Jesus was calling his disciples to exhibit was focused on the unity he shared with the Father.

WEEK THREE

JOHN 14:1-14

But more than just faith was required in order for these greater works to be done. It also required Jesus “going to the Father” (John 14:12). Now why would Jesus tie his going to the Father to his followers’ ability to do greater works? What did this have to do with his followers doing great works? Was he saying that his physical proximity to the Father would somehow garner extra power from the Father? No. Rather, Jesus was saying that his death and resurrection and ascension to the place of glory at the Father’s right hand (all wrapped up in the phrase, “because I am going to the Father”) would bring about a change in how his followers were able to work. His death and resurrection would allow his followers to become one with himself. They would not be doing the works themselves. Rather, they would trust in him, and he would do the greater works. Don’t miss that part of the promise. It is not the followers who do these great works. On the contrary, Jesus does the works through the followers. As he said, “Whatever you ask in my name, this *I will do*”. What is the purpose of these greater works? We can answer this question by answering another question: what was the purpose behind Jesus’ works when he was physically here on earth? The answers are one and the same! The works testify to the unity of the Father and Son, so that the Father might be glorified as the Son is glorified.

The greater works are tied to the glory of God. And you, if you are a believer, are a part of that glory being revealed! God wants to do greater works through you because he wants to bring glory to himself. The promise has nothing to do with your greatness. It has everything to do with his greatness.

Now what, specifically, are the greater works his followers will be doing? I would suggest that we cannot limit these greater works to only those “great” things like healings or deliverances or mass conversions. These are not the only things that demonstrate the life of Christ. Small things like a cup of water given to a righteous man are also greater works. Visiting the sick is a greater work. Remembering those in prison is a greater work.⁵ Greater works are *any* works that Christ does through us. Anything done in the strength of Christ showcases his life in us, which showcases his unity with the Father, which brings glory to him.

Notice the powerful promise in regard to prayer in these verses: “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14). Staggering, isn’t it? Jesus said he will do *anything* we ask in his name. Don’t miss the reason why he answers these prayers—he does this “that the Father may be glorified in the Son”. The fundamental reason Jesus answers prayer is not because of your holy life (although that is important). The fundamental reason Jesus answers prayer is not because of the strength of your faith (although that, too, is important). The fundamental reason Jesus answers prayer is because of the glory of God! He answers because prayer provides an opportunity to display God’s glory. This should change the way we pray. We are not trying to convince a disinterested God to take pity on us and to (possibly) resolve our problems. We are praying to a very interested God, who is looking to display his glory! This increases my faith! I know God is interested in answering prayer, because I know he is interested in his glory.

Do you realize what Jesus has done in these verses? He has brought his followers into the unity enjoyed by the Father and the Son! Jesus’ relationship with the Father dictated all he said and did. May the same be said of our relationship with Jesus and with the Father. May we never forget that God is glorified when the work of Christ is displayed!

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

⁵ See Matthew 25:31-46.

Week Four

JOHN 14:15-31

WEEK FOUR

JOHN 14:15-31

DAY ONE

Read *John 14:15-31* through twice. The first time through these verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

JOHN 14:15-31

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” ²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

DAY TWO

Read *John 14:15-17*

1. What is the sign that someone loves Jesus? *John 14:15*

2. What does this say about those people who say that they love Jesus but do not obey his commands? See also *John 14:21, 23*

3. Why do you think Jesus called the Holy Spirit “another Helper”? What does this tell you about his job function? What, based on verses 15-17, do you think he would be helping the disciples to do?

4. According to Jesus’ words in verses 16 and 17, how would the following two groups relate to the Holy Spirit?

The World

The Disciples

5. Please read John 20:19-22 and describe the events surrounding the Holy Spirit’s entrance into the disciples’ lives.

6. Why do you think the disciples received the Holy Spirit on that particular day? *See Romans 10:9*

DAY THREE

Read **John 14:18-24**

7. In verses 18 through 21, Jesus referred to his resurrection. According to verse 19, what benefit would his resurrection bring to his disciples’ lives?

8. Jesus said that the disciples would know three specific things “In that day”. What are these three things?

1.

2.

3.

WEEK FOUR

JOHN 14:15-31

9. What three things did Jesus promise to the one who obeys his commandments? John 14:21

1.

2.

3.

10. What three things did Jesus promise to the one who obeys his commandments in verse 23?

1.

2.

3.

11. Why do you think Jesus repeated this same thought regarding love and obedience so many times in these few verses?

12. What was Jesus teaching us about the nature of love?

13. Based on these verses, what is the easiest way to foster intimacy with the Lord?

DAY FOUR

Read John 14:25-26

14. What two things will the Holy Spirit do in the life of the believer? John 14:26

1.

2.

15. How does 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 describe the Holy Spirit's role in the life of the believer?

16. What confidence should the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is within him give to the believer?

17. Think of excuses you might have used to excuse your disobedience to Christ. What are a few of these excuses? How does the Holy Spirit's presence in your life eliminate these excuses?

DAY FIVE

Read **John 14:27-31**

18. What did Jesus say he was leaving with the disciples? What, if anything, does this have to do with Jesus' instruction to the disciples in the second half of verse 27?

19. How do you think the disciples could have accessed this gift that Jesus was leaving with them? How can you access this gift?

20. What should have been the disciples' response to Jesus departure? Why?

WEEK FOUR

JOHN 14:15-31

21. How did Jesus describe his relation to Satan in verse 30?

22. If Satan wasn't behind Jesus' death, who was? *John 14:31*

23. According to verse 31, why did Jesus obey the Father?

24. What similarity do you find between Jesus' obedience to the Father and the believer's obedience to Jesus? *See John 14:15, 21, 23-24*

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter 14:15-31

25. Read the study notes and then complete the following sentence. This week the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

IF YOU LOVE ME ...

This next segment begins with a command that was to be repeated, in one form or another, several times on this night.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John 14:15

Love and obedience, it seems, are inseparable. If you do not love Jesus, you will not obey him. But if you do love him, you will obey him. We will be examining this command in greater detail later. For now, it is enough to say that obedience is the mark of those who love Christ.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

At this point, rather than expanding on the commandments the disciples are to keep, Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit. Why did he introduce the Holy Spirit at this point in the conversation? Perhaps because he was now talking about actions the disciples were to perform. High demands were being placed on the disciples. Their relationship with the Lord would be judged by their obedience to the Lord. The disciples needed to know that they would not be left alone to meet this standard. They would have a Helper.

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

The Helper would be given, Jesus said, upon his request. He would ask the Father, and the Father would give the Helper to the disciples. The Holy Spirit would then become “another Helper”. The word “another” is quite significant here. Jesus was obviously comparing the Holy Spirit to someone else who had been the disciples’ helper—namely himself. Unlike Jesus, however, this Helper would not be leaving the disciples. He was coming to them, and, once he had arrived, he would be with them forever. But he wouldn’t just be with them, operating as an external helper. He would actually be in them, operating as an internal helper.

We must be careful that we do not miss the full import of Jesus’ comment here. Jesus was going to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit—God himself!—to come and live inside of the disciples. This must have been a shocking revelation to the disciples. What changes would he bring to their lives? Little did they know that this promise would be fulfilled the very next Sunday evening.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
John 20:19-22

But while the disciples were to experience a great change in just a few days, “the world” would not. Jesus was quite clear that the world was not to enjoy this same relationship with the Helper. His help was reserved for Jesus’ followers. In fact, those who do not know him cannot see him or understand him. They cannot acknowledge him, because he is invisible to them. They are helpless, but they do not know that they are helpless, for they do not know that there even is a Helper.

Of course, the fact that the disciples would have a new Helper did not mean that their “old” helper was forgetting about them.

WEEK FOUR

JOHN 14:15-31

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” John 14:18-20

What joy this must have brought the disciples! Jesus would come to them and they would see him. Their separation was to be very brief. Little did they know that they would all, save Thomas, be seeing him on Sunday night. Notice the little statement, “Because I live, you also will live.” These seven words neatly summarize the gospel message: Jesus’ life enables his followers to live. Remember his statement earlier in the chapter: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”? Their reunion would result in new life for the disciples. This new life would have immediate results for the disciples. One of these results would be a greater level of understanding regarding their relationship with Jesus and Jesus’ relationship with the Father. They would know “that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you”.

Do you know this? Do you see the intertwining of your life with Jesus’ life? Do you recognize the unity he has with the Father and the unity you have with him and the resulting unity you have with the Father through Christ? You are not alone in this world. Don’t think of yourself as an orphan. You are in Christ and Christ is in you and Christ in is the Father!

THE OBEDIENCE – FELLOWSHIP PATTERN

The pattern established in these verses is repeated several times in this chapter. The pattern begins with Jesus talking about how the love of the believer is expressed by obedience. The pattern ends with Jesus talking about how the Father and Son will respond to that obedience.

This pattern may be seen in verse 21.

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” John 14:21

The pattern repeats itself in verse 23.

Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” John 14:23

Do you see it? The life of the obedient servant is not one of drudgery. Rather, it is one of sweet fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Obedience, we could say, equals fellowship. Since this is the case, many of us will need to rework our understanding of the word “obedience,” for it is loaded with a good deal of baggage that has nothing to do with fellowship. We think of obedience as slavish submission to one whom we do not want to obey. This is not what Jesus was talking about here. He was talking about doing the very things that give us the greatest joy!

Earlier in the book of John, Jesus told his disciples that obedience to the Father was like food to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” John 4:31-34

Jesus’ obedience was his food. It was what kept him going. In the same way, our obedience to Jesus’ words is our food. It results in the sweet fellowship that is, as David said in Psalm 63:3, “better than life”.

Once again, Jesus made it clear that the disciples were not going to have to shoulder the load of this obedience alone. They would have a Helper.

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 14:25-26

The disciples would not need to constantly be worrying about whether they were doing the right things. The Holy Spirit would teach them what was right. They wouldn't have to worry about whether they had forgotten some of Jesus' commands. The Holy Spirit would remind them of everything Jesus had said. Do you see how the Holy Spirit took the load off of the disciples' shoulders? He does the same for us. God is asking us to do something that requires supernatural strength. And he has provided that strength in the person of the Holy Spirit. He not only gives you the desire to obey Jesus' commands, he gives you the strength to accomplish those commands. This is precisely the point Paul made in Philippians 2:13.

... for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
Philippians 2:13

On the face of it, Jesus' departure would seem like the worst thing that could have ever happened to the disciples. But the exact opposite was true. His departure was exactly what they needed. Jesus wanted to make sure that his disciples saw his departure as a blessing and not a curse.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.” John 14:27-29

In spite of Jesus' words, I'm not sure the disciples *felt* greatly comforted at this moment. My guess is they felt more bewildered than anything. Remember, the Holy Spirit wouldn't be coming to live inside of them for a few days. Until then, they would be trying to make the best of what appeared to them to be a very bad situation. Jesus' words would make better sense to them once the Holy Spirit had come to inhabit them.

The final verses in chapter 14 include three very important points.

“I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.” John 14:30-31

First, notice that Jesus acknowledged the fact that Satan was coming. He was referring to Satan's impending attack on Jesus. But Jesus made it clear that Satan was not controlling his destiny. Rather, Jesus was doing as the Father had commanded him. The disciples must know that Satan was not in charge and was not winning a great victory in the days ahead.

Second, notice why Jesus obeyed the Father. He did it “so that the world may know that I love the Father”. Ultimately, this is why he went to the cross. He went because of his love for the Father and his desire for the entire world to see his love for the Father. What does Jesus want us to think of when we think of his sacrifice on the cross? First and foremost, he wants us to think of his relationship with the Father. I would suggest that most of us do not consider this first—if at all—when we think of Jesus' death on the cross. We think of Jesus' love for mankind. But this is not what Jesus wanted the world to see, at least primarily. He wanted the world to see his love for the Father.

WEEK FOUR

JOHN 14:15-31

Third, notice that Jesus' love for the Father was demonstrated by his obedience to the Father which resulted in fellowship with the Father. Hasn't that been the theme of these verses we've been considering in this lesson? It seems this is a universal pattern.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." John 14:15

"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me." John 14:21

"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word ..." John 14:23

"Whoever does not love me does not keep my words." John 14:24

Obedience equals fellowship. We have seen it in these verses, and we have seen it in our Lord's death. May we also see it in our own lives. The joy of sweet fellowship awaits you.

Week Five

JOHN 15:1-17

WEEK FIVE

JOHN 15:1-17

DAY ONE

Read *John 15:1-17* through twice. The first time through these verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

JOHN 15:1-17

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ 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. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹² *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”*

DAY TWO

Read *John 15:1-6*

1. In *John 15:1*, Jesus said, “I am the true vine ...”. Jesus used this same “I am the ...” formula several other times throughout the book of *John*. For each verse listed below, answer the following: (1) what did Jesus say that he is?, (2) what do you think Jesus meant by using this description in regard to himself?

John 6:35

John 8:12

John 10:7

John 10:11

John 11:25

John 14:6

2. Israel was compared to a vine in the Old Testament. Describe the manner in which is Israel compared to a vine (or the fruit of the vine) in the following passages.

Psalm 80:8-16

Isaiah 5:1-7

Jeremiah 2:21

Jeremiah 5:10

Hosea 10:1

3. As a vine, how is Jesus different from Israel?

DAY THREE

Read **John 15:1-6**

4. What is the general outline of the vine/branches analogy? Who are the main characters? What does each character do? What happens to each character? *John 15:1-6*

5. Jesus placed great significance on whether a branch bears fruit or not. What do you think fruit is?

WEEK FIVE

JOHN 15:1-17

WEEK FIVE

JOHN 15:1-17

6. According to John 15:2 the Father prunes those who already are bearing fruit. What is the goal of this pruning? What, specifically, do you think the Father cuts off or trims back in the Christian's life?

7. Do you have any specific examples of pruning that have taken place in your life? If so, what are they?

8. If you are a Christian, what comfort can you find in the fact that the Father is pruning you?

9. What happens to those branches that do not bear fruit? *John 15:2, 6*

DAY FOUR

Read **John 15:1-17**

10. According to John 15:4-5, how does a branch bear fruit?

11. Look up the word "abide" in a dictionary or Bible dictionary and write out the definition below.

12. How does someone abide in Christ? What, specifically, is Jesus wanting his followers to do?

13. According to verse 10, how does one abide in Christ's love?

14. Would those who know you best say that you are abiding in Christ?

DAY FIVE

Read John 15:1-17

15. Review John 15:1-17 and write out the specific promises Jesus made regarding those who abide in him.

16. What changes, if any, has this passage prompted you to make in your life in regard to your relationship with Jesus?

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter 15:1-17

17. Read the study notes and then complete the following sentence. This week the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

JOHN 15:1-17

John 15 is probably one of the most loved chapters in the Bible.¹ Here, in the clearest possible terms, Jesus painted a picture of what his relationship with the believer is like. He also outlined what the believer should expect as a result of this relationship.

THE SETTING

But before we look at the chapter itself, let’s consider the setting for the chapter. John 14 ended with Jesus telling the disciples, “Rise, let us go from here”. This indicates some sort of change in location. The words in chapters 13 and 14 had been spoken at and around the table. The words spoken in chapters 15-17 were not spoken at the table. However, it is not clear exactly where Jesus and the disciples were when he spoke the words recorded in chapters 15 through 17. They weren’t spoken in the garden of Gethsemane, for chapter 18 begins with the following words:

¹ An interesting fact concerning this chapter is that it is one of only three chapters in the New Testament comprised entirely of Jesus’ words (the others being Matthew 6 and 25).

WEEK FIVE

JOHN 15:1-17

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. John 18:1

Perhaps the words recorded in these chapters were spoken while Jesus and the disciples were preparing to leave the upper room. Or perhaps they were spoken as Jesus and the disciples made their way out of the city of Jerusalem toward Gethsemane.

THE TOPIC

But while the setting may have changed, the topic had not. In chapter 14, Jesus unveiled the type of relationship the disciples would henceforth enjoy with him.

“Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” John 14:19-20

In chapter 15, Jesus focused on the results this “you in me/I in you” relationship would produce, using an analogy to prove this point.

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

This is the last of the seven “I am” analogies appearing in the book of John.² By using the words “I am,” Jesus was not only introducing a comparison between himself and something else (e.g., a gate or bread), he was also pointing to his own deity. As background to Jesus’ use of the phrase “I am,” it’s important to know that God told Moses that his name is “I am” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus claimed this name as his own when he told the Jews, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). This was, to the Jews, the most blasphemous thing Jesus could have said. That’s why, in the very next verse, we read that “they picked up stones to throw at him” (John 8:59).

The focus of this “I am” analogy in John 15 is the relationship the believer has with Jesus. It describes the full, rich life that is available to all believers. Unfortunately, all believers do not live this type of life. Like a race horse pulling a wagon full of manure, we often live a life that is well beneath what is available to us. Fortunately, things do not have to stay that way.

THE VINE ANALOGY

As background to this chapter, it is important to know that Israel is referred to as a vine or a vineyard several times in the Old Testament.³ Consider the following words recorded in the book of Jeremiah:

“Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?” Jeremiah 2:21

Here, we see God condemning Israel as “degenerate” and as “a wild vine”. This verse is typical of the verses comparing Israel to a vine or a vineyard. Not one of the comparisons of Israel to a vine or a vineyard is positive.

But Israel’s connection to a vine or a vineyard went beyond the comparisons made in the Scriptures. According to commentator George R. Beasley-Murray, Jewish historian Josephus reported that “a large golden vine was set at the sanctuary entrance in the temple built by Herod.”⁴ Leon Morris, in his commentary titled *The Gospel According to John*, notes “... in time the vine became a symbol of Israel, and it is found, for example, on coins of the Maccabees.”⁵

Whether, in his statement recorded John 15:1, Jesus meant to compare himself to Israel is not known. However, by his deliberate use of the word “true” in front of the word “vine,” it is clear that Jesus did not consider *any other “vine”—Israel included—as true*. Israel is not the only “false vine” to which Jesus might be compared. Anything to which we connect ourselves and from which we attempt to draw our strength may be compared to a vine. Success or religion or money or education or a myriad of other things may become a vine from which we attempt to draw life and

2 The other “I am” passages are: John 6:35 (“I am the bread of life”), 8:12 (“I am the light of the world”), 10:7 (“I am the door of the sheep”), 10:11 (“I am the good shepherd”), 11:25 (“I am the resurrection and the life”), and 14:6 (“I am the way, and the truth, and the life”).

3 See Psalm 80:8-16, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21, 5:10 and 12:10, Ezekiel 15:1-8 and 17:1-24, and Hosea 10:1.

4 George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987), 272.

5 Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), 668.

strength. But these vines, like Israel, will become degenerate and wild and will produce poor fruit. This is the nature of all false vines. Jesus, on the other hand, is not wild or degenerate. Rather, as the true vine he alone is able to produce fruit that is pleasing to the Father.

In addition to the true vine (Jesus), there are three other main characters in this analogy: the vinedresser (the Father), the branches that do not bear fruit, and the branches that do bear fruit.⁶ The vinedresser's actions are determined by the productivity of the branches.

“Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” John 15:2

THE FRUITLESS BRANCHES

Let's focus on the unfruitful branch first. If the branch does not bear fruit, the vinedresser takes it away. Verse six goes on to describe what happens to these branches that have been removed.

“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.” John 15:6

Scholars have long debated the identity of these unfruitful branches. Are these unproductive branches actually Christians? If so, can we infer from this passage that unfruitful Christians are cut off from Christ by the Father (verse 2) and are eventually thrown into Hell (verse 6)? This doesn't seem to fit with statements that Jesus made elsewhere.

For instance, consider Jesus' words in the following passages:

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:37-40

“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.” John 10:28-29

Based on verses like these, it would appear that John 15:2 is not describing unfruitful Christians being cut off from Christ. A more likely possibility⁷ is that the unfruitful branches here are those who have some relationship with Jesus, at least in word, but are not true Christians. That is, these branches that have never produced fruit are people who have never truly put their trust in Jesus. The reason they have no fruit is because they are not actually connected to the vine. His life is not in them, and this explains their lack of fruit.

Judas is a perfect example of a fruitless branch. He had some connection with Christ; in fact, he was one of the 12 disciples. But, while he appeared to be a true disciple—so much so, in fact, that the disciples had no idea which one of them would betray Jesus—he wasn't a true disciple. It may be that Jesus had Judas in mind as he described the branches that are taken away by the Father.

We must remember that not all who would call themselves followers of Christ are truly followers of Christ. Jesus said that many who did not know him would claim to know him.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” Matthew 7:21-23

6 The Holy Spirit is not referred to by name in this analogy, although fruit bearing is impossible apart from his work.

7 I recognize that a few commentators believe the vinedresser doesn't take away the branches, but rather he “lifts them up.” This is a possible interpretation, as the verb translated “he takes them away” can also be translated “he lifts them up.” If this were the correct interpretation, Jesus would be saying that God “repositions” the fruitless branches that they might be in a position to better bear fruit.

WEEK FIVE

JOHN 15:1-17

THE BRANCHES THAT DO BEAR FRUIT

However, not all branches are fruitless. It is the natural response of a branch on a vine to bear fruit. In the same way, the life of Christ in a person will naturally result in fruit being produced.

“Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

What is fruit? Quite simply, it is the life of Christ making itself known in and through a person. Perpetual fruitlessness is proof that a person does not know Christ, for fruit—the evidence of the life of Christ—will be produced in all who are connected to him.⁸ John makes this clear in his first epistle. (Note: don’t look for the word “fruit” in these verses—you won’t find it. Instead, look for the evidence of Christ’s life being seen through the believer.)

No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:6-10

Here, we see that practicing righteousness and not making a practice of sinning are both fruit—evidence—of the life of Christ. Not only does the life of Christ result in good being done, it also results in evil not being done. “God’s seed” prevents the believer from continuing in sin.⁹

Remember Jesus’ words in John 14? Four different times he emphasized the fact that those who love him keep his commandments. Thus, keeping Jesus’ commandments is also fruit. John emphasized the same truth in 1 John when he wrote,

Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not found in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 1 John 2:4-6

Fruit may also be seen in the Holy Spirit’s personality being expressed through the believer.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ... Galatians 5:22-23

Of course, these examples I have just given are all outside of John 15. As we move through this passage, we’ll see descriptions of other fruits that are produced in the life of the one who abides in Jesus. Simply put, the fruit that is produced in the believer is of amazing size and quality! Jesus’ descriptions in this chapter should set our mouths watering, knowing that these things are being produced in our lives. We will look at this fruit shortly. Before we do this, however, let’s take a few moments and consider two things that take place in the lives of all those who would bear fruit: pruning and abiding.

1. PRUNING

As the vinedresser, the Father is interested in the branches (Christians) producing as much fruit as possible. That is why he prunes them. Jesus didn’t explain how the pruning takes place in the life of the Christian. He simply said that it does take place. As the owner-operator of the vineyard, the Father takes fruit production quite seriously—indeed, he expects a bountiful harvest. To that end he examines our lives, focusing his attention on anything that takes unnecessary energy away from fruit production.

8 See Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:15-20. This, of course, does not mean that a Christian will be equally fruitful at all times in life. But Scripture does indicate that a Christian will bear at least some fruit.

9 John is not saying that a true Christian will never sin. However, the fact that Christians sometimes do sin does not excuse sin. We are commanded not to sin. Sin must not be done. However, if it is done, the Christian is to confess the sin. See 1 John 1:9.

J. Carl Laney, in an excellent article appearing in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, the journal published by Dallas Theological Seminary, explains several different ways that “real” vines are pruned.

“Pinching” with the thumb and finger removes the growing tip of a vigorous shoot so that it will not grow too rapidly and be broken or damaged by the wind. “Topping” involves the removal of one or two feet from the end of a growing shoot to prevent a later loss of the entire shoot which might be snapped off by the wind. “Thinning,” the removal of flower or grape clusters, enables the rest of a branch to bear more and better quality fruit. “Pruning” involves the cutting away of suckers that arise from below the ground or from the trunk and main branches. In addition to this pruning during the growing season, during the fall or winter, the farmer prunes the vines back to the main stalk, except for perhaps two mature shoots.¹⁰

I would guess our pruning as Christians is somewhat like the pruning Laney describes here. Sometimes we are pinched, sometimes we are thinned, sometimes we are topped, and sometimes our “suckers” are cut away. Maybe it feels like all four of these things are happening to you right now! Pruning may not be comfortable, but it is, nonetheless, comforting. I say that it is comforting, because it means that God is doing what is necessary in our lives to ensure our fruitfulness. So often, we think that our fruitfulness depends *entirely* on our own performance. THIS IS NOT THE CASE. The Vinedresser is at work, examining our lives and removing those things that hinder or that will hinder our fruitfulness.

We should not assume that the Father is only pruning those things in our lives that are directly related to sin. I don’t believe this is the case. God will prune us even if we have not sinned. He knows what is best in our lives and will bring the changes necessary to ensure our long-term fruitfulness. Our fruitfulness matters to him because fruitfulness reflects the glory of Christ which, in turn, reflects the Father’s glory. Ultimately, then, the Father prunes us because he is concerned about his own glory.

2. ABIDING

While pruning describes the Father’s work in the life of the Christian, abiding describes the Christian’s relationship with Christ. In fact, “abide” is *the* key word describing the Christian’s relationship with Jesus. Forms of this word are used three times in verse four, once each in verses five and six, twice in verse seven, twice in verse ten, and once in verse 16.

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

The word “abide” means “to remain” or “to live.” The idea is of staying in Christ and making him your permanent home. How do we do this? Part of the answer may be found in verse seven, where Jesus said, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you ...”. To abide in Jesus means that Jesus’ words are abiding within us; that is, they are remaining and dwelling within us. Where do we find his words? We find them in the Bible. This would seem to indicate that reading and studying the Bible (with a receptive heart) is important to abiding in Christ. We hear Jesus’ words preached when the church is gathered. This would seem to indicate that actively listening to the sermon (again, with a receptive heart) is important to abiding in Christ. Of course, there are many other places where we might find Christ’s words. The point is, if we want to abide, we need to soak up the word. It needs to dwell within us. And as we soak up the word, we will abide. And as we abide, we will increasingly soak up the word. Do you see the pattern here?

What happens when Jesus’ words abide within us? We become people of faith. We are constantly reminded that it is not our effort that brings about results, but Jesus’ finished work on the cross and his ongoing work as our High Priest. Jesus’ words remind us that we need to constantly rely upon him. This fact can be easy to forget. Paul needed to remind the Galatian believers of this fact. While they had begun in faith, somewhere along the line, someone convinced them that they needed to add their own efforts to their faith if they were to be “perfected”.

¹⁰ J. Carl Laney, “Abiding Is Believing: The Analogy of the Vine in John 15:1-6,” *BSac* 146 (1989): 57.

WEEK FIVE

JOHN 15:1-17

Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Galatians 3:2-3

What a tragedy! The Galatians had started in faith but were now trying to abide—to stay in Jesus—by their works. This approach never works. Having started in faith, we need to continue in faith. Our trust needs to be not only in the work Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection but also in the work he is doing today. Our trust needs to be not only in the one who died 2,000 years ago, but in the one who is living today. Notice Paul’s instructions to the believers in Colosse:

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught ... Colossians 2:6-7

The Christians in Colosse were to walk in Jesus in the same way that they had received him. In other words, they began by faith and they were to continue by faith. Apart from faith, we have no relationship with Christ. Apart from faith, we are just dead wood that will be thrown into the fire. However, if our trust is in Christ, we are not dead wood. Faith opens a channel for his sap—his power and life—to flow in and through us.

Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” John 6:29

If I have faith in Christ, I will not rely on myself, for faith, by its very definition, is an acknowledgment that I can do nothing on my own. I will, instead, put my trust in another.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:4-5

Those who do not have faith cannot bear the fruit of Christ. But those who do have faith are supernaturally connected to Christ and will bear fruit. The Father’s pruning ensures it.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF FRUIT

In verses seven through 17, Jesus outlined some of the fruit those pruned by the Father and abiding in Christ should expect to see. These are amazing promises. I would encourage you to read them slowly and to think hard about them. Do you live as if they are, in fact, true?

1. If we abide in Christ ... our prayers will be answered.

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” John 15:7

This promise is repeated in John 15:16.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

Your praying is not in vain. If you abide in Christ—which includes, as we have already discussed, his words abiding in you—you can expect an answer. This should encourage you to pray all the more.

2. If we abide in Christ ... we produce evidence that we are Jesus’ disciples.

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

If we want to know if we are Christ's disciples, we need look no further than the evidence of it in our lives. Remember, Christ's life will produce life in those who are connected to him.

3. If we abide in Christ ... God the Father is glorified.

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

When we, as branches, abide in Christ and thus bear fruit, we display Christ's greatness for all to see. And when he is glorified in this way, God the Father is also glorified, for the display of Christ's greatness is also the display of the Father's greatness in Christ. We were created for this purpose (see Isaiah 43:7).

4. If we abide in Christ ... we will abide in his love.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” John 15:9-10

Abiding in Jesus' love is not referring to Jesus loving us (although he does love us!). It is referring to us making his love our habitation—the place we dwell. Just think, even while we live in a world filled with cruel hatred, our dwelling place can be in the love of Christ.

5. If we abide in Christ ... we will have full joy.

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

It is significant that Jesus uses a present tense verb when describing his joy being in the believer. In the Greek, a present tense verb indicates a continuous action. Thus, Jesus is saying that those who abide in him will have his joy continuously within them.

6. If we abide in Christ ... Jesus calls us his friends.

“You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” John 15:14-15

What a privileged position! We are not considered servants. We are considered friends. That must mean Jesus enjoys our company. It also means he trusts us with information he wouldn't tell to those outside his circle of friends. As Jesus' friend, we will know what Jesus is doing; for he lets his friends know those things that he has heard from the Father.

7. If we abide in Christ ... we will love one another.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12

Isn't this interesting? Abiding in Christ results in us loving one another. The church grows in love as its individual members abide in Christ. A sign that I am not abiding is if I am not loving.

8. If we abide in Christ ... our fruit will remain.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide ...” John 15:16

WEEK FIVE

JOHN 15:1-17

Have you ever worked on something only to see your work produce no results? Of course you have. Rotten fruit leaves you frustrated, tired, angry, bitter, etc., etc., etc.. But here, we read that those who abide in Christ will not spend their time in wasted effort. Don't you want your fruit to last? If that is your desire, you must abide in Christ.

A REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

Let's end this lesson by taking a look at the life of Hudson Taylor, the famous 19th century missionary. Taylor was the founder of the China Inland Mission. While he had achieved some measure of "success" as a missionary and had convinced others to follow him into the field, he was miserable. He just could not seem to find joy in his labors. He just couldn't find victory over sin. Taylor poured out his feelings to his sister Amelia in a letter.

My mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally, and for our Mission, of more holiness, life, power in our souls. But personal need stood first and was the greatest. I felt the ingratitude, the danger, the sin of not living nearer to God. I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolution, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for retirement and meditation—but all was without effect.

Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often cause me to forget Him. Then one's nerves get so fretted in this climate that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts, and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.

Then came the question, "Is there no rescue? Must it be thus to the end—constant conflict and, instead of victory, too often defeat?" How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, "to them gave He power to become the Sons of God" (i.e., God-like) when it was not so in my own experience? Instead of growing stronger, I seemed to be getting weaker and to have less power against sin; and no wonder, for faith and even hope were getting very low. I felt I was a child of God: His Spirit in my hear would cry, in spite of all, "Abba, Father." But to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless.¹¹

Taylor's answer came in 1869. He read a book written by Stephen H. Tyng entitled "Christ is All." Here, Taylor learned the secret of abiding in Christ. He realized that he needed to believe that he was a branch. "I am a part of [Jesus], and have just to believe it and act upon it."¹² This understanding changed his life forever. By the time of his death, over 200 CIM mission stations had been established in China and 800 missionaries had dedicated their lives to the work. Beyond this, Taylor changed personally. He found new joy in his labor. He found a strength that he had never had before. The answer, he realized, wasn't found in his efforts. The answer was found in abiding.

It still is.

¹¹ Vance Christie, *Hudson Taylor* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour, 1999), 173-174.

¹² Christie, *Hudson Taylor*, 176.

Week Six

JOHN 15:18-27

WEEK SIX

JOHN 15:18-27

DAY ONE

Read *John 15:18-27* through twice. The first time through these verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

JOHN 15:18-27

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’

²⁶ “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

DAY TWO

Read *John 15:18-27*

1. In verses 18-27, Jesus discussed the hatred and persecution the disciples would receive. From whom would they receive this persecution?

2. What do the following verses teach about the nature of this persecutor?

John 3:31

John 7:7

John 8:23-24

John 14:16-17

John 14:30

John 17:14

John 18:36-37

Romans 12:2

Ephesians 2:1-3

James 4:4

1 John 2:15-17

1 John 3:13

1 John 5:19

3. In what ways have these verses changed your opinion of mankind?

DAY THREE

Read **John 15:18-27**

4. What are the specific reasons Jesus provided detailing why his followers would experience this treatment? (There are at least five specific reasons given in these verses.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY FOUR

Read **John 15:18-27**

5. Based on the following verses, what part will persecution play in the “normal” Christian’s life?

John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12

WEEK SIX

JOHN 15:18-27

6. How does this alter your expectations concerning your life?

7. Why do you think God allows persecution directed toward those he loves? What good, if any, might it do in the life of the one receiving the persecution?

8. What good, if any, might it bring to the church?

9. What harm might it bring to the individual or the church?

10. According to Matthew 5:10-12, what should a Christian's response be toward persecution? Is this really possible?

11. How does John 16:33 say that we should respond toward persecution? What, according to Jesus, enables the Christian to respond in this manner?

DAY FIVE

Read John 15:18-27

12. What help does God provide in the midst of persecution? *John 15:26-27; Mark 13:9-13*

13. What comfort should this bring to the Christian?

14. What was Jesus' intention in sharing these words with his disciples? *John 16:1-4*

15. How is it possible to live with the knowledge of these truths and yet live a life that is filled with joy and that is not dominated by fear?

16. In what ways, if any, has this passage changed your view of what “normal” life on this earth will look like for the Christian?

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter 15:18-27

17. Read the study notes and then complete the following sentence. This week the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

JOHN 15:18-27

While the last passage we considered is a favorite of many Christians, I doubt many would say the same of this passage. The first 17 verses of John 15 concern the believers’ relationship with Jesus. The last ten verses concern the believers’ relationship with “the world.” In the first 17 verses, we read about Jesus’ love for his followers. In the last ten verses, we read about the world’s hatred for Jesus’ followers. The change is almost as shocking as the change one feels when, after standing in a hot shower for a few minutes, the hot water unexpectedly turns cold.

THE WORLD’S HATRED

Jesus introduced this passage by telling his followers about the treatment they should expect from the world.

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.” John 15:18

In telling his disciples that they would be hated (based on the verses that follow, it’s easy to see that the word “if” in this verse is not conditional), Jesus was careful to let them know that he had experienced the world’s hatred first. Why did (and does) the world hate Jesus? Jesus revealed the answer to this question in a conversation he had with his brothers.

“The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.” John 7:7

Ahhhh! There’s the answer. The world hates Jesus because he exposes and speaks against its sin. The world does not want its sin exposed. Knowing this, is it any wonder that the world hates the followers of Christ? Our very presence reminds the world of its sin.

WEEK SIX

JOHN 15:18-27

At this point, it may be helpful to consider Jesus' usage of the words, "the world." In this context, he was not referring to the world as a place (e.g., planet earth). Rather, the world refers to sinful humanity living in opposition to God. As we move through these verses we'll see how the world's opposition and hatred of God is expressed in the way it treats Jesus' followers (for instance, as we saw in verse 18, the world hates Jesus' followers because it hated Jesus first).

FIVE REASONS CHRISTIANS ARE HATED AND PERSECUTED

In this passage, Jesus outlined at least five reasons why the world hates believers and persecutes them:

Reason #1

We have already considered the first reason the world hates the followers of Jesus—because of our connection to Jesus.

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you." John 15:18

The fact that the world hated Jesus *before* it hated us, as strange as it may seem to be, is very comforting. Jesus understands what we're going through; he understands it because he has experienced it himself. In fact, in order to function as our high priest, Jesus needed to experience everything we will experience.

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God ... Hebrews 2:17

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

Jesus has lived where we will live. He has gone through what we will go through. He is both merciful and sympathetic. This allows us to go to him with confidence. He understands!

Reason #2

A second reason the world hates the disciples is because we are not "of the world".

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. John 15:19

What did Jesus mean when he said that his followers are not "of" the world? He meant that his followers, while living in this world, are not worldly in their origin or makeup. They are a different sort of creature (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). They are "of" heaven. To use a rather crude analogy, Jesus' followers, while they are physically identical to those who are of the world, are stuffed with a different sort of material. Paul alluded to the "other-worldliness" of Christians in his words to the church in Corinth.

As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:48

If you are a Christian, you are "of heaven". That is one reason the world hates you.

Reason #3

A third reason the disciples should expect to be hated is that the disciples are Jesus' servants, and a servant should not expect to be treated better than his master.

"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours." John 15:20

How do we expect the world to treat us? We should expect to be treated in the same manner in which the world treated our Master. He was hated. If we are his servants, they will hate us also. This should eliminate the surprise and indignation we sometimes feel when we or other Christians are hated. What do we expect? Our Master was treated the same way. Are we, his servants, worthy of better treatment than he received?

Reason #4

The three reasons we have considered are peripheral. In verse 21, Jesus traced persecution back to its root. Persecution is ultimately related to the world's relationship with God the Father.

“But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.” John 15:21

The world does not know the Father. This does not mean that they do not know of his existence. God has, from the very beginning, been careful to proclaim his existence to mankind.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Romans 1:19-20

While the world has known of God's existence, as Romans 1 goes on to say, it “did not honor him as God or give thanks to him” (Romans 1:21). In other words, the world has not known him as God. Because the world has no regard for God, it hates those who are connected to him.

Reason #5

The fifth reason why Jesus' followers should expect persecution in their lives is different from the others in that it is not because of the world. Rather, it is because of the Word.

“But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’” John 15:25

Persecution is inevitable because the Scriptures say that it is inevitable. The world's hatred of Jesus is prophesied. That means it will happen. As verse 25 says, “the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled”. The world's hatred of Jesus didn't end with his death. He lives within his followers, so, as long as he is present in this world, we can expect persecution to continue. Jesus had great confidence in the Scriptures. He said that it “cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Thus, based on the Scriptures alone, Jesus knew that persecution was inevitable.

HELP FOR THE PERSECUTED

Verses 26 and 27 do not appear, at first, to concern hatred and persecution. But they are very much connected to the verses we have just considered. These verses don't provide another reason why we will suffer persecution. Rather, these verses show us why we will be able to endure it.

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.” John 15:26-27

In these verses, Jesus reminded his followers that they will not face this persecution alone. They will have great help. Jesus has not left us to endure persecution alone. The Holy Spirit has come to help in the task of proclaiming Jesus to a hostile world bent on removing any vestiges of Christianity. They will not succeed.

WEEK SIX

JOHN 15:18-27

Consider Jesus' words in the following passage:

“When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” Matthew 10:19-20¹

Do you see the help the Holy Spirit provides in times of persecution? At the time of greatest need, he takes over—giving us exactly what we need to say! We don't need to worry! We've been given great help!

JESUS' WORDS IN LIGHT OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Jesus' words proved true in the lives of those hearing his message on this night. Ten of the eleven hearing his words died as martyrs (John's manner of death is unknown). In the days since then, countless more have lost their lives because of their faith. Most of the names of the faithful are unknown. But we do know a good deal about many of the martyrs. One example is Polycarp, who served as the bishop of Smyrna in the second century. Christianity was, at the time he lived, illegal. Late in his life, Polycarp was arrested and sentenced to death by burning at the stake. When urged to deny Christ, and thus, to save his life, Polycarp responded, “For eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no evil. How could I curse my king, who saved me?”² His final words, spoken while tied to the stake, were “Lord Sovereign God ... I thank you that you have deemed me worthy of this moment, so that, jointly with your martyrs, I may have a share in the cup of Christ. ... For this ... I bless and glorify you. Amen.”³ Polycarp was killed in A.D. 160.

Did you notice that Polycarp considered it an honor to suffer for Jesus? He didn't just endure it; he endured it gladly. This is exactly how Jesus told his followers to react when they are persecuted.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:11-12

We will be persecuted. There is no question regarding whether it will happen. Jesus was very clear about this in this passage. Paul said the same thing in his second letter to Timothy.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ...
2 Timothy 3:12

But persecution is not a cause for sorrow. Rather, we should rejoice when it happens because we will be rewarded because of it. We're being treated like the prophets. Far better to be identified with the prophets than with the world. The prophets, while they were unloved by the world, laid up a rich foundation for themselves in heaven. Those within the world, while they will be loved by the world, are laying a terrible foundation for themselves in hell. To put it another way, all will experience a time of pain. For the Christian, that time will be very brief (and will be followed by great reward). For the world, that time will be eternal.

1 See also Mark 13:9-13.

2 Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 1* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984), 44.

3 González, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 1*, 44.

Week Seven

JOHN 16

DAY ONE

Read *John* 16 through twice. The first time through these verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

JOHN 16

“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.³ And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.⁴ But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

¹⁶ “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.”¹⁷ So some of his disciples said to one another, “What is this that he says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’; and, ‘because I am going to the Father?’”¹⁸ So they were saying, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.”¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me’?”²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.²¹ When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.²³ In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

²⁵ “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.²⁸ I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

²⁹ His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! ³⁰ Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” ³¹ Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? ³² Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. ³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

DAY TWO

Read John 16:1-4a

1. Why did Jesus tell the disciples about the persecution they would soon face?

2. Why does the world persecute Christians? *John 16:3; John 15:21,24*

3. What do the following verses teach about persecution?

Acts 5:41

Acts 14:21-22

James 1:2-3

1 Peter 4:12-13

4. How do you think remembering Jesus’ words regarding persecution help the disciples when the persecution actually came? *John 16:4*

WEEK SEVEN

JOHN 16

DAY THREE

Read **John 16:4b-15**

5. Why was it to the disciples' advantage that Jesus was leaving? *John 16:7*

6. In verses eight through 11, Jesus listed several specific things the Holy Spirit would do when he comes. What are they?

7. Do you think the believer plays any part in these actions? If so, how?

8. In verses 12 through 15, Jesus listed several additional things the Holy Spirit would do when he comes. What are they?

9. Describe the Holy Spirit's working relationship with the other members of the Trinity.

John 16:13-15

DAY FOUR

Read **John 16:16-24**

10. What event was Jesus referring to in verses 16-20?

11. What would happen to the disciples' sorrow? *John 16:20-22*

12. Do you, like the disciples, experience joy because Jesus is alive? If not, what is keeping you from rejoicing in this truth?

13. In verses 23 and 24, Jesus talked about a change that would take place in the way that the disciples prayed. What is that change?

14. According to verse 23, how successful would the disciples' prayers be?

15. According to verse 24, what are two results of asking the Father in Jesus' name?

16. Has this been your experience?

DAY FIVE

Read **John 16:25-33**

16. Jesus said that the time was coming when he would tell the disciples plainly about the Father. Do you think that time has already come? If so, when did it come?

17. What are the Father's feelings about the disciples? Why does he feel this way?

18. In verse 32, Jesus told the disciples that they would soon abandon him. What was the comfort Jesus found in the face of this abandonment?

WEEK SEVEN

JOHN 16

19. Is this a source of comfort to you?

20. Jesus said that his followers would have peace in him. What do you think he meant by this? What is peace?

21. In verse 33, Jesus told the disciples that they would experience “tribulation” in the world, yet, it is clear that he did not want the disciples to live gloom-filled lives. How were the disciples to take heart with such a gloomy forecast?

22. Reflect on your own life. Do you take heart in this? Is it, alone, enough to encourage you? If not, why not?

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter 16

23. Read the study notes and then complete the following sentence. This week the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

JOHN 16

WHY JESUS FOCUSED ON PERSECUTION

In the last lesson we looked at the final ten verses of John 15. These verses focused on the persecution and hatred the disciples were to experience. It is worth asking why Jesus provided his disciples with such an extended treatment of persecution. There were, after all, other details that he purposely avoided discussing with them on this night. Jesus avoided those topics, he said, because his disciples were not able to “bear them now”.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” John 16:12

But the disciples were, apparently, able to bear the topic of persecution. In fact, as verse one of chapter 16 makes clear, they *needed* to bear this topic of persecution.

“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.” John 16:1

The implication here is that the disciples *would* fall away if they didn't know about the persecution that was coming their way. Impending persecution was a topic that they obviously could bear—and needed to bear—at this point. If they didn't hear about it, the upcoming persecution would take the disciples by surprise and they would fall away from the faith.

I love Jesus' knowledge of our mental and emotional makeup. Jesus knew which things he could discuss with his disciples and those things he couldn't discuss with his disciples (at least not yet). There were things that they simply couldn't handle at this point (e.g., the fact that gentiles were able to receive eternal life), and things that they could handle (persecution). Doesn't this give you great confidence regarding Jesus' work in your life? He knows what you can and cannot handle. He knows what you don't need to handle yet. He knows what you must handle now. And he is giving you the information you need at the appropriate time.

Jesus' words regarding the treatment the disciples would receive from the world served to prepare the disciples for the difficult days ahead. Jesus knew that terrible times of persecution were facing the disciples. He wasn't afraid to tell them how bad the persecution would get.

“They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.” John 16:2-3

Jesus wasn't afraid to tell the disciples this, because he knew that their knowledge regarding upcoming persecutions was vital to their survival.

“But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.” John 16:4a

Knowing that persecution is coming does not lead to fear-filled Christians. Rather, it leads to Christians who do not fall away. That is why Jesus said these things. He is interested in our long-term success.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus was not always so free with his knowledge regarding the future. In fact, as we learn from the second half of verse four, Jesus had purposely not told his disciples certain things.

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.”
John 16:4b

While Jesus was with the disciples he was able to shield them from certain things that they would one day have to face. In the same way that parents don't instruct their young children about how to file taxes because they do not need to know about taxes ... at least yet, Jesus didn't share everything with the disciples because he was with them and was taking care of them. But his departure was about to change everything. For the disciples, the news of Jesus' departure was tragic. Jesus' perspective was very different. He knew that his departure would be a great “advantage” to the disciples.

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”
John 16:7

It's important to notice that the Holy Spirit's coming (he is referred to as "the Helper" here) is tied to Jesus' going. How are they linked together? Quite simply, Jesus' departure brought about a change in humanity. His death, burial, and resurrection made it possible for man to be made holy. So holy, in fact, that the Holy Spirit could come and make his home in man. Remember Jesus' words in John 14:17? Jesus said, concerning the Holy Spirit, "he dwells with you and will be in you". Notice the future tense here. Jesus was saying that at some point in the future the Holy Spirit would come to live within the disciples. When did this happen? It happened on the very day Jesus rose from the dead. Remember, the disciples were gathered together that Sunday evening. Although the doors were locked, Jesus appeared to the disciples. They saw his body and knew that he had risen from the dead. Romans 10:9 indicates that the requirements for salvation are that you "confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead". While the disciples had previously confessed Jesus as Lord, this was the first possible moment they could have believed that he had been raised from the dead. Now, notice what Jesus said and did once the disciples had seen and acknowledged his presence.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:22

This was the moment promised in John 14:17! The Holy Spirit was now in the disciples! In the same way that God breathed on Adam and he became a living being (see Genesis 2:7), Jesus breathed on the disciples and they became new beings in him!

With this as our background, we return to Jesus' words in John 16:7.

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

Notice, Jesus did not, at this point, tell the disciples what advantages the Holy Spirit would bring to them. He only told them that there are advantages. We will see some of these advantages listed as we move through this passage.

THE "CONVICTING" WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit's work in this world is not unlike Jesus' work. Remember, the world hated Jesus because he spoke against its sin (see John 7:7). It should not surprise us, then, that the Holy Spirit does the same thing.

"And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." John 16:8-11

How does the Holy Spirit do this convicting? I believe he does this, at least in some measure, *through* individual Christians. That is, he uses the words and lives of Christians to bring conviction to the world. Remember, the Holy Spirit lives within the Christian. Through the Christian, then, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt.

The Holy Spirit's conviction is focused on three areas: sin, righteousness, and judgment. In other words, the world is guilty in regard to sin, in regard to righteousness, and in regard to judgment. Let's consider these three areas one at a time.

The world is guilty in regard to sin, because, as Jesus said, "they do not believe in me". Belief in Jesus—that is, trust in the work accomplished by his death, burial and resurrection—is the only way the guilt of sin can be removed. But the world refuses to believe in Jesus, therefore its guilt in regard to sin remains. The Holy Spirit constantly reminds the world of its guilt in this area.

The world is guilty in regard to righteousness because, as Jesus said, "I go to the Father". "I go to the Father" seems to encapsulate Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection within one phrase. These events vindicated Jesus, proving that he was righteous. They also made it possible for men to be counted

righteous. By refusing to trust in Jesus, those within the world have rejected the Righteous One and the righteousness he offers. In other words, the unrighteous have rejected the Righteous. But God demands righteousness! Therefore, because the world has rejected Jesus and the work he accomplished, it has also rejected righteousness itself. The Holy Spirit constantly reminds the world of its guilt in this area.

Finally, the world is guilty in regard to judgment. According to Jesus, Satan, referred to as “the ruler of this world”, stands judged. He has been condemned as guilty. Because of its relation to Satan, the world shares his judgment. The Holy Spirit constantly reminds the world of its guilt in this area.

The Holy Spirit’s work of conviction in these areas may be seen in Paul’s words to Felix, which were spoken while Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea. Notice the specific things Paul “reasoned about” in this passage:

After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.”
Acts 24:24-25

Why was Felix alarmed? I believe he was feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit (through the mouth of Paul) and he didn’t like it. He knew he was guilty. However, rather than repent, Felix tried to eliminate the source of the conviction by sending Paul away.

This should give us great confidence as believers. The Holy Spirit works through us to bring conviction to the world. We are not left to perform this work alone. It is his ministry. We can’t get into anyone’s heart to bring conviction, but he can and he does! Beyond this, the Holy Spirit’s conviction of the world redirects our focus. So often, we are on the defensive, seeking to defend our faith before the world. Here, we see that we are not on trial—the world is on trial. We have nothing to be defensive about.

THE “GUIDING” MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

But the Holy Spirit’s ministry isn’t primarily focused on the world. As with Jesus, whose attention was directed toward the disciples nearly 24 hours a day, so the Holy Spirit is constantly focusing his attention on the believer and his needs. One specific need we have as believers is understanding. That is why a significant aspect of the Holy Spirit’s ministry is in guiding the believer into truth.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” John 16:12-15

Jesus told the disciples that there were things that they couldn’t “bear” yet. (Remember, hearing about the persecution they would face was not one of those things!) What things were beyond their ability to bear? One thing they couldn’t have borne at this time was the truth that “to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18). It took quite some time before the disciples were able to bear this truth. As it was, the Holy Spirit needed to orchestrate a whole series of events so that Peter could bear this truth. He then had to pass it on to the rest of the church (see Acts 10 and 11). The disciples also couldn’t bear, at this time, the truth that circumcision is not necessary in order to be saved. Again, we must acknowledge that the Holy Spirit led them to see this truth (see Acts 15 to see how he brought about this understanding). They also couldn’t bear, at this time, a full teaching regarding the church. Again, the Holy Spirit brought this truth to the disciples as they could bear it.

1 See John 11:16.

WEEK SEVEN

JOHN 16

It's significant that Jesus didn't say that the Holy Spirit will "tell" you all the truth. Rather, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). As with Jesus, who didn't explain everything to his disciples but did lead them where they needed to go, the Holy Spirit isn't going to tell us everything. Rather, he is going to lead us into the truth—and he will do this as we are able to handle it. Aren't you grateful for how God works in our lives? He knows what we can handle and when we can handle it.

The disciples had grown to trust Jesus in their three short years together. They followed him, even when it went against their "better" judgment.¹ Jesus wanted them to be able to trust the Holy Spirit as they had trusted him. That's why he told them that the Holy Spirit will "take what is mine and declare it to you". The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, would tell the disciples "whatever he hears", including "things that are to come". Do you see how the focus is to remain on Jesus? The Holy Spirit would not be bringing a new message to the disciples. He would be passing along Jesus' words. The Holy Spirit never brings attention to himself. He always draws attention to Jesus, and this is evident in this passage. Jesus' imminent departure did not decrease the glory he received. Rather, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it increased! The Holy Spirit's work, ultimately, is to glorify Jesus.

As a final note regarding this section, consider how verse 15 outlines the working relationship between the members of the Trinity.

"All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." John 16:15

Here, as in so many places, we see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit working in perfect harmony. What is the believer's place in all of this? We are not left out, for the Spirit takes what is from Jesus and makes it known to us!

YOU WON'T SEE ME ... THEN YOU WILL SEE ME

In verse 16, Jesus turned his attention from the Holy Spirit to his own impending departure. His disciples still did not understand what was about to happen. Notice how clearly Jesus spoke here. It is almost as if he was speaking to little children.

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." John 16:16-18

The disciples were still confused. They didn't know what Jesus was talking about. However, they didn't want to tell Jesus that they were confused. Rather than asking Jesus, they asked questions to each other. Jesus answered the question they didn't dare to ask him.

Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." John 16:19-22

Jesus told the disciples that they would "weep and lament". This weeping and lamenting was to begin in just a few short hours. A perfect example of this was when Peter "wept bitterly" after denying Jesus (Luke 22:62). Juxtaposed against this weeping and lamenting was the rejoicing of

“the world”. Remember, the world is sinful man in opposition to God. Jesus’ death was the world’s triumph. That triumph, however, was not to last. Everything changed on Sunday, for it was on that day that the disciples saw Jesus. And when they saw him, their hearts rejoiced! This was the first moment that true joy was theirs to keep. All throughout their travels with Jesus, they had known that something unpleasant was coming. They didn’t know exactly what it was, but they knew it was bad. Jesus told them about it many times. But on Sunday, they would no longer have this cloud of impending doom hanging over them. On Sunday, there would be a new joy in their hearts and spring in their steps, for on that day, they saw Jesus!

Everything changed on Sunday! Even the way the disciples communicated would change. Remember, just a few verses ago, we saw that the disciples were afraid to ask Jesus for more understanding. But on Sunday, such a change would overtake them that they would even dare to ask the Father himself!

“In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” John 16:23-24

What a promise! The fearful, confused disciples would, on Sunday, become the joyful, asking disciples. They would ask the Father in Jesus’ name and he would answer them! And the joy within them would grow ever greater! The days of cowering in fear were coming to an end. The days of joy and boldness were about to begin!

PLAIN SPEECH COMING!

Jesus then told the disciples about an upcoming hour when he would speak about the Father very plainly. This is what the disciples had been waiting for. There would be no more asking of each other what Jesus meant. He would tell them everything they needed to know in plain Aramaic (aren’t you glad he also knows English?).

“I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.” John 16:25

When did Jesus begin speaking plainly about the Father to the disciples? He was already doing it, in a sense, at this time. But the disciples couldn’t fully understand Jesus until they received the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit’s presence in their lives would mean much more than just increased *knowledge* of the Father. It would also mean increased *access* to the Father.

“In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.” John 16:26-28

This may not sound exciting to you today (although it should), but just imagine how these words would make you feel if you were one of the disciples. Here, Jesus said that the Father would listen to the disciples’ prayers, not because Jesus would tell the Father to do so, but because the Father loved the disciples himself. He loved them, we read, because he had seen their love for Jesus and their faith in him.

The disciples’ excitement was increasing. But, as may be seen from their answer, they still didn’t understand much ... yet.

His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.” John 16:29-30

WEEK SEVEN

JOHN 16

Jesus' response may not have been what the disciples anticipated. As when he turned from discussing the joys of abiding in him to the realities of persecution, Jesus changed the topic from the happy to the sad.

Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." John 16:31-32

The burdens Jesus carried at this time must have been incredible. Not only was he trying to teach the disciples (a tough enough task on an ordinary day!), but he was also wrestling with the emotions that must have been coming over him as the moment when his disciples would abandon him drew ever nearer. Add in the fact that his death was just hours away and you can see that Jesus was under pressure at this moment that was unprecedented in human history. But notice where Jesus found his consolation—"the Father is with me."

Take a minute and consider that thought. Where do you find your consolation? Is it in your present circumstances? These will surely change—at least at times—for the worse. Or is your consolation found in the reality of your relationship with God? Just as the thought that the Father was with Jesus brought Jesus comfort, so we are to have peace and comfort in the thought that we are in Christ.

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

We will find our share of trouble and distress in the world. But we are not to despair. Jesus has triumphed over the world! For the Christian, the days of tribulation will not last long. In fact, the days of peace—even in the midst of tribulation—have already begun.

Week Eight

JOHN 17

WEEK EIGHT

JOHN 17

DAY ONE

Read *John 17* through twice. The first time through these verses, simply read the text. Do not write any notes regarding the verses at this time. The second time through the verses, circle or underline key words or phrases and write down any questions or thoughts the verses leave you with in the margin. If the verses bring any related Scriptures to mind, please write them in the margin.

JOHN 17

17 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

⁶ "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

DAY TWO

Read John 17:1-5

1. Who was Jesus praying for in John 17:1-5? What, specifically, did he ask the Father to do?

2. According to verse two, why did the Father give Jesus “authority over all flesh”?

3. What does this say about the Father’s role in salvation?

4. What does Jesus do in response to the Father’s action?

5. How do the following verses describe the salvation process? For each passage, describe the actions taken by the Father and the actions taken by Jesus.

John 6:37-40

John 6:44-45

John 10:27-30

6. How do these truths impact your view of salvation?

7. How did Jesus define eternal life in verse three? Is this the definition you would have used?

8. How does verse five prove the deity of Jesus?

DAY THREE

Read **John 17:6-10**

9. How did Jesus describe the disciples in verse six?

WEEK EIGHT

JOHN 17

10. What does this tell you about how Jesus selected his disciples? What, if anything, does this tell you about his all-night prayer the night before he called the Twelve?

11. In verses seven and eight, Jesus acknowledged that the disciples had learned certain truths. What were these specific truths?

12. Do you ever think about these truths?

13. What impact would knowledge of these truths have on a person's life?

14. What does this tell you about the importance Jesus places on our understanding of the Father?

15. According to verse nine, why was Jesus praying for the disciples?

16. What does this tell you about the motivation behind his actions?

17. In what sense was Jesus glorified in the disciples? *John 17:10*

18. Do you think he is glorified in you? In what way?

DAY FOUR

Read **John 17:11-19**

19. What request did Jesus make of the Father in verses 11-15?

20. According to verse eleven, what was the purpose behind this request?

21. In verse 12, we learn a secret about how the eleven disciples had made it without falling away? How did this happen?

22. How is this aspect of Jesus' ministry seen in Luke 22:31-32?

23. What confidence should this aspect of Jesus ministry give to you as a believer?

24. If this is true, what happened to Judas? Why do you think he fell away? See *John 6:70; 13:18-19; 17:12*

25. Compare verses 13 and 14. What should the Christian expect in this world? How should this affect the Christian's inner attitude? Where does true joy come from?

26. Think about verse 18 for a moment. This is a remarkable verse. Do you live as if this were true? What if Jesus had taken his mission to the world with the same degree of seriousness as you have taken your mission to the world? Would he have accomplished his mission?

27. According to verse 19, why did Jesus consecrate himself?

28. Do you, if you are a Christian, consider yourself to be sanctified? What might change if you did?

WEEK EIGHT

JOHN 17

DAY FIVE

Read **John 17:20-26**

29. In verse 20, Jesus began praying for another group of people. Who are they?

30. What was the focus of this prayer? What did Jesus want to happen? *John 17:20-24*

31. What did Jesus expect would happen as a result of this? *John 17:21, 23*

32. According to verse 22, why has Jesus given his glory to believers?

33. Using truths outlined in John 17:20-26, complete the following sentence. "Unity is possible in the church because ..." (provide at least two reasons)

34. Why did Jesus want his followers to be with him? *John 17:24*

35. Why did Jesus make the Father's name known to the disciples? Why is he still doing this today? *John 17:26*

DAY SIX

Read the study notes for chapter 17

36. Read the study notes and then complete the following sentence. This week the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

WEEK EIGHT

JOHN 17

JOHN 17

Jesus had said all that he needed to say to the disciples. He must have felt that this particular task was now completed. He was, in a sense, handing the responsibilities of teaching the disciples off to the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting to note how Jesus prayed here: “he lifted up his eyes to heaven” (John 17:1). There is something about this action that is quite significant. It is almost as if Jesus was physically looking at God the Father. As you read these words, imagine the connection between Jesus and the Father. Jesus was looking up. The Father was (at least in a sense) looking down. The disciples were looking on. They were not involved in this conversation, but the conversation involved them.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF

Jesus began by asking the Father to glorify him (remember, the idea of glory here, at least in part, is of Jesus’ greatness being displayed for all to see).

“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son ...” John 17:1

Why did Jesus want to be glorified? We should know the answer without even reading the second half of this verse.

“... that the Son may glorify you ...” John 17:1

Jesus asked the Father to glorify him because that action, Jesus knew, would bring glory to the Father. Jesus’ next statement is connected to this idea.

“... since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.” John 17:2

The significance of the connecting word “since” demands some attention and hard thinking. It appears that Jesus was saying that his request that he be glorified was the proper next step on account of the fact that he had been given authority over all flesh. In other words, Jesus was asking the Father, now that he had given him authority over all flesh, to fulfill the next step in the plan he had for the Son; that is, to glorify him.

WEEK EIGHT

JOHN 17

None of the verses in this chapter should be skimmed over. There are so rich with meaning! Notice, the two specific things listed here that God the Father gave to the Son: one, he gave him authority over all flesh, and two, he gave him certain persons. Let's read this verse again.

"... since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him." John 17:2

These phrases are connected. Jesus was given authority so that he might "give eternal life" to those whom the Father had given to him. This indicates that the Father gives people to Jesus *even before they are saved*. Jesus then gives them eternal life.

Jesus' words in John 6 and 10 also point in this direction.

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:37-40

"... you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." John 10:26-30

Thus, salvation is not initiated in the efforts of man, but in an action taken by the Father. Jesus' words in John 6:44 bear witness to this truth: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." A divine action by the Father precedes any action taken by man. In fact, without the Father's work, man cannot come to Jesus. Left to ourselves, we would never recognize our need for a Savior. As Romans 3:11 says, "no one seeks for God". Left to ourselves, none would be saved, for we would never want or desire God.

In verse two, Jesus mentioned that he gives eternal life to all those that are given him. He then went on to discuss the nature of this eternal life.

"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." John 17:3

What a strange definition of eternal life! Jesus did not focus on the *eternality* of eternal life; instead, he focused on the *intimacy* of eternal life. To *know* God and Jesus, in this sense, is not just to "know about" God and Jesus (although that surely is important!). The level of intimacy Jesus described here goes far beyond a knowledge of facts (remember, even the demons know facts about God).¹ He was talking about a knowledge of God the Father and God the Son which proves its reality by its expressions of love, faith and obedience. It is perhaps significant that the verb translated "know" in this verse is in the present tense. This tense indicates, more than anything, the "continuous" aspect of a verb. Thus, Jesus was describing a knowing that would not be static in nature, but that would, rather, be constantly abiding—and may we say growing—in love, faith and obedience.

Many claim to have a knowledge of God. But, as the following verses demonstrate, they have no real knowledge of him.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 7:21

"And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" Matthew 7:23

¹ See James 2:19.

Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him ... 1 John 2:4

No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. 1 John 3:6

Do you know the Father and the Son in this way? Do faith, love and obedience demonstrate that your knowledge is real? God forbid that any of us would hear, on that Day, “I never knew you; depart from me” (Matthew 7:23).

In verses four and five, Jesus returned to the topic of verse one.

“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” John 17:4-5

Do you see how interested Jesus was in the glory of the Father and in his own glory? God’s glory is God’s highest purpose.

Jesus accomplished the work he was sent to accomplish. That work, as we see from this verse, was to glorify the Father. But now that Jesus had finished this work—again, we see Jesus referring to his work in the past tense even though it was not yet completed—his desire was that he would be glorified in the Father’s presence with the same glory he had before he came to earth.

This desire to be glorified, if it were to be seen in anyone other than Jesus, would be greatly offensive. However, we must consider that if Jesus did not seek his own glory he would be placing other things above himself and that would be idolatry.

Notice, in this verse, Jesus indicated that he had had glory with the Father “before the world existed”. Do we find a reference to deity here? We absolutely do! For by saying that he had glory with the Father, Jesus was placing himself on the same level with the Father. As he said in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.”

JESUS PRAYS FOR THE DISCIPLES

In verse six, Jesus turned the focus of his prayer toward the disciples. His prayers stayed focused on them until verse 19.

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.” John 17:6

Here, we find Jesus acknowledging that the Father gave the disciples to him. This is the same truth we saw in verse two (and the same truth we’ll see in verse nine). So often, we ignore the work of the Father when referring to those who have become followers of Jesus. We focus on the fact that, for instance, Jesus called Simon and Andrew and that “they left their nets and followed him” (Matthew 4:20). But here we see that there was another aspect to this calling. Before any of the eleven became Jesus’ followers, they were the Father’s property. He then gave them to Jesus. Jesus then, in response to this giving, called them as his disciples.

In Jesus’ prayer, we learn something about the disciples that we would not learn otherwise. It would appear, based on the disciples’ behavior during Jesus’ passion (e.g., Peter, James and John falling asleep in the garden, Peter denying Jesus, the disciples running away, Thomas doubting, etc.) that the disciples knew next to nothing about Jesus at this point. As the following verses make clear, this was not the case. Jesus was convinced that his disciples had learned three significant truths, all of them relating to the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

WEEK EIGHT

JOHN 17

“Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.”
John 17:7-8

The disciples now knew everything that Jesus had—power, authority, etc., etc.—had come from the Father. They also knew that Jesus himself had come from the Father. They also knew that the Father had sent him. Isn't this remarkable? All three truths are related to the connection between Jesus and the Father. These truths mattered to Jesus because the Father's glory mattered to Jesus.

“The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.” John 7:18

The glory of the Father was the reason Jesus labored. His disciples needed to know that the Father was the one behind Jesus and all of his actions.

JESUS PRAYS FOR THE DISCIPLES' PROTECTION

Jesus' care was for those who had been given to him by the Father. These were the ones he prayed for. These were the ones, as we will see, he guarded and protected.

“I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.” John 17:9

Verses ten through 19 comprise the bulk of Jesus' prayer for his disciples. In the first section of this prayer, Jesus reminded the Father that he was returning to him, and, because of this return, he asked the Father to “keep” the disciples.

“All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.” John 17:10-11

In asking the Father to “keep” the disciples, it is clear that Jesus was asking the Father to guard and protect them. This guarding and protecting was to happen “in” the Father's name. The preposition translated “in” has a wide range of meanings. Here, it probably means “by”. In fact, that is how the NIV translates this verse: “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name...” (John 17:11 NIV).

It is important to notice the greatness of Jesus' concern for the disciples' safety. It is easy to think that the disciples were mere addendums to Jesus' ministry. They seem, often, like court jesters or extras in a movie. They are peripheral. Jesus' ministry is central. They are unimportant. Jesus is the star. Jesus didn't see them in this way. His great concern, in returning to the Father, was that the disciples would be protected.

Jesus had protected the disciples by the power of the Father's name. This name proved so effective in protecting the disciples that none, save one, had been lost.

“While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” John 17:12

Do you realize how significant it is that the disciples were still following Jesus at this point in time? Satan's desire was “to steal and kill and destroy” them (John 10:10). In fact, according to Luke 22:31-32, he “demanded” to have them.

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Luke 22:31-32

It is important to know that the first two appearances of the word “you” in these verses are plural. Satan demanded *all of the disciples*, not just Peter, that he might “sift [them] like wheat”. What was Jesus’ response to this? He prayed to the Father that Peter’s faith wouldn’t fail. Why did he pray for Peter when all of the disciples were in danger? We are not given this answer, but we must believe that Jesus prayed in the exact manner needed. Jesus’ prayer was not that Peter’s faith wouldn’t be tested, but rather that it wouldn’t fail. While it may appear as if it did fail, we know, from Jesus’ words here, that it did not fail. Even though his faith looked weak and wobbly at times, he persevered. This lack of failure must not be attributed to the greatness of Peter. Rather, it must be attributed to the prayers Jesus offered on his behalf. With the strength he had received, Peter was to strengthen the rest of the disciples.

Do you see how engaged Jesus was in the protection of his disciples? In Luke 22, he told Peter that he had prayed for him that he would not fail. Here, in John 17, we find Jesus praying for the disciples once again.

“I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.” John 17:15

How often do you think he is praying these prayers for Christians today? We know that he is “interceding for us” at the right hand of God even right now (Romans 8:34). Surely, protection is one of the things he is interceding about. Doesn’t this give you confidence for the days ahead? Jesus, who sees all and knows all, knows exactly what to pray about in regard to our lives. He will not let the devil destroy us!

Before we move on, let’s consider Judas for a moment. How was Judas lost? Why wasn’t he “kept” from Satan? It is important to notice that Jesus called him “the son of destruction” here. From the very beginning, Jesus knew that Judas wasn’t a true follower. Early on in his ministry, Jesus said, in reference to Judas, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil” (John 6:70). Jesus’ prayers for protection were for his followers. He was under no obligation to protect one who hated him.

JESUS PRAYS FOR THE DISCIPLES’ SANCTIFICATION

Now that he had prayed for their protection, Jesus prayed for the disciples’ sanctification.

“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.” John 17:16-19

Jesus’ desire was that the Father would “set apart” the disciples as holy to himself. It’s important to notice that this setting apart was directly tied to Jesus’ actions. His setting of himself apart—by his death, burial and resurrection—opened the way for the disciples also to be set apart.

JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS

In verses 20 through 26 Jesus prayed for all believers. Notice the focus of this prayer.

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” John 17:20-23

WEEK EIGHT

JOHN 17

This prayer is all about unity! Jesus knew, 2,000 years ago, that we would need prayer about this very issue. Unity is important because it is a reflection of the relationship between the Father and the Son (see v. 21). In fact, the unity we are called to have includes the Father and the Son. Verse 21 reads, "... just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us". Verse 23 reads, "I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one". Our unity is tied to the Father's unity with the Son. We can have no unity apart from the Father and the Son (and, though he is not mentioned here, the Holy Spirit).

It is interesting to note that unity is tied to evangelism in these verses. Jesus prayed for unity "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). This same truth is repeated in verse 23: "I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

Some might say that unity, while technically possible, is actually impossible, but that would be to deny the work of Jesus. He prayed for us that we might be unified. If we deny the possibility of unity among believers, we are denying the efficacy of Jesus' prayers. Beyond this, Jesus gave the church a special gift so that we might be unified. Consider the following words: "The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one" (John 17:22). We, as Jesus' followers, have been given the same glory that Jesus had! We have been given this glory so that we might be unified.

Human effort will not bring about unity. Jesus' efforts are the key to unity. We, as his followers, must trust him to accomplish his desires through us. Do you trust him to accomplish this work?

JESUS PRAYS ABOUT HIS FOLLOWERS SEEING HIS GLORY

Jesus was leaving the ones he loved. He didn't want this separation to last for long. His desire was that the disciples would soon join him where he was. The question is, why? Why did Jesus want his disciples to join him?

"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world." John 17:24

Jesus wanted the disciples to see his glory! Not the glory that he had manifested on earth, but the glory he had before the foundation of the earth. He wanted them to see, with undimmed eyes, his true greatness! As this is his desire, it should be our desire. We should long to see the glory of Jesus—the glory that was given to him because the Father loved him "before the foundation of the world". What kind of glory is that? What does it look like? Jesus has been the apple of God's eye—his great delight—from eternity past. The love of God that is constantly showering upon Jesus is Jesus' glory. We should stop and ponder this for a moment. More than a moment, we should marvel at it for all eternity. What love there must be in Jesus! All of God's affection is poured out on him.

And, wonder of wonders, this love—the very love which the Father showers upon Jesus—is in us.

"O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." John 17:25-26

Why is Jesus constantly making the Father's name known to us? He is doing it so that the Father's love may be found within us! Jesus shares the love he has received with his followers. How can we be anything but unified? The love of God "has been poured into our hearts" (Romans 5:5)!

Oh, Father, please open our eyes to see the glory of Jesus! Let us see his worth! May lesser things truly become lesser things in our lives. May the greatest thing—your glory—truly become the greatest thing in our lives.

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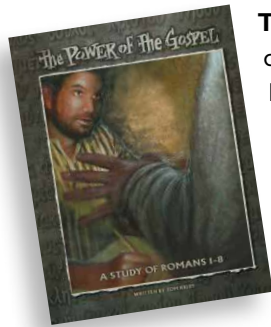
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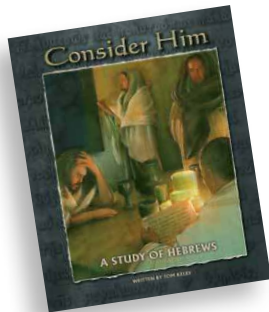
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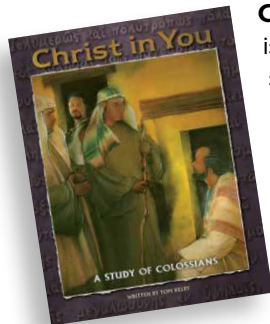
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Most, if not all, of the great revivals and reformations in the history of the church have been directly related to the book of Romans.¹

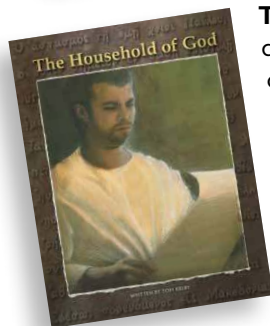
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¹ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), p. ix.