

A. CONSTANT CONNECTION

- We have learned that Jesus Himself is the Living Word of God. (John 1:1) His Word is living and active and constantly at work in us. (Heb 4:12, 1 Thes 2:13)
- God says that His desire is for us to know His Word in our innermost selves, for it to replace the old mindsets and heart convictions we've erroneously held. (Ps 51:6)
- In the last lesson, we discovered that meditation is a practical way of taking the Word in more deeply so that it bears fruit and has greater impact in our lives: Josh 1:8 NIV--Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.
- Our text today is meant to continue this idea of God's Living and Active Word bearing fruit in our lives and how we grow to experience abundant fruitfulness.
- Jesus wants to show His disciples (us!) how to enjoy constant connection with Him when He is not visibly present on earth so that our lives overflow: John 15:1-11 NLT--
 "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.⁵"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. ⁹"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!
- There is an optimum environment for growing every living thing. Jesus used this metaphor to describe how we can grow in our relationship with Him and His Word.
- He has promised to never leave us but to remain with us and provide for us through the presence of His indwelling Spirit.
- Notice His use of the word "if" – we must choose to abide in Him, to stay connected. Both parties need to remain or abide for our lives to be abundant and fruitful.
- Remain/Abide in the original language means: "to maintain unbroken fellowship with one, not to depart or leave, to continue to be present." (Strong's G3306)
- Jesus is saying that we are rooted in Him, that "something has established itself permanently within my soul and always exerts its power in me." (Rückert, Abendmahl, p. 286f)
- In order to harness this power and become more fruitful the prayer of our hearts must be, "Spirit, use this Scripture to teach us to abide!"
- Insights:

B. COMPLETE DEPENDENCE

- In this teaching on the Vine and branches, Jesus doesn't mince words: "you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me." (v. 4) So it is imperative that we learn to abide.
- If we remain connected to Jesus and depend on Him to make us fruitful (vs. living out of our own energy and ideas), fruit is a byproduct of His life flowing through us.
- Depending on anything else but Him leaves us dry, withered and weary. We are not able to do anything of an eternal or deeply satisfying nature apart from Him. (v. 5)
- When Jesus teaches about the fruitful and fruitless branches, He is speaking to believers. He tells us that fruitless branches are cut off and burned. (v. 6).
- "Like other parables, the picture Jesus used here was not meant to describe a whole theological system. Yet the progression described a sober and significant warning of the danger of not abiding." (David Guzik Commentary)
- This explains how Christians can live in defeat and be devoid of peace, joy, love, or hope. Let's let these feelings remind us of our need to reconnect and depend on Him: Hosea 6:3 NAS--So let's learn, let's press on to know the LORD. His appearance is as sure as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, as the spring rain waters the earth
- Jesus' presence with us is as certain as the dawn and He is the source of all that we need. So let us press on, press in and cry out to Him to be for us all we are lacking.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Lord, we pray for You to highlight the areas of our lives where we are not living in complete dependence (areas where dry, withered, weary, defeated):

Holy Spirit, lead me into all the truth of Your presence with me. Help me to believe that You are there for me, ready and willing to reconnect:

Jesus, please replace any wrong thinking on my part with the truth that I cannot do anything apart from You. By faith I declare: "I depend on You."

- It is out of our awareness of our complete dependence that we learn to seek Him and His Word. From that posture, prayers that please Him rise up from within us.
- Insights:

C. COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

- As true disciples of Jesus, chosen of God, we have the amazing capacity to live our lives at home in Him and to bring Him glory: John 15:7 MSG -- If you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.
- The Lord's intention is that our lives are so abundant that the watching world takes notice. Those around us begin to see evidence of our Savior and His great love.
- Jesus gives us His own testimony of abiding: John 15:9-11 JBP--"I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. You must go on living in my love. If you keep my commandments you will live in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and live in his love. I have told you this so that you can share my joy, and that your happiness may be complete.
- During His time on earth, Jesus lived as a human in complete dependence and obedience to His Father. (Phil 2:6-8)
- In His instructions on abiding Jesus speaks of how He focused on God's love for Him. That's where He lived and that is how He could be fruitful to fulfill His call: 1 John 4:17 NAS—God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in Him.
- His reassurance to us that He loves us just like the Father loves Him is meant to fuel, empower and satisfy us.
- When we occupy this place of abiding in the love of God, obedience will flow out of that love (not our striving or performance): Is 45:8 MSG -- Open up, heavens, and rain. Clouds, pour out buckets of my goodness! Loosen up, earth, and bloom salvation; sprout right living. I, GOD, generate all this.
- Lastly, when we abide in His loving presence, our faith is strengthened to believe His Living and Active Word: Ps 119:89--Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.
- Insights:

- LISTENING EXERCISE:

Spirit of Truth, I pause now to get in touch with Your perfect love.

Would You penetrate past anything standing in the way of my ability to embrace the truth that You are love and You love me without condition?

(Ex: fear, frustration, impatience, disappointment, self-reliance, shame, etc.)

I extend faith in Your promise: Romans 5:5 God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Thank You that this is the truth! It is part of Your covenant relationship with me. Help me to meditate on this great love in such a way that it bears abundant fruit in my life.

D. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- ONE THING

The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

- PONDER THE TRUTH

Which verse or principle stood out to you this week? Write it below taking some time to review it often. Be still in God's presence, alert for new insights. Record them here.

- PROCESSING THE TRUTH

Prayerfully consider the Listening Exercises from this lesson. Ask the Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of the truth and to reveal any specific faith steps He is calling you to take. Write down your insights.