***Session 4 Empowered To Walk in True Greatness (Jn. 15:3-5)***

*“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty.” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)*

*This is Session 4 of Intimacy with the Trinity in John 15, Session 4. I am calling this: “Empowered to Walk in True Greatness.” Last week we talked about what true greatness was from God’s point of view. I am going to read that Psalm again that have as a tag line for this series. David said it best; it is my favorite description of John 13-17, although David did not know about John 13-17. He said, “Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures.” He is praying to the Lord “as I delight in Your beauty.”*

*I put two passages together: “To drink from the river of Your pleasure” when God reveals God to the human spirit, when God imparts love and understanding in the human spirit,* ***that*** *is the river of His pleasure and we are drinking from it. We do that best as we delight in His beauty.*

1. Review: John 15—Our life is Great and successful as we bear Fruit
   1. Jesus spoke of some called “great” and some called “least” in the kingdom. God will call their life choices “great” because they loved and obeyed Him. This greatness is attained without regard   
      for outward achievements and impact. It is based on the size of one’s heart response to God.

19“Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments…shall be called least in the kingdom …but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom…” (Mt. 5:19)

41…one star differs from another star in glory. 42So also is the resurrection…(1 Cor. 15:41-42)

*Quick review from our last session. Because I love these truths so much, I do not want to move on too quickly even though we covered them last week. And just for a moment, this passage from Matthew 5:19. I do not think we can hear it too many times, “Whoever breaks the least of these commandments and teaches men to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever does these commandments and teaches people to do them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” It is clearly talking about born-again believers in the resurrection forever, and the Lord is calling their lifestyle great. He calls some people, and He is not writing off the least as unimportant, least in value, least in significance. However, He is making a declaration about their life choices. and they were least.*

*There is a difference between the greatest and the least in many, many different—I do not know what you call the gap between the far end of one spectrum to the other. To some people that is a new idea, but it is a truth that is emphasized in scripture in many different places using differing language. I like the passage in 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul said, “as one star differs from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.” Trillions of stars, not one of them is the same, and “so also is the resurrection of the dead.” We looked at that last week, so I will move on though I love this truth. This greatness is attained in God calling your life choices great, I do not mean every choice of your life, but as a kind of overview of your life, without any regard for your outward achievement or how much you impacted other people. Meaning it is not about touching millions; it is about responding. It is the size of our heart response. That is what He calls great.*

*I love this idea here that God is far more committed to your spiritual greatness than you are. It is called fruitfulness here in John 15. It is true greatness, and it is spiritual success. It is called fruitfulness. They are identically the same subject.*

* 1. Note five truths Jesus emphasized that are necessary to cultivate an abiding life of fruitfulness.   
     First, Jesus is the *true vine* (source); second, the Father is the *vinedresser* who “prunes” us;   
     third, His people are *branches* (vessels of His presence); fourth, we can bear *fruit that remains*;   
     fifth, we enjoy a supernatural life by abiding in Christ (talking to Him) and Him abiding in us.

1“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser 2…every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 5…you are the branches. He who abides in Me [talks to Me]…and   
I in him, bears much fruit…16I chose you…that your fruit should remain.” (Jn. 15:5, 16)

*Let’s look at four truths that Jesus emphasized here in John 15 which are necessary, though actually there are about ten of them. I am just laying them out in an introductory way. I mean, we could list five to seven more right off the bat here, but these are necessary to cultivating this life of abiding. This abiding life has fruitfulness or what God calls true greatness. Remember, fruitfulness is spiritual success. We are so used to the term, fruitful, that we do not understand how dynamic a reality this is and the fact is everybody has access to having a lifestyle that God calls great.*

*Let’s read the passage and familiarize ourselves with it, though I am sure most of you are familiar with it anyway. Jesus said, “I am the true vine.” Point number two, “My Father is the vinedresser, and He prunes every branch.” Verse 5, “you are the branches.” You are the vessels of the glory of God. You are the vessels that God has chosen to manifest His glory in a fallen world. I said last week that if I was the Lord I do not know if I would have chosen us. You know, maybe send angels, but He says, “No, I want you, in your humanity and in your weakness. You say yes to Me, and My glory will be manifest through you in ways you cannot measure and will not always see. Many times you will not even see it; sometimes you will and very dramatically.”*

*Verse 16: “He chose us to bear much fruit and with fruit that remains.”*

* 1. Fruitfulness is about *possessing* love, humility, purity, gratitude, etc. and then *inspiring* it in others. Abiding in Him results in the miracle of bearing fruit that “remains”–or that God esteems forever.

*Now this fruitfulness, or this spiritual success, or true greatness, is about possessing the heart qualities of love, humility, and purity, and as I mentioned last week, gratitude, generosity, and diligence in our service to the Lord. When these kinds of qualities are formed in our heart, the Bible calls it fruitfulness. It is not only about possessing them. It is about imparting these qualities into other people as well, inspiring them in others. And it is not like mass numbers. It might just be the neighbor next door that you have talked to, and their heart is moved just a little bit in this direction. You are actually bearing fruit, and you have inspired people to move a little bit forward in humility or in diligence in serving God or in generosity, etc.*

*Jesus said that you can bear fruit that remains. Abiding in Him results in the miracle of bearing fruit that remains. That is a miracle that you and I can have, movements of our heart, and we can inspire others for their heart to move forward in God. God sees this forever, and it remains forever. It does not just remain through the season of revival. It remains forever in His sight. God esteeming our fruitfulness is what defines true success or being great in His sight. The fact that God could look at your heart, see generosity growing, seeing gratitude towards His leadership growing when things are not going well but you are grateful to Him. He sees that and it remains forever before Him.*

*This is what defines our life as great, and our life becomes epic. It really does if we get ahold of this. We are engaging in a life-long journey of bearing fruit that God remembers and esteems forever! I mean, that is remarkable! I am assuming that most of the billion believers on the earth, I am assuming that many believers do not live in the light of this epic reality, but they live in the light of the pressures and the smallness and mundaneness that is in front of them, which is normal in the kind of resistance that they feel. The Lord would say, “Yes, that is true but there is a BIG story going on that I am watching in your life.”*

*When we connect to that, it is like, “Okay! Every day is important even if it is routine and mundane in the activities of that day because our heart is engaging, and we are wanting to inspire this one and that one to walk in greater humility, or great generosity, or greater gratitude towards the Lord or in more diligence in serving even without anybody noticing that they are serving.”*

*Like I mentioned last week that some years ago the guy came and told me, “Oh man, you are bearing so much fruit!” because he saw how many people were coming to the Onething conference.*

*And I said, “How do you know that I am bearing fruit?”*

*He said, “Well, look, man, there are twenty-five thousand people registered for the conference. That is so fruitful!”*

*I said, “Unless they choose to move forward in humility and in purity, I did not bear any fruit. We just gathered a crowd. I do not know if I am bearing fruit. I mean, I hope I am, but you cannot tell just because there is a crowd.”*

*He was kind of like “Oh, bluh, bluh, bluh”*

*“But it is true! I do not know. If they leave and move even a step forward in their commitment to purity, then I bore a little fruit in my ministry, but I do not know it. I cannot measure it. I cannot see it. It is certainly not the size in the room, that is for sure!”*

1. empowerd by engaging in conversation—the power of His word

*Now this is kind of the essence that I want to share in this session here: empowered by engaging in that two-way conversation with the Lord. This is the power of our life. It is so simple that everyone can do it, but so simple that so many rarely or never do. This two-way communication, we have to be intentional about it as the Lord will not make us do it. It is not hard to do, and it is not confusing to do.*

* 1. The Spirit empowers us as we engage in an on-going conversation with Jesus around the many truths in John 13-17. The disciples were clean because of receiving Jesus’ words (15:3; 17:6).   
     Jesus mentioned 3 ways that our lives are cleansed and that lead us to bear fruit—they include the Father pruning or removing hindrances to our spiritual life (15:2), speaking to us through His Word (15:3), and calling us to “abide in Him” (15:4) or to engage with truth by taking to Him about it.

2“…every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4Abide in Me [talk to Me]…” (Jn. 15:2-4)

6“…they have kept Your word…17Sanctify [purify] them by Your truth [Word].” (Jn. 17:6, 17)

*The Holy Spirit empowers us. He empowers our heart. He energizes us with new motivation. He gives us new insights, even just little, small installments of understanding that increase a little bit. That is the Spirit energizing us. He does it as we engage in an ongoing conversation in this context: around the truths of John 13-17, or just any biblical truths. However, we are right here in John 13-17, and I don’t know how many truths that I am going to identify. I am sure we would all do it a little bit different, but there might be forty or fifty main truths or promises in these five chapters.*

*If we can engage in conversation in an ongoing way—and I do not mean every minute of every day but that it is something that happens through the day—around these forty or fifty truths—or however many there are and again, we could count them differently—Our hearts will be empowered if we will engage with Him in conversation around these truths.*

*Let’s look at verse 1 again, “My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch that bears fruit He prunes it.” In other words, He is helping it grow. That is the point of focus here now, so it bears more fruit.*

*Here is the phrase I want you to catch: “You are already clean because of the word I spoke to you.” And so He is talking about pruning and removing hinderances. He is talking about that their hearts are clean or that He sees them as clean because they are engaging with the truths that He has given them. Now, they are not very deep in it, but they are saying yes to it. They are leaning into it, though they would find out later that they were not very deep at that time.*

*Then He goes on in verse 4. He is still talking about engaging with truth, and He says, “Abide in Me because you cannot bear any fruit unless you abide in Me.” I will say this many times tonight but if I had to put a phrase for what it means to abide in Christ—one phrase only, and it is bigger than this, but this is the core reality—it would be, “Talk to Me! Talk to Me. Abide in Me, and I will abide in you, I will talk to you. I will give you impressions, slight ones, here and there, but it will shift your life over months and years in a dramatic way. If you talk to Me, I will talk to you.” I don’t mean that you hear it audibly. I am talking about subtle impressions that just slightly move our heart forward, little by little, here and there.*

*However, some months go by, some years go by, and your life is bearing fruit. Your humility seems more reasonable. Purity seems like it is worth it. Gratitude, “Yes, I am going to do that, it seems right to do that!” That is the fruit we bear by talking to Him.*

*I want you to catch this in verse 2: the Father prunes to help us out. We looked at that last week. Verse 3, He speaks His word to clean us. It is the word that He speaks to us. Verse 4, we speak back to Him. And so these are all components of causing our life to be fruitful and to grow in God. He prunes, He speaks the word of God to us—the written word and then by the Spirit too—and then we talk back to Him. Those three components right there cause us to bear much fruit if we stay with it.*

*Again, it is so simple that everybody can do it because most of our conversations with the Lord are not long. When I look back over my years in the Lord, many, many of my conversations are ten and twenty-second engagements with the Lord. And yes, you do have longer times, but here I mean throughout the day, coming and going, just ten and twenty-second little exchanges where you whisper to the Lord, and you might not hear or feel anything back, but doing that throughout a day. Here, in John 13-17, we have probably fifty truths to say, “Thank You, God. Show me more about this one!”*

*And when those truths get into our mouths, the truths that He spoke in verse 3, He said, “You are clean! Your heart is clean. You are touched because I spoke truth to you and you engaged in it” is the implication.*

*Now we find here in John 17—He says this about an hour later—I guess John 17 is an hour later; that is just my idea.*

*I mean this is remarkable! He is praying to the Father and says, “Father, they kept My word,” and I think, “Well, Peter is going to deny You in about two hours, and the others are arguing about who is the greatest, and none of them volunteered to wash feet, but they ‘kept Your word!’ Wow! You are generous. I like the way You edit our lives through the grace of God!”*

*Because what Jesus is saying is, “They are engaging with Me at the level of maturity that they are in.” And then He gives us very powerful truth in John 17:17. He says, “I am sanctifying them,” or “I purify them by My truth.” He is giving us insight that, if we engage with truth, to be sanctified is to be purified by engaging with the truth. This is a very significant point there. We do not get sanctified by simply saying, “Lord, touch me, touch me, touch me.” However, by that dialogue He is saying, “I will move their heart forward, I will sanctify them if they will engage with My truth.”*

* 1. Our Father’s “pruning knife” is first His Word which is a knife that is sharper than any sword and pierces deep in our heart to lay bare the unperceived areas of darkness that are lodged there. (  
     Heb. 4:12). We all have more “unperceived” pride and darkness in our hearts than we imagine, including a lack of gratitude, generosity and more. His Word reveals these areas to us.

12The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit…and is a discerner of the...intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

9How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. (Ps. 119:9)

21…receive [engage with]…the implanted word, which is able to save [purify] your souls.   
(Jas. 1:21)

*Our Father said that He would prune us. And our Father’s pruning knife is first the Word of God, the written Word of God. Meaning, He prunes in a number of ways, but the absolute priority is to prune us by speaking His Word to our hearts. And His pruning knife, as I will call it, is His Word, and it is a knife that is sharper than any sword and can pierce to the very depth of our heart.*

*Hebrews 4: I want us to grasp this. I mean this is so remarkable! Hebrews 4:12, “The word of God is living.” It is alive, and it may not seem alive when you first read it, but if you will stay with it, it has a power that is working in you when you talk to God using the very language of the Scripture. If you bring those ideas back to Him, and I do not mean it has to be those exact language—that is not my point—but if you bring those truths back to Him, you will find that it is alive. It is moving in your heart. It is causing you to overcome bitterness, fear, shame, and all kinds of negative, dark emotions. It is alive!*

*The word of God is powerful. It is more powerful than our fears. It is more powerful than our lusts, more powerful than our bitterness, more powerful than our dullness. It is powerful if we engage with it.*

*I know in my own story, at first, the word of God was so boring to me. I remember I would read the Word, and I was just so bored, and I said, “Lord, if You would have made this a little more interesting, maybe more of us would read it more often!” I remember thinking those kinds of thoughts. It was just so confusing and boring to me. I had no idea it was powerful because it did not become powerful in my experience until it got in my mouth, saying it back to God, when I would talk to Him about the truths. It was not instantly, but when it started, “Wow! I can feel that a little bit!” Not all of the time, but progressively over the months, and I would say “Wow! It is powerful!”*

*“The word of God is sharp; it pierces to the division of soul and spirit.” What that means is we have soulish or just our human natural, carnal way of thinking, and then there are things that are Spirit-born, and the Word of God helps us see: “That is a dark emotion that you have; that is a dark motive.”*

*You are thinking, “I never thought about that! I thought I was doing pretty good!”*

*He would say, “No, I am going to let you see the intent of your heart which you can’t even see.” We all have, myself included—I mean I am right in the middle of this—we all have more unperceived pride in our hearts than we can imagine. As the Lord kindly shows us, that is His kindness because it is unperceived. It is like “Oh!” That unperceived lack of gratitude, unperceived pride, unperceived agendas where we think we are doing pretty good. And the Lord is not about making sure that we know how bad we are all the time. That is not the point.*

*However, when we read the Word, it shows us the intents of our heart that we are not that aware of, just a little here, a little there. I used to tell the Lord, “Show me everything!”*

*He would say, “Trust Me you do not want Me to tell you everything. I will give you a little here and a little there because I love you, and I know what you can respond to.”*

*It is like the magnifying glass in the biology class in high school. We would put the slide under the microscope, and you would see something, which you could clean up a bit, but you pop it up ten power and it was like, “Whoa, it is still dirty!” Clean it up a little bit, pump it up a hundred power, and “Whoa! It is dirtier than it was before!” And the closer we get to the Lord, the more we see, but He does not give it to us at a pace that will destroy us, but at a pace where we can enter into that living engagement with Him so we are walking free little by little. His goal is not to crush us with it. His goal is to liberate us. He is a Father that is pruning.*

*Jesus is speaking His word to us to clean us. We are sanctified, we are purified by the Word entering our heart. Like Psalm 119:9, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living by the word of God.” It enters our heart. Jesus’ word—I have written here—“it was sharp.” I mean it was cutting. He teaches them the Sermon on the Mount. They are thinking, “Oh man, we thought we were radically committed to God! My goodness!”*

*It is sharp, and it awakens us. He taught them to deny themselves. He pierced through their fear of forsaking all until they were not afraid to forsake all. The Word of God has that kind of power. They could embrace a life of servanthood; that is the Word of God piercing the heart and giving strength, courage, and insight to actually embrace that kind of lifestyle. And again, we do it little by little. We do not do it all at one time, but just little steps forward. Every now and then there are big steps, but mostly it is baby steps forward.*

* 1. It is not enough to study the Bible—we must talk to God as we study. Bible study is meant to lead us to conversation with God by giving us the “conversational material” for our prayer life. It provides language we use as we talk to Him. Using the Bible and speaking the Word back to God makes prayer easy and enjoyable. It “turns up the volume” in our conversation with God.

39“You search the Scriptures [Bible study], for in them you think you have…life; these are they which testify of Me. 40You are not willing to come to Me [talk to Me] that you may have life.”   
(Jn. 5:39-40)

*Oh, this is really precious to me what I am about to share here because it is part of my personal testimony. It is in John 5:39-40. This is the passage, and not that you have to define this kind of stuff but it was the first “revelation” I ever had besides Jesus would forgive me. It struck my heart like lightening. Now that is a little exaggerated, but it is nearly true. I mean it really arrested my heart, this passage did, and just looking at it makes me smile.*

*Here is my point: it is not enough to study the Bible. We have to talk to God while we are reading and studying the Bible. This was a completely life-changing revelation to me. I was teaching weekly Bible studies and had been for about two years and I was studying the Bible. And the Bible was really boring to me, but I was studying it because I was too embarrassed to not have anything to say because Tuesday night came every week, and I had to give a little Bible study first to junior kids and then to high school after that.*

*Now I am at the high-school-kid level. and there were about twenty, thirty, forty in the youth group, and I was just petrified to have to come with something. I was studying even sometimes several hours a day, again, not out of passion but out of more desperation, but I felt like I was backsliding. Not that I was sinning more, but I felt dull as could be, and I was saying, “God! I am reading the Bible, studying You, and my life is spiritually dull!” I was literally reading this passage when I was complaining to the Lord. I was reading John 5. I had no idea what I was going to run into in verses 39 and 40. I was reading the beginning of chapter 5 that day trying to prepare a message from it.*

*However, when we study the Bible, the Bible study is meant to lead us into conversation with God. The Bible gives us the conversation material like, “What am I going to talk to God about?” I remember when I first started trying to pray an hour a day, it was more bitter than death. I did not know what to say. “Thank You, God, that I have food. Thank You, God, You know that there are people over there who are starving and I am not. Thank You, God, that I have arms and legs. Thank You I am in college. Thank You…” You know, stuff like that! I would look at my clock and look down, and I would have fifty-nine minutes to go! I really did not know what to say to Him. So when I discovered this verse it was fantastic! Because now I had conversation material! The Bible gives you the conversation material. I thought, “Well, I can do that! If You will give a hint by telling me what to talk to You about, I can do it!”*

*He said “I have a whole book full of things to talk to Me about.”*

*By using the Bible and speaking the word back to God, the shock of my life­­—as prayer was so boring to me and Bible study was so boring—prayer started to become enjoyable, and that was a miracle, though not instantly. I don’t want to exaggerate. Some of you think, “Well, you have been leading the House of Prayer, and you are a prayer guy.”*

*If God had appeared to me when I was eighteen years old and said, “Yay, boy of God, you will lead twenty-four-hour prayer,” I would have died in desperation! I mean, that would not have been awesome.*

*I would have said, “Please! I will repent of anything! Anything besides prayer and Bible study!”*

*“Yea, you will have a Bible school too!”*

*“Aughhhhh!” I mean I loved ministry trips and meetings. That is what I liked. I did not like talking to God and reading the Bible. I just could not hardly imagine that it could be enjoyable for me.*

*I was reading this passage. I remember it vividly. I remember where I was sitting, and I mean this almost sounds forever ago, but I was eighteen years old. It was June 1974. I was in college and leading Bible studies. It was the summer break, and I was just trying to figure out leading the high school group for the summer at home. I was just searching the Scripture, and it said, “You search the Scripture” I was reading this, and I said, “Yeah! Yeah! That is me!” When I saw verse 39, “You search the Scripture,” I paused, and I did not even read the rest of the verse. I said, “That is what I do a couple hours a day!” Again, not because I was spiritually hungry. I was humanly desperate. I had a Bible study coming on Tuesday night.*

*“For in Bible study you think you have life, you think you get inspired spiritually through Bible study.”*

*“Yeah!”*

*Here it was in verse 40, I thought, “Oh my goodness!”*

*“Because you are not willing”—I am just going to use my own words—“to talk to Me when you read the Bible! Then you will have life, and then you will have inspiration!”*

*That was like a lightning bolt and I said, “I never thought about talking to You when I read the Bible. What should I say?” and I was excited! I did not know how to do it, but I was so excited. I had no idea. I mean that was what some forty years ago, a long time ago, whenever 1974 was. I had no idea that this would become the most significant practice in spiritual exercise in my entire life. I mean, it is almost forty years; well, it is almost fifty years, I guess. I had no idea, but when I look back, this is by far easily the most significant activity that I have in my spiritual life, and when I look back over the fifty years of walking with the Lord, it is talking to God when I read the Bible. I did not discover it immediately but when I saw this, it took me a while to get into the rhythm of it, but maybe even a year or two as it was like, “I do not know quite what to say to You! I know I am supposed to talk to You.” It was like a lightning bolt of flash of understanding came, “You are not willing” when it said, “come to Me,” the phrase, “You are not willing to talk to Me that you could have an inspired heart.” I thought, “Oh my goodness!”*

* + 1. God’s Word works powerfully in us and liberates us as we engage with Him around it.

13…the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. (1 Thes. 2:13)

32“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Jn. 8:32)

*I am just going to give you some quick Bible verses about the power of the Word. Number one, the word of God is, as Paul said, “Effective,” meaning “supernaturally it works in you,” but you have to engage with it and not just read it and underline it. You have to talk to God about it, about that truth. Jesus said, “You will know the truth,” and He meant biblical promises, biblical warnings, biblical commands. However, if you will engage with the truth, He will liberate your heart. It will set your heart free progressively, not all at once but little by little your heart will get free of shame, fears, and wrong desires, and you will be more willing to serve, more willing to be humble and more willing to be teachable. And just little by little the heart gets liberated from those normal human things that entrench the human heart. Even after we are born again those things are not gone, but we have the power and the access for them to go away. But if we do not engage with the truth—I mean talking to God about the truth is what I mean by engage with it—we do not have liberty from those dark emotions.*

*And many believers twenty, thirty, forty years later have as much dark entrenchment and are entrenched with dark emotions as they were when they started. They know the Bible, and they have been on ministry trips, and they go to church services all the time, and they love Jesus, but they do not talk to Him when they hear the Bible. They hear it and go, “Wow, wow!” and they even take notes.*

*However, He says, “That is not enough! You have to come to Me!” And again, it was like a little flash of lightning—a little exaggerated—but I mean it was really clear, “Talk to Me!” and I thought, “Oh my goodness!”*

*I didn’t know way back then in June 1974 that many years later that I would say that was the verse that changed my life. Even to this day, that was the verse. There are many passages that have struck my heart since then, but nothing has had more impact on me than this reality, even now, talking to God when I read the Bible. That is why I love this message because it is really fun for me to even look at this. I want to convince you of this, and I want to make it simple for you. That is why I am spending time on this. I look back and say, “Lord, I am so grateful that You did this for me! I would have never figured this out by myself.”*

* + 1. Paul’s thorn was not a blessing to him until Jesus revealed His promise that His strength was made perfect in Paul’s weakness, lest he exalt himself due to his many revelations.

7Lest I be exalted above measure [filled with pride] by the abundance of the revelations,   
a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me [persecutions]… 9He said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness”  
 (2 Cor. 12:7-9)

*Paul had a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan. It was persecution. That is what was happening; he was being persecuted. He could not figure out why God would not lift this thorn in his flesh, this persecution, from him. And the Lord spoke to him and let him know. In verse 7, Paul said, “Unless I be exalted above measure. My heart would have been filled with pride because I had so many revelations.” I mean, how would you like to be the author of thirteen books that are in the Bible forever? That is some pretty significant revelation. In his heart, he said, “Even I as a mature apostle I could not keep my heart humbled with that level of privilege.”*

*And the Lord said, “The messenger of Satan, the persecution, I want you to know that My power is available to you,” and it was that promise that His power would be made available to him, and his weakness was in living in this persecution and some other things too, but I am just making this brief.*

*It was the word of promise. He said, “Well, I can do it now. It makes sense now! It did not make sense until Your word touched my heart on this!”*

* 1. As we engage in conversation with Jesus around His Word—it is like a *fire* that tenderizes and refines our heart, like a *hammer* that shatters resistance against Him in our heart, and like a *sword* that pierces us and lays bare unperceived areas of error and sin that are lodged deep in our heart.

29“Is not My word like a fire…and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29)

*In Jeremiah 23:29, the Lord said to Jeremiah, “Is not My word like a fire? Is not My word like a hammer that shatters, that breaks the rock?” The word of God does this when we have conversation with it; it is not just hearing a sermon. You could hear a message and get a little inspired, like I trust that some of you will be a little inspired tonight, but this inspiration will not last. If what you feel tonight does not get into your mouth and into your conversation with God, the inspiration will be gone soon. That is true of all of us. If the truth of it does not get into my mouth, then it does not move me forward.*

*I remember when I was first started teaching Song of Solomon back in like 1990. I was all excited that I was teaching Song of Solomon. Well, first I was not at all, but we will skip that part for now, but until those truths got in my mouth, in my conversation with God, they did not move me. They were cool ideas. I would urge people: these truths need to get in your conversation with God or they will just be a great idea that you underline or put on social media or send it to your friends. But it will not actually move you. It will excite your understanding, but it will not move your heart.*

*The Word of God is like a fire that tenderizes the heart. The Word of God is like a hammer. It will shatter resistance. I mean the “I am not doing that! I am not embracing that! No, Lord, that is out of reach.”*

*And the Lord would say, “I will shatter that resistance. I will tenderize you, and I will break all that resistance. I will empower you to walk with Me in a way that will bring incredible joy to you.”*

*The Word of God is like a sword. It pierces. It lays bare—I already mentioned this—the unperceived errors or sins, the ones we don’t even know are in our hearts. The Word of God will pierce through and show them to us. But we have to engage with the Word of God.*

* 1. Jesus’ words have a supernatural dimension to them—they impart spiritual life. Each time we say what God says in taking to God or to others, it marks our spirit and changes us. Even as a computer program may be changed by rewriting each line of code, our inner man is renewed by multitudes of short prayers. This draws us into intimacy with Him while it transforms and unifies us with others.

63“The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” (Jn. 6:63)

*Jesus’s words have a supernatural dimension to them. I did not understand this. I mean, I still always need to grow in more of understanding of this. But when I really got to believe this and said, “Okay. These are not just words. They have a supernatural dimension. They impart life”—I mean, the first couple years I read the Bible, I did not feel any life. It was so boring—I could not figure out anything, but I would talk to the Lord with it. But when I started talking to the Lord, or even when I talked to people—like my favorite thing that I love about these Friday night EGS services, it is my sanctified selfishness. I like being a blessing to some of you—I love having these truths go through my being because they are in my mouth. I leave, and I go home and say, “I really mean it this time, God! I am going all the way.” I mean, it just talks me into God because it gets in my mouth. And whether you are talking with two people, ten people; it is just in a conversation, a message, singing, it gets in your mouth to others or gets in your mouth to God, it will have a spark. Not always—again, I do not want to exaggerate this—but it will mark your spirit.*

*I have used this analogy for years. It is like a computer program that can be changed by rewriting thousands, hundreds of thousands of lines of code, and the program can be changed. Our inner man is like being a line of code. Every time you say it to God—these 10 and 20-second exchanges even, I do not mean an hour prayer time, short little ones, intermittent in conversation. I mean, I like the longer ones, but you do not have to wait for the longer ones—it is like a line of code written on your heart. And you do not feel it every time, but eventually you will look back a year or two later, sometime later, some months and years. It starts, “Wow! I feel His presence. How is that happening?”*

*“Because My Word,” Jesus would say, “has life in it. My Word is living if you talk to Me with it. It is more powerful than your fears, your lusts, your bitterness, and your pains. It is more powerful than any desire that you have if you talk to Me. It is powerful! It is living! It pierces through all the fog and shows you things about your life and your heart you cannot know, the negative, unperceived things, but even glorious things from God about your destiny and your identity, those things too.” It pierces through the fog of our mind, just little bits here and there.*

* 1. ***God cleanses us***: God first convicts or warns us of sin directly by His Word (He may confirm it by giving us a personal dream). Next, He may speak it to us in a general way through the voice of others (in a message, or conversation, etc.). Next, He may send someone to correct us privately (Mt. 18:15). Next, He confirms it by sending more people to us (Mt. 18:16-17). Next, He may get our attention through sickness or a painful circumstance (Rev. 2:20-23). Next, He may bring us home by a premature death so that our spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

1…there is sexual immorality among you…that a man has his father’s wife! 4In the name of our Lord Jesus…when you are gathered…5deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh [sickness or premature death] that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (1 Cor. 5:1-5)

20“…you allow that woman Jezebel…to teach…My servants to commit sexual immorality…  
21I gave her time to repent. 22I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery…into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23I will kill her children…” (Rev. 2:20-23)

*Now this is going to get a little heavy here. Jesus said, “They are clean because I spoke My Word to you.” I just want to throw this out. I will spend maybe a minute or two on it, but this is a really big subject. I am making it really personal by using first person pronouns.*

*First, the Lord cleans us by speaking His Word. He says, “If you will hear Me when I give you My Word, we are good!” Sometimes He will even give you a dream to back it up, not that often, here and there, some people more than others. So, He tells us our errors and our sins. By reading the Word, He speaks to us.*

*Next, “Well, I really did not respond to that one.” You hear when He speaks to you in a general way. You are in a meeting like this, or you are in a conversation, in a classroom or you are watching a Christian TV program and they make the point. The Lord says, “I am speaking again! I am being general. Nobody knows I am zeroing in on you, but I am talking to you right now.” Well, I do not really want to respond.*

*All of a sudden, He sends somebody to us privately. “For these reasons… the Lord has sent me to you privately to say you need to stop this.” The guy’s eyes get real big. Still does not listen. Well, then the Lord sends a few more. The point is not to shame the guy or to embarrass him. The point is to liberate him. He will not listen still.*

*Then it really picks up. And this is the part that is not very popular in the body of Christ, but it is really clear in the Bible. He gets our attention. Sometimes He makes us sick to get our attention, or He sends painful circumstances. Now the problem with that is that for everybody who is sick, this is not the issue. That is why it is a little bit weird to say this, but we cannot avoid this subject completely.*

*Well, when you get in pain, it changes your conversation with God. Pain changes our conversation. We talk about different things to God even in our own soul. We imagine different things when we get into pain.*

*Well, the guy is still not listening. The Lord brings home people by premature death. He kills them so they are saved in the day of the Lord. You say, “Where is that in the Bible?” Well, actually it is in a handful of places.*

*Paul says it right here in 1 Corinthians 5. He said, “There is immorality, and the guy will not stop.” Verse 14, “When you gather together, I will be with you in spirit”—He was talking about himself—“Deliver him over to Satan.” Like deliver him over to Satan? What does that mean? It means that hedge of protection is lifted. “For the destruction of his flesh.” That is sickness, and if they stay with it, it is death, premature death.*

*Why would God do that? So his spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord. The Lord would say, “So I take him home early, but he lives forever in My kingdom.” If he continues in that path, he will get harder and harder and more dull and more resistant, and he will actually step away from his faith. So, it is a severe mercy, but it is a beautiful mercy.*

*Jesus said it more clearly than Paul. Paul said it, and you say, “Aghhh, I am going to skip preaching that one.” I have preached these passages a couple times over the years, and it never is like the bestseller stuff, you know.*

*In Revelation 20, Jesus said, “You allow Jezebel to teach My people and to seduce them into immorality.” She tells them that it is okay to do it in the grace of God, etc. He went on—I love verse 21—“I gave her time to repent.” Beloved, Jesus is so gentle that He gave Jezebel time to repent! I mean, if Jezebel gets time, I mean, He said, “No, I am not trying to hurt her. I am trying to win her. I am going to give her time. I am going to send people to her. I am going to send circumstances. I am going to speak to her.” Well, she did not repent. You can read the whole passage later. He said, “If she does not”—and she did not, Jesus might say, “I just did not put it all here”—He said, “I will cast her upon a sickbed.”*

*“Well, Jesus cannot make people sick.”*

*Well, He says He can. And the people who commit adultery under her inspiration, “I will cast them into great tribulation.” He is not talking about the End-time tribulation. “I will trouble their life until they are more interested in My breakthrough in their heart than continuing in their way. If they do not repent, I will kill them and take them home, like Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5.”*

*Now again, you have to qualify this. It would be a little irresponsible of me to come say this and then move on. Not everybody sick is in sin. And everybody in immorality does not get sick. It is not like that. But you ask, “How do you know?” You talk to the Lord. And He is shouting at you.*

*If you say, “Are You talking to me about that, Lord?”*

*“Well, are you involved in it? “*

*“Well, yeah.”*

*“Well, then I am talking to you about it.” Again, in the body of Christ today, immorality is so immersed in the “grace of God” reality. We love the grace of God because God gives time. God is not trying to expose or break the person. He is trying to free the person. But there is a time when His mercy says, “I will trouble you in your life to change the conversation, and if that does not work, I will take you home so that you are saved in the day of the Lord.”*

*In John 9, the blind man was blind, and the guy asked, “Who sinned?”*

*Jesus said, “Nobody.”*

*Well, there has to be sin; he is blind. No. No. You cannot make equations like that. Well, how do we know? This is so personal that you talk to the Lord about it with a strong foundation of the love of God in your life—because some people are so fragile to any negative emotion, they are just easily sucked into condemnation and shame—but you take the Word of God, and you speak the truth back to God and talk to Him about situations; He will give you light.*

*But always know: He is not trying to expose you or break you or anyone. He is trying to free us because He is committed to our greatness more than we are. He might say, “For billions of years when we talk, you will be glad I did not let you have your way. You really will be glad. Right now, all you want is your way. But you will be so glad.”*

*Anyway, I did not mean to spend this much time on it, but I wanted to say this. Jesus said this, “You are clean because of the word you spoke, and you are clean because you are talking to Me, or abiding in Me, and My Word is sanctifying you.” But I wanted to say that if you do not do it that way, there is a progression. It does not follow this exactly. This is not meant to be a scientific progression that is never different. The Lord does it different all kinds of ways, but I know one thing, He does these things because He loves us.*

1. we are called to “Abide in Christ”
   1. ***Abiding in Christ***: The main activity of a believer related to growing in God is to abide in Christ.   
      It involves three things—*talking with God*, *applying His promises*, and *obeying His leadership*.   
      Abiding in Christ speaks of our on-going dialogue with God with active trust in His Word (promises, warnings, doctrines, etc.) and a spirit of obedience flowing from mutual affection.

4“Abide in Me [talk to Me], and I in you [I talk to you]…5you are the branches. He who   
abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (Jn. 15:4-5)

*We are called to abide in Christ. I have been talking about, “You have been made clean by the Word.” And you are sanctified by the Word. That is what I have been talking about the last ten minutes, how the Word cleanses us when He speaks to us.*

*Now I am going to talk about how we speak the Word back to Him. It is the same subject, just the other side of the conversation. Last week we spoke about pruning to remove hindrances. This week we are talking about the written Word that He speaks to our heart as well. Here He is saying, “Now I want you to talk to Me.” This is the other side of the conversation.*

*Abide in Christ. The main activity of a believer who is going to grow in God, the main activity—you can use different phrases by the way. But the phrase Jesus used is a really good one—“Abide in Christ. Abide in Me.” This involves three things. The first one is talking to God and again, if I had to reduce it to one core activity, this is the one.*

*Number two is actively trusting Him or applying His promises. Not just talking to Him, but taking His Word and refusing lies about condemnation, shame, and fear, and saying what God says is true about you. It is not enough to talk, “I love You. You love me. I am such a creep, but I love You, and You love me. I love You. I love You. I love You. I am such a creep. I’m a creep.” No, go to the next step. You are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. You are My beloved Bride. You are sons of the Kingdom. You have an eternal destiny. “Yeah, but I am a creep, but I love You.” Yeah, we have got to talk, but then we have to apply His promises.*

*Then, there is that spirit of obedience. Those are three significant components about abiding in Christ. I have a little bit on each one of them.*

*But the main one, the core activity, let’s just read verse 4. We know the passage, but it doesn’t hurt. I am going to look at it anyway. He says, “Abide in Me.” Again, in one phrase, “Talk to Me.” “And I will abide in you. I will inspire you. I will give you impressions.” Again, I am not talking about audible voice talking. He might do that, but He is saying, “I am going to inspire you with impressions here and there on a regular basis.”*

*I just want you to know this one thing before we get to it in a few moments. Our abiding in Him is not the same thing as Him abiding in us. Those are two distinct realities and two distinct activities. They are not the same subject. A lot of folks can read this passage fast and miss the glory, because to see this clearly—oh, I want this whole thing—He says, “You cannot bear fruit if you do not engage in this conversation with Me.” You will not have motivation for humility, purity, gratitude, and generosity. You will not have it. The dark emotions will take over and smother out the inspiration that you have on occasion unless you talk to Him. “I am the vine. You are the branches. You are the vessels I am releasing My light through.” He says it again in verse five, “Talk to Me, and I will talk to you.” He repeats the same truth for emphasis. “You will bear a lot of fruit if you do this. But I want to tell you, you will not bear any if you do not.”*

*Most believers talk to the Lord a little bit. And they have a little bit of motivation for purity, generosity, gratitude, and humility. He says, as it were, that you will get more fruit in yourself, and your words will even touch people differently if you do this. But you cannot move your own heart just by deciding to be pure and to be humble. You cannot move your own heart in a way that you can make others inspired to walk in gratitude, humility, generosity, etc.*

* 1. The Lord’s pruning removes hindrances (15:2), and His Word cleanses us (15:3). The other side of this two-way conversation is to “abide in Christ” (15:4) that we might be cleansed and bear fruit.
  2. ***#1 Talking with Jesus***:Talking with God is the core activity of abiding. This is where it starts, but it includes more. The Christian life is an ongoing dialogue with a Person. He has much to say, but allows us to set the pace of the conversation—abiding consists of many 10-20 second exchanges.

*I am going to say the same thing I have already said ten times, but like I said before, my gift is repetition. The first element: talking to God is the core activity of abiding in Christ. When that dawned on me, I thought, “Well then, it is so simple. I can do that. As long as You give me conversation material.”*

*He said, “Here is the whole Book.” We are looking at John 13-17 where there are 40 or 50 different truths to talk to Him about. But we have the whole Bible. We are not limited to John 13-17. This is where it starts, by talking to Him. But it includes more. The Christian life is an ongoing dialogue with a real Person. The Christian life is not just a mandate to serve in an army. It is a dialogue with a Person. That is the glory of Christianity. We are not just a workforce. We are a workforce, but Christianity is not a mandate to serve and to work. It is an ongoing conversation with a Person who energizes us to do work.*

*He has much to say—now, catch this—but He allows us to set the pace of the conversation. If we start the conversation, He will keep talking to us. And if we stop the conversation, He says, as it were, “Okay, I will stop. I am not going to make you talk to Me.” And the more that we get energized by the Word—the more we are reading it and talking, and it gets in our spirit even when we are coming and going, moving from this room to the next room just in little 10 and 20-second exchanges all through the day—it gets stronger and stronger the more that you do it.*

* 1. ***#2 Applying His Promises***:We actively trust Him by applying the promises of His Word in our conversation with Him. When shame, fear, and rejection rise up to challenge what He says about loving, forgiving, healing, providing for us, etc. then we must apply His promises to our hearts by *confessing the truth* of His promises and *resisting lies* against them (Rom. 10:10; Deut. 30:11-14). Ask the Lord to let you *see what He sees* about you—commit to *say what He says* about your life.

10…with the mouth confession is made unto salvation [liberty]. (Rom 10:10)

*Second is applying His promises. We have to actively trust Him. Again, when fear, shame, rejection, bitterness,—put all whatever dark emotion you want to put there—when they rise up in our heart, and they challenge what God says about us, He would say, “I love you.”*

*We say, “Well, I feel worthless. My life is meaningless. I am not doing anything that matters. I don’t even know what I am doing.”*

*He would say, “No, I love you, and you are bearing fruit that no one sees but I see it, I will remember it forever.”*

*“Oh, come on. Let’s get real, God!”*

*He would say, “I am getting real right now. You reject those lies and say to Me what I say about your life.”*

*Paul talked about, “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” And when he said “salvation” here, he meant liberty in the heart. He did not just mean being born again. A lot of times people quote this verse, Romans 10:10, and they are talking about the day you get born again: you make confession with your mouth, and now you are born again.*

*I like that, but this is an ongoing principle. By speaking the truth of the Word of God, the heart enters into deliverance and liberty, which is the word “salvation” here. Paul is actually quoting Deuteronomy 30. We have looked at it before, and we will look at it again. He is quoting Deuteronomy 30 where Moses was saying that you have power to love God if you will talk to God about loving God. You will have power to love Him. It is actually talking about an ongoing liberty of the heart called salvation.*

* 1. ***#3 Obeying His leadership***: Jesus requires His people to express their love for Him by walking in a spirit of obedience (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23)—that is, by setting their heart over and over to obey Him.

*The third is obeying His leadership. We all know that Jesus requires us to express our love for Him by walking in a spirit of obedience. He requires us. There is no loving God on our own terms. I mean, we have personal ways we love and express it, but we must love God on God’s terms by a spirit of obedience that continues to reset our heart to obey.*

*We stumble, we call it sin, we repent, we push delete, get rid of it, and set our heart to obey. Two days later, we do it again. Set our heart again. Two days later, we do it again. Set your heart again. That is what I call the spirit of obedience, that there is a true tenacity. You say, “Well, if I really meant it, I wouldn’t do it.” No, you are probably weaker than you think you are. It is probably the revelation that you are weaker than you think you are. The fact that you are not following through does not mean you are a fake. Just keep signing up for real and warring against it. You will move forward in time. I call that the spirit of obedience.*

1. Christ promised to “abide in us”—2 aspects and 3 activities
   1. ***Christ abiding in us***: There are 2 distinct aspects to Jesus’ promise to abide in us. First, He abides, or lives, in our spirit *instantly* at our new birth (1 Cor. 6:17). Second, He abides in our hearts *progressively* as He manifests His presence in us (Jn. 14:23)—inspiring our emotions and our understanding. Paul spoke of Jesus “dwelling in our heart” by His manifest presence (Eph. 3:17)—this is the same as “Jesus abiding in us” and Christ “being formed” in our hearts (Gal. 4:19).

16…that He would grant you…to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith… (Eph. 3:16-17)

17But he who is joined [born again] to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Cor. 6:17)

*Now this is very different. Christ promised to abide in us. He is not talking about us abiding in Him. He is changing the subject. But if you read this really fast, you miss it. There are two aspects—you are going to have to take time to read this on your own if it is brand new to you—I have here two aspects, three activities. You might say, “Oh, my goodness!” It is really not confusing though. He abides in us. He lives in us in two very distinct ways. The day you are born again, the Spirit of God instantly comes into your spirit, and He lives in you instantly the day you are born again. He lives in your spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:17, you are one spirit with God.*

*But your soul—your mind, emotions, and will—He is not moving on your mind, emotions, and will very much on day one. He lives in your spirit, but Jesus is not talking about Him living in you the day you are born again. 1 Corinthians 6:17, you are one spirit with God. He is talking about that. He is living in your heart, and He is moving on your mind and emotions progressively. He would say, “You talk to Me, and I will move on your mind and emotions. I will overpower dark emotions. I will overpower dark thoughts in your mind supernaturally if you will abide in Me. Talk to Me, and I will do this in you.”*

*Paul spoke of Jesus dwelling in our heart. Here he is praying in Ephesians 3 for these on-fire, born-again believers in the city of Ephesus. The greatest revival in the book of Acts was in the city of Ephesus. He was praying that Jesus would dwell in their heart. Like, I thought they were saved? He was not talking about them being one spirit the day they are born again. He was talking about Jesus manifesting His presence and overpowering dark emotions and dark thoughts in their mind. That is what he meant by the heart. It is different than the spirit. Sometimes the words are interchangeable, but Paul was praying for on-fire, born-again believers to have a greater manifestation of the Spirit’s activity on their mind and emotions.*

* 1. Some only emphasize our *legal position* with Christ—our *justification* by faith (Rom. 3:21-31). Others emphasize our *living condition* with Christ—our *participation* with His indwelling life.   
     Our *legal position* before God is based on us freely *receiving Jesus’ righteousness* (2 Cor. 5:21). Our *living condition* (our behavior) is based on our *response to the Spirit’s leadership* (Jn. 15:5).
  2. ***Christ abiding in our hearts***:This involves at least 3 activities of the Spirit in us: 1) *teaching us* about God’s heart, Word, and will; 2) *inspiring us* with perseverance and courage to keep seeking God; and 3) *empowering us* to live in obedient love and prevailoverdark thoughts and emotions.

*He abides in our heart. He moves in us. There are at least three activities. You could probably identify ten here if you really wanted to. I am just giving you an idea about this abiding in the heart of a believer. We are praying that God would strengthen us so that God dwells in our heart. Again, you hear a lot of folks asking, “I thought He did dwell in my heart. Why am I praying that He dwell in my heart?” Again, it is talking about inspiring your mind and emotions and freeing you from dark thoughts and dark emotions.*

*I list three activities, and undoubtedly it could be a bit longer. He teaches us. That spark of insight, a little bit of insight about God’s heart and His Word, His will, just a little here and there—that is the Spirit of God touching your mind. He inspires us. We want to stay diligent. It is a miracle if you stay diligent for 5 years, 10 years, or 20 years. Even if you have a few bad days in there, staying diligent is Holy Spirit. You are not sitting in this room because you are more noble than other people. He has moved on you. You are hungry, and that is why you come on a Friday night to a meeting like this. Then you go to a prayer meeting. Some of you stay all night and others tomorrow or the next day or whatever. He has inspired you. He empowers you. Those are ways He dwells in the heart.*

1. talking to the Lord: pray-read the word
   1. One important and practical way to enhance our “abiding in Christ” relationship with God   
      is to talk to Lord by pray-reading the Word, which is similar to fellowshipping with the Spirit.

*Okay, I do say this over and over, so I am going to do this pretty quickly. Talking to the Lord. I call it, “to pray-read” the Word. I did not use that term way back in 1974, but that is when I started the journey to pray-read the Word, to read the Bible and turn it into conversation. First year or two, I did not quite know how to do it. But I have described it really simply here. I just wish that when I was 18 somebody had told me this. That would have saved me two or three years on walking in circles, trying to figure out how to come to Him in His Word.*

*I asked, “What does that mean?” I would ask different leaders.*

*“I do not know. You know, just come to Him.”*

*I said, “Come on! Somebody break it down for me!” I was frustrated. “Tell me how to come to You!”*

*He might have said, “Just come on, you are doing it. Keep doing it. I am going to surprise you. I am going to answer you.” But I did not know it for a while.*

* 1. Our words are in His heart, and His words are in our heart—this is foundational to our union (15:7).   
     Abiding starts with words. Simple phrases spoken to God can shift our emotions. Over time, what He thinks, feels, says, and does gradually fills our hearts. One of my favorite prayers is to ask the Spirit to let me *see what He sees, feel what He feels,* and *say what He says* about my life, my family, and others—and about Jesus, the Church, the harvest, the nations, the end times, etc.

*This is so stunning. Our words are in His heart. We say, “Jesus, we love You.” That moves Him. Why would our words move You? And, His words move us. This is the foundation to this union. We will talk about this more in verse seven next week. Abiding, again, starts with words, with simple phrases. You speak simple phrases, “Thank You, God, for loving me. Show me more.” “Thank You, God, for forgiving me. Show me more.” “Thank You, God, that You promised to guide me. I do not feel guided but thank You that You promised it. Show me more.” Those little phrases. You give that little beginning. I almost always start with that phrase, and many times I get more phrases. Sometimes I do not. Over time our emotions shift, and so does our thinking. What He thinks and feels and does starts to fill our mind and heart and life. I start thinking what He is thinking now. I mean, not totally by any means, but much more than before.*

*One of my favorite prayers to ask the Holy Spirit—I love to say this to the Lord. It is probably my favorite one-liner prayer—I say, “Holy Spirit, let me see what You see and feel what You feel”—and you could use a hundred subjects—“when you look at Mike Bickle. Let me see what You see and feel what You feel when You look at me.” My family, the house of prayer, driving to the meeting, I don’t do it every time, but mostly, “Let me see what You see and feel what You feel about the EGS tonight.” Just little simple phrases. I will drive home, and I will ask the Lord, not always, “Lord, let me see what You see and feel what You feel about Diane when I get home. About my family who I will see tomorrow. Let me see what You see.” Just little 10 and 20-second prayers like that.*

*It is really fun if you ask Him, “Let me see what You see and feel what You feel about Jesus.” Holy Spirit knows everything about Jesus. I mean, “Tell me what You know about Him.”*

*“Ohh! How much time do you have?”*

*“I hear I have billions of years.”*

*“It will take it. I will be teaching you for billions of years.”*

* 1. It is a common error to try to live the Christian life without Christ—*without conversation with Him*. Hosea taught that returning to the Lord includes bringing words to speak to Him (Hos. 14:2).

1O Israel, return to the Lord…2Take words with you, and return to the Lord. (Hos. 14:1-2)

*This is a common error: To try to live the Christian life without Christ. It is so clear and easy, but it needs to be said. What do I mean by “without Christ?” We are born again, but if we are not in conversation with Him, we are all but living the Christian life without Christ. And it is so common. Hosea told us, “When you are returning to the Lord, take words with you when you return to the Lord.” It matters when you take words.*

* 1. There are two broad categories of truth related to pray-reading the Word.
     1. Scriptures that focus on ***promises to believe*** in God’s Word are passages that declare truths such as God loves, forgives, leads, protects, provides for us, etc.
     2. Scriptures that focus on ***exhortations to obey*** God’s Word are passages that command us to walk in purity, bridle our speech, serve others, give time and money in serving God, etc.

*There are two broad categories of truth I see when I pray/read the Word. There are Scriptures that tell us to focus on promises to believe. And, there are Scriptures that focus on exhortations to obey.*

*Like there are Scriptures that tell you, “God loves you.” You are supposed to believe that. He forgives you. He leads you. He protects you. He provides. There are many, many promises to believe.*

*There is another category of Scripture related to pray/read the Word: exhortations to obey. Walk in purity. Bridle your tongue. Serve other people. Be grateful. Give money. Give time, etc. There are hundreds of exhortations to obey.*

* 1. We dialogue with God as we read the Word by praying back to God ***promises to believe***.   
     Our conversation includes saying, *“Thank You, show me more!”* for specific truths and promises.

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)

*We dialogue with God by praying back promises to believe. It is so simple. We say, “Thank You, Lord. Show me more.” It is really that simple. I say a little bit more, but that really is all that I am saying. I have said before that John 15:9 is my favorite passage in Scripture, as is John 17:26. Those are my two favorite Scriptures put together. I say, “Okay, You said, ‘As the Father loved Me, I have also loved you. Abide in My love.’” So, there are two promises to believe, that the Father loves Jesus and that Jesus loves us the same way. Like, pretty intense. And there is one commandment. “Stay focused on this love. Abide in it.”*

*So, I will stop and say, “Thank You, Jesus, that You love me like the Father loves You. Show me more.” Beloved, that simple “thank you” and then put the phrase in, “show me more,” that will set you on a trajectory. Many times, you will start saying another phrase and another phrase, and, if you are wise, you will journal the new phrases. I try to journal. That is why I always have got my laptop open. I want to journal any phrase that I say that moves me. I don’t always go back and look at it, but just writing it while I say it touches me more and more and more. That is why I do not go to a prayer meeting without a notepad or my laptop. I used to only have notepads for many years. I want to say, “Jesus, I love You. And You love me. Thank you.” And just add another phrase. I think, “Oh! I kind of like that. I want to write it down.” When I write it down, it grows in me. So, one, say, “Thank You.” Two, “Show me more.”*

* + 1. First, ***we*** ***thank God*** for a particular truth. We turn these truths into simple declarations of thanksgiving and trust. Say, “Thank You, Jesus, that You love me as the Father loves You   
       and that You forgave me.” Or declare, “I trust that You will lead, provide, and protect me.”
    2. Second, ***we*** ***ask God to reveal******or release*** more about a specific truth to us. For example, pray, “Jesus, reveal to me how much You love and forgive me as well as the certainty of Your provision,” or, “Father, release Your promised guidance, provision, protection, etc.”
  1. We dialogue with God as we read the Word and pray back to God ***exhortations to obey***.   
     Our conversation includes saying, *“I set my heart to obey this. Help me more!”*

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)

*I am just saying the same thing over and over. Now we get to exhortations to obey. Here the conversation includes things like “I set my heart to obey this.” Like we are in John 15:9 again. The two promises, the Father loves Jesus, that is promise number one. That is a great promise. I love to say, “Father, Thank You, the way You love Jesus. Show me more. Show me more how You love Jesus.”*

*And the Lord could answer, “Well, keep asking Me and I will give you surprising little installments of insight. Just little ones here and there, but they will add up over time.”*

*I say, “Thank You that You love me the way the Father loves you. Show me more.”*

*Now I am moving to the commandment, “Abide in My love,” which is to stay focused, stay locked in on this. That is a commandment. So, when you see a commandment, stop and set your heart to obey it. I say, “Lord, I set my heart to obey. Help me more…Lord, I set my heart to abide in You, to stay focused on You. Help me more.”*

*That is basically all, “Encounter me more,” “Help me more,” “Empower me more,” And whether it is, “Lord, I want to control my tongue. I set my heart to have pure speech. Help me more.” Or “Lord, I set my heart to use my time in a way that obeys You. Help me more. I want to use my money in a way that obeys You. Help me more.” Again, “I set my heart. Help me more. I set my heart. Help me more.”*

* + 1. First, ***we*** ***commit ourselves to obey God*** in the specific way set forth in a biblical passage. Make declarations of resolve to obey the Word as you read passages about obedience.   
       Say, “I set my heart to abide in You, to obey You with my speech, time, money, etc.”
    2. Second, ***we*** ***ask God to empower us to obey*** a particular command seen in Scripture. Ask God to help by giving you wisdom and motivation to obey in specific areas. For example, pray, “Help me to ‘abide in love,’ to control my speech, to use my time and money in obedience.”

*Well, worship team, come on up. I should have called you a few minutes ago. I am at the end here.*

*Let’s just stand before the Lord. Some of you, this is new. Others of you, this is just a review, but it is a good review. I have preached this so many times over the last many years. I love to just say this stuff. I worked all day on these notes, and I was just saying, “I am so happy about these truths. They make me happy, Lord.” I even wrote down, “They make me happy, Lord.” It touched me. I probably will never say it again. Well, I guess I said it just now. I just say, “This is marvelous, Lord. This is how we live together. Oh, this is marvelous, Lord, how we live together.” Oh, I am going to say that again too. That felt good.*

*Father, here we are before You.*

*This is so simple anyone can do this. It is so simple, so few do it. When you come to the Lord, take words with you. Take words with you. I have more. I have developed these ideas in more comprehensive ways on the website, if you want to search it out more or hear more about this or whatever. Just do this, and it will grow in you. You really do not need a whole lot more. It is just that little push.*

*Father, here we are before You. Oh, we love the way You love us. Thank You, Jesus, that You love me as the Father loves You. Thank You that You love the people in this room the way the Father loves you. Show them more. We set our heart to abide in this love, to stay focused on it. Help us. We set our heart to go deep in this. Help us. Help us more. Help us more.*

*We love You, Father. I mean, having power to feel gratitude, it is so cleansing. It feels so good to have a little bit of gratitude that is real. That is supernatural to feel gracious to other people, even a little bit, that feels liberating. Give me more of this. I want to bear more fruit. I want more of this in my life.*

*Let us see what You see and feel what You feel when You look at us. Let me see what You see, Holy Spirit. Let me feel what You feel. Let me love the things You love. I want to bear fruit in my heart. I want more of this. I want to know the things You know, Holy Spirit, about Jesus, about the Church, about Kansas City, about this generation. I want to know what You know about the Father. Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures. Beloved, this is drinking from the river of His pleasure. I want to lean into Your heart. Lord, my dark emotions and my dark thoughts, power over dark thoughts and dark emotions! Come, Holy Spirit! Touch us! Touch us even now as we stand before You. We want to talk to You more. Ten and twenty-second exchanges through the day. Long times, short times, here and there throughout the day.*

*I want to know You, Jesus. I want to see what You see and feel what You feel when You look at me, Lord. When You look at my family members, the ones that are struggling, let me see what You see when You look at them. I want to say what You say when You look at them. I want to say what You say.*

*Father, I ask you to lift the spirit of heaviness off people. The Word of God is powerful. It is living. Release heaviness in the heart, in the mind, the talking, the thinking. Release from dark thoughts!*

*I want to know You, Jesus. I want to see what You see. I want to feel what You feel. I want to say what You say.*