

# **The Upper Room**

## **Sermon #4: Be the Branch**

**John 15:1-11**

**Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- March 26, 2023**

Good morning, Grace! Turn in your Bible to John chapter 15. We've got some good stuff today. The subject matter is character change—radical life change. And Jesus is going to bring in a paradigm shift that separates Christianity from everything else.

Character and character change; character is who you are when no one's looking. It's what you do if you couldn't get caught, no way. Would you be honest? Are you joyful? Are you generous in those conditions? What is your real character? How do you change yourself?

One of our issues with our souls is that they're victims of physics, the second law, where unless we have a lot of energy, all things approach chaos, entropy. And if you just coast, if you do nothing for your own integrity, then you will just drift into a cynical, angry person, or into a person wrapped in anxiety; addictions come easier and are harder to beat. It just happens if you just coast and do nothing.

No one stays the same. You've got to add energy just to stay the same.

So can we change? Can you go from selfish to selfless, from greedy to generous, from being taker to being a giver, from being a coward to being courageous? Well, I sure hope so. That's why we're here in so many ways. That's the power of Christ in our lives.

### **Jesus' Last Formal Teaching**

Today in John chapter 15 the key is life change. And in the context of this, it is the last formal teaching of Jesus the Christ. And this will be the last time He says, "I am." They have left the Upper Room. The hourglass is running towards empty. He'll be judged and crucified soon. And on His way to the Garden of Gethsemane, it is very probable that they pass through a vineyard. And at that He stops.

I think He's bringing all of His teaching to this focal point that I want all of us to enjoy today. In this garden He grabs these vines and He holds them up and He says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. My Father is the gardener."

And He's off, and He's going to teach us about the mysteries of life. He's going to tell us how and why God works with every one of His children to help them become like Christ in all of life. He's going to show us, hopefully, that if we understand this passage—and it's going to take two weeks—we're going to focus on two separate sources. This week we're going to talk about what we do for life change. And then next week we'll look at what the Father does, what the vinedresser does, what the gardener does for life change, so that we understand that there's a significant difference between the two. But it's going to help us make sense out of some difficult times in our lives and what God is up to in His invasion of our lives.

### **John 15:1-8**

**I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off (lifts up) every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.**

**<sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.**

**<sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.**

**<sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.**

**<sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

So, we'll read verses 1 through 8 right now. The key word—"fruit." It'll be hard to miss. Join me, would you?"

"I am the true vine"—this is Jesus. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off (or lifts up) every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into a fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

You can see there the fruit: fruit, more fruit, much fruit, showing ourselves to be followers of Jesus Christ. I think those eleven men who listened to this metaphor take place understood much of what it meant. You and me? What do we know about any of this gardening stuff, right? There are a couple of farmers in here, but most of us—here’s Vineyards 101. Here’s what He’s talking about.



Jesus says, “I am the true vine.” And if you’re growing a vineyard, think of the vine as the trunk of the tree. It’s going to go about waist high. The vinedressers will let it split left and right so as to get a head start on things in either direction. Jesus is that true vine.

He says, “The Father is the vinedresser.” The Father is the gardener. His job is to get the most and the best fruit out of the branches. And He’ll do whatever that takes. We’ll see that next week.



You and I? We are the branches. The way the branches are set up, they’re going to tie this trellis, these cables to them. Think of sheet music, four or five lines across, all the way down for those branches to run down. And that helps them get air flowing through so that they won’t fall on the ground, and it keeps them clean. It allows the most branches to be exposed to the sun. So, he’s setting them up to win.



The Father is the gardener. Jesus is the vine, the trunk. It's connected to the ground where all the nutrients are. He's going to pull those nutrients up and then send them out to the branches. That's how it works.



This is labor intensive. How does the gardener make that work? We're going to look at that next week. He'll do whatever is needed, because the goal is fruit, more fruit, much fruit. He's actively involved in making the fruit take place.

### **What Is Fruit?**

So, what is the fruit? The fruit is character traits, attributes, thoughts, ambitions that glorify God. We say around here, "Becoming like Christ in all of life"—all the attributes of Christ. When we have those kinds of fruits, like courage or generosity or humility—those are the fruits. It's going to happen in our lives.

## **Galatians 5:22**

**The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”**

There’s a list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians. We’ll study that this summer. But look at the list. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. You look at that list of fruit and you think, *I want some of that*. Don’t you want more joy? You can kind of get greedy with this fruit—*I want more joy, I want more love, I want more patience with people. I want all of those things*. Sure.

## **John 15:8**

**This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

All of this talk about fruit and the reason God wants fruit to spring forth in our lives is in verse 8: “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” Every time we bear fruit it brings glory to God. Angels and demons both are watching and saying, *Wow, that’s a miracle. They’re becoming and looking like Christ in this way. In light of their background, where they’ve been, what they’ve experienced, look at that fruit*. Each expression is glorifying God that way. It is Christ breaking out fruit in us. He’s breaking out in us.

## **Our Role in Bearing Fruit**

This week we’re going to look at what we do to play our part in bearing much fruit. When we look at this list of fruit, it looks like goals, doesn’t it? Like, *We’ve got to get on that. Let’s get to work bearing fruit!*

Except that’s not what this story is about. Jesus says the vinedresser is going to be doing all the work. The farmer is the one who’s active in this. Our role is passive. Jesus is using this as a metaphor analogy, a word picture for us, because the fruit is organic. It’s a natural consequence of the branches playing their part and being attached to the vine. And so, the goal is not—listen

carefully—to bear fruit. That’s not our goal. Our goal is to just stay connected to the vine, to the trunk, because the trunk is connected to the ground where the nutrients are.

### **Remain --- Abide**

Our job? Remain. Abide. Connect. Live through. Let Jesus break out in us.

Watch this. We’re going to read most of this section again. But now we’re going to emphasize the word “abide”, or in this translation, it will say “remain.” Eleven times in eleven sentences ... hmmm ... Jesus is going to say, *You’ve got to remain to have fruit. If you don’t remain, you can’t have fruit.* And He’s going to say it again and again and again. It’s just going to go back and forth. It’s going to wear us down.

Why? Here’s why. Because it is our inclination to, what God began in the Spirit, we’re going to perfect in the flesh. We want a piece of this. We want our fingerprint on some of this fruit. And Jesus says, *That’s not how this works. You do this thing. Let the vinedresser do His thing. Let the Holy Spirit do His thing. Stay in your lane, branch.*

#### **John 15:1, 4**

**I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener ...**

**<sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. NO branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.**

Look, let me read it for you. Verse 1 says, “I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener ... Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

## **John 15:5-11**

**I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.**

**<sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

**<sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in His love.**

**<sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**

I'm going to say it again for the people in the back: "I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me, and I in him, he will bear fruit—much fruit. Apart from me he can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me he's like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up and are thrown into a fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Here are a couple more new verses: "And as the Father has loved me, I have loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandment and remained in His love."

The last sentence: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

You see the key words there? Remain. Some versions say "abide." It means to lodge with, it means to sojourn with. It means to be connected to, it means to dwell with. It means to camp alongside. It means to be with them, dependently.

**John 15:7**

**If you lodge in me and my words live in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.**

**If you sojourn in me and my words travel in your mind, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.**

**If you encamp in me and my words dwell in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.**

Verse 7: “If you lodge with me and my words live in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you.”

“If you sojourn with me and my words travel in your mind, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you.”

“If you encamp in me and my words dwell in your thoughts, ask whatever you wish.”

The primary point of this teaching is that the branches—that’s us—are not to bear fruit. Our mission is not to bear fruit. We are just to abide and stay connected. There is no command here that says, *Go make fruit*.

But repetitiously, what does He say? Stay connected; abide; remain. And then fruit just happens. It’s organic. Play your part. The sap runs through things like work. Not try harder. But we’ll see next week, especially when the vinedresser gets in there, depending on circumstances of life—Cling harder. Abide harder.

He says it so many times. It’s like, “Martha, Martha ...” Do you know that story of Martha and Mary? Martha is running around doing. Mary is abiding. She’s sitting at his feet, back and forth, enjoying, drinking in the fellowship of being with her Savior.

This is a different kind of change. This is radically different than anything out there, whether it’s self-help or religion or whatever it might be. Jesus is the trunk. And He’s rooted to the ground. And the branches are receiving life through that trunk. The branches live. It’s an indescribable paradigm change in how a person is changed. It’s indescribable in its intimacy, because the connection here is that the branch is literally drinking off the vine. The branches are living off the life of the vine. It’s total dependency.

This is just simple stuff—the branches have no connection to the earth where life is. So, the only way to get life to the branches is through the vine, through the trunk. So, we have to remain so that it flows through.

You can see sometimes—like the last two or three months—there was a word picture for this around us—the oak trees crashed and burned. And even right now, you think about trimming some trees. I had been thinking about it for about a month now. And there are some tree limbs that have the appearance of abiding. They are superficially attached to the trunk. And three weeks ago, I didn't know which was which. How about now? Right? Just look around. Now you know which ones are attached. How do you know which ones are abiding? Leaves. It's green everywhere, except where death is taking place, except where they're disconnected.

So, Jesus is saying that, if you work it backwards, fruit on the end is the essence of and evidence of being connected. The branch is connected to the vine and the vine is connected to the ground, and the ground is where Yahweh is. It's the divine nature of God himself that's flowing through and giving us this. It is so different from any other source of character change.

There are relationships you can be in that have tremendous power of influence, but nothing like this. And employer/employee relationship—there's power of influence, sure. A coach and an athlete, a parent and a child—yes, right? That's a lot of influence, a lot of connectivity, a lot of potential change. But you can't make a teenager do what they don't want to do. You can make them regret it. But that's the nature of things.

Here's the part that's important. All of those relationships are all external, trying to change someone from the outside. That can't happen. Even as powerful as they are, it's external influences. This is intrinsic. This is more than just influence; this is Jesus saying, *I'm entering into you and your soul*, and then it's changing from the inside out. The fruit gets produced by what's going on through the chemistry that's natural.

Jesus had just taught on the Holy Spirit—kind of an introduction to the power of the third person of the Trinity. And now He's showing that this is how it works. The Holy Spirit is now inside of your soul, inside your spirit, and the Holy Spirit is running through your veins. And that Holy Spirit is going to produce fruit. You're not doing the work. The Spirit's doing the work. That's lasting, true character soul change.

This is so different in kind, not in degree—this is what I'm saying. This is a different kind of change, not some other type of change that turns back at 11:00 or something. No. I was

thinking all week about what an analogy would be that could help us. And the only one I could find was a fetus attached to a uterus through an umbilical cord. That fetus is living off the life of the mother. And it's absolutely necessary for it to be connected. And if that child, that fetus, that little baby, wasn't growing, you don't yell, "Grow!!" You do diagnostic work. You say, *Okay, wait a minute. Is everything healthy? Is the cord hooked up? Is it working right?* Because if it is, that fetus will live off the very life of the mother and show through.

Jesus says, "I am the vine." *I am the trunk of this tree. I am connected to the very divine nature. And I'm pulling those resources up. And if you stay connected with me, you'll enjoy that through the veins, through the arteries, of your spirit.*

## **2 Peter 1:3-4**

**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our personal knowledge of Him ...<sup>4</sup> through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the decay in the world.**

Look how Peter says it. With that in mind, look what Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 1: "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness" so we can be passive. "...life and godliness, through our personal knowledge of Him ... through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the decay of the world."

We participate in the nature of Yahweh, which comes through the vine into the branches—if we abide. This is so revolutionary. Christianity isn't just a set of rules. It is not a set of doctrines. It's so much more than that. This right here separates us from everything else, because it says you and I are in an umbilical cord relationship with a triune God. And we are dependent—not independent—and we are passive—not active. The Father's doing the work through the Spirit. And it is intrinsic change, not extrinsic.

We need to do this one thing. Jesus says, *You just stay connected to me and everything else just happens.*

Listen to this: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." "Through Christ"—His strength in me, breaking out courage. You've got to just remain. You just need to remain.

## How to Remain / Abide

Well, how do we do that? How do we remain in Jesus?

Well, Jesus is going to have two applications for this. How do we increase our dependence upon the Spirit's work in our souls? He's going to reference two primary points. Truth and love. And you're not surprised. Of course, it's going to be truth and love. We need to remain in His truth, we need to remain in His love. That's how we grow. If we're not growing, we're not showing fruit, becoming more bitter, more anxious, more whatever, I'll be you're not experiencing that abiding flow of remaining in His love or truth.

### 1. Truth

**John 15:7**

**If you remain in me and my words remain in you ...**

Look ... when He talks about truth, it says in verse 7, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you ..." This is the idea of knowing the words of Christ—well, the Bible, Old and New Testament—not just knowledge, but it's mind-transforming. It's paradigm-shifting. It is letting the Word of God define what is right and real and true. And you, being self-aware enough ... when we're self-aware, we can start checking ourselves and saying, *No, that's not what the Bible says. I was disconnected for a second*. It is an instinctive response to life's circumstances, in a way that, eventually, we would be responding like Christ, in the way we think and feel and do. It's like muscle memory where it just happens.

In Colossians, Paul writes, "May the Word of Christ dwell richly inside of you." It's when the nature of God and the promises of God are part of our psyche, our primary program that's running all the time. And it shows up sometimes in our failures, but sometimes it shows up—we're bearing this fruit of applying the truth when word comes down that we're going to have a bunch of layoffs, it's going to be a Russian roulette, no one knows who's going to be let go. And while everyone runs and panics and it's one hundred percent up to you to find a way to

survive, you think, *Wait a minute. Jesus said that He feeds the birds of the sky and He dresses the flowers of the field, and they don't matter much to Jesus.*

And then He says, *But I love you. So, you don't need to worry. You're a dad; if your kid asks for a loaf of bread, would you give him a rock? If he asks for fish, would you give him a snake? And you're evil. You know what's good for your kids. I'm a good father. I'm going to be good to you no matter what happens at the end of this, you will not be alone.*

So, while everybody's burning ulcers, you're thinking, *I'm going to abide in the truth and have this fruit of peace.*

It's studying the Bible for more than just reflection or inspiration or doctrine. It's reflection. Honestly, the best word I have is "imagination." I imagine myself in the promises, or I imagine myself in the storylines. I change the Bible around—so there, I said it. "For God so loved Matt, that He sent His only begotten Son so that if I believe in Him I have eternal life. God did not send His Son to condemn Matt. He sent Him so that He would have eternal life."

## 2. Love

You start applying these promises to your life and that's when you're abiding in the Word. Jesus also says you need to abide in His love. And His love and obedience are almost synonymous here, because if you love, you'll obey, and when you obey, you're going to show you're loving.

### John 15:9

**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.**

But look what it says in verse 9: "As the Father has loved me, so I love you. Now remain in my love." It's like Jesus is saying, *Look, the sap is going to be running through you.* What does that truth sap taste like? Ah, that's real. What does the love sap taste like? When you're drinking off that, it's coming through your pores. You walk into a room and love is preceding you, and people know that. He's saying that the ground, where the nutrients are—Yahweh is. His divine nature is coming up—He's specifically bringing up love here. It's coming up and it's showing itself up in your life as fruitful.

**John 15:10**

**If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love.**

And it's showing itself in obedience. Verse 10 says, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love." Love is expressed in obedience because when we love, we obey. And quite often—just look around, no time to explain, in many ways—a lot of times when we don't obey, it's because we're pursuing love in places where we shouldn't be. We're pursuing significance or exaltation because we're not enjoying the love and the significance we have in Christ.

And so, in the application of what it means to abide in the love, let me just focus on this one truth. This could be the most important time right now, right here. It's this fact: that the moment you change your allegiance of the nature of your salvation and who you surrender your life to; when you go from *I'm going to earn my way from heaven, I'm going to have my own religious system, I'm going to try to be approved by God*; when you abandon that because you realize the nature of your own sin and the holiness of God, and you switch over and start to grasp the promises of Jesus Christ and you say, *Yeah, I'll let His death and resurrection pay my debt and I'll inherit His righteousness, I'll let Him take my shame, I will not be ashamed again. I'll take His honor. He can have my powerlessness and I will receive the power of the Spirit*; the moment that happens, you are seen by God as a beautiful, radiant son or daughter of the King. And it never changes. There's no wavering in His love.

I'm going to say it a different way. His love for you, His love for me, never increases. It never decreases. It is static. It is one hundred proof all the time. And so, when we talk about remaining in His love, it's not trying to get more love. Frankly, it is abiding, remaining, in the love and growing in our awareness of this fact: that He can't love us any more, He can't possibly love us any less. And when we grasp that, we stop looking for love and appreciation or significance and exaltation in these other ways. Because we keep going back to how we're children of the King. *I'm a prince! I'm a princess!* There's no need to dabble in these other distractions that grieve the Father.

This is how life change works. This is how the whole Spirit world works in the lives of the children of God. Jesus is the vine, the source of the nutrients. The Father is the gardener, the vinedresser. We're just branches, and we have one job: remain. Remain in His love, remain in His truth. And when we drink of that, we just bear fruit. We can't help it. It just happens.

## The Results

### John 15:7

**If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.**

And when that happens, look at two consequences. I love this. These are fruits by themselves. Look at verse 7: "If you remain (abide, dwell) in me and my words in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you."

Well, sure, why wouldn't you ask. If you have the Spirit running through your thoughts and feelings and actions, you're going to pray the thoughts, feelings, and actions of Jesus. So, sure, whatever that prayer is, you're going to be receiving an answer to that. Certainly, that's an easy application.

The other one is—think, again—just like before, where He says, "whatever you ask," I don't think He's changing the subject. *Oh, let's talk about fruit .. wait, hold on, I just remembered, I wanted to talk to you about prayer over here ...* No, the context is fruit. And He says, *Look, you want to pray about some fruit? Do it. I'm going to give that to you. You just asked for joy. You're famously gloomy. We would love to see that. The Holy Spirit would love to see that in your life. Let's do that.*

You have a hard, crusty heart and then you pray, *I want to pray for the fruit of compassion, tenderheartedness ... I'm going to pray for that.* And Jesus says, *Yeah. You pray for that, you're going to get that answered.*

He's saying to let the divine nature flow through the ground up through the vine. Stay connected. Those branches are going to have those fruits of the spirit. Pray for them. Go ahead. You have answer to prayer when you do this.

**John 15:11**

**I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**

The other thing is overflowing joy. Verse 11 again: “I have told you this so that ...”—I’ve told you how this thing works—“... so that my joy will be in you.” See, not on you—in you. “... and that your joy may be complete.”

It’s organic. It’s coming through the inside of you. This is different than anything else, this joy that’s just abounding. In the culture that we’re living in today, I dare you to just step into a room and overflow with joy. You’ll be like a flag flying.

I love this quote: “Joy is the flag that flies over the castle of our hearts, announcing that the King is in residence.” If you walk into any room with that flag of joy flying, people are going to stop and stare.

You can pastor a church and not abide, not be connected. I’ve done that. Boy, it’s heavy. You can run a business, you can have a marriage where there’s nobody remaining. And you might even have, I don’t know, signs of health, but boy, you work for it. You work hard and it’s not lasting.

But could I tell you the easy way? It’s what Jesus is saying here. It’s passive. It’s intrinsic. It’s supernatural. Abide, connect, co-join. And then you have these powerful effective prayers. And you’re starting to see God stories everywhere and you have this joy unspeakable that dominates most of your life experience. It’s so different.

Let me show you what it looks like. What do you want? Do you want peace? Do you want to go from unforgiving to forgiving? That would be great, right? You’re an anxious person—this is the peace part. Do you want to have a softer heart towards people? Here’s how you abide in truth and love.

You seek this thing out and you pray for that. He wants to answer that prayer. *I want peace*. Okay. So, you go to verses in the Bible that focus on peace. “This is the peace I leave with you; not the peace of the world.” You look for promises that are based on peace and why those promises could be true—the theology behind them—the promises of the nature of God. You look for examples in the Bible where men and women are expressing the supernatural

peace. And this is the imagination part—you get inside of their stories. And when they choose something that you don't choose, they're right and you're wrong. You're self-aware enough to say, *What's going on here?*

You look at the life of Joseph, standing before Pharaoh, and they don't know how to interpret this dream. No one knows what the dreams mean. And Joseph just says, *Well, okay, before I tell you, I serve Yahweh God who's way above you, and He rules the universe.*

*Oh, okay.*

That could get him killed, but it doesn't matter to him.

Daniel, before the many kings that he stood in front of, proclaimed who he served and who his Lord was. How does that peace happen? How? You look in their lives and you can tell. They have a grasp of the unrelenting, unflexing, consistent one hundred percent proof love of God in their nature. They understand that. They grasp the truth of the promises of God, that no matter what happens, they will never be left, they will never be forsaken. They've applied Bible verses to their life: "For God so loved Daniel ..." They become invincible. There is nothing to fear. And so, they have this peace and tranquility, the kind of peace that Jesus gives.

And so, it didn't happen overnight. It wasn't easy for them. But they certainly get to that place, and that fruit is breaking out, because of the work of the Spirit inside their lives.

When you feel like you're weak and powerless and defeated, this passage says, *Well, maybe you're disconnected from the vine. Maybe you should be spending more time at the feet of Jesus, Martha, with your sister Mary, because that's where the power is. Maybe you've been working it from extrinsic instead of intrinsic.*

Because here's the thing. The Lord wants fruit in our lives. This passage goes all the way back to a bigger worldview in how the Lord works. It's this value: He gets all the glory. All the stories are about Him. He doesn't share credit with anyone. Think about that.

Our salvation: what do we bring? Sin. That's it. That's all we bring. Repentance.

What about life change? He doesn't want us telling stories where we say, *Yeah, I read these three books and went to this seminar.* Those are good things. I'm not against them. But supernatural change—He wants us to tell God stories that say, *Yeah, we fought like cats and dogs; two selfish people fighting over crumbs. And then we changed the paradigm and we sought our love from the one hundred percent pure love of the Spirit of God coming up through the root,*

*coming through the trunk into our branches. And then we just tried to out-love each other. And God gets the glory.*

When we tell God stories, that's the way of saying that God gets the glory. He has set up even our transformation in a way that He doesn't have to share credit. It just makes sense, right? We are participating in His divine nature and telling people about it. He's changing us from the inside out. We're living off of His sap. And His sap ... oh, it tastes like truth with a whole lot of love. Abide. Cling to. Remain. Drink up. And He'll change your life in ways that make angels gasp and demons weep ... to the glory of God.

Do you get it? We know our part. You come back next week and we'll see what the Father's up to. You're going to need to know that.

Let's pray.

*Well, in some ways, Lord, I don't know how You could have been clearer. But yet, what we have received miraculously, we still try to perfect with works. I think we want to share the glory with You. That's what it is. So now, Lord, with a better understanding of just how the physics of our souls work, we cling, Lord, dependent upon You maybe more than ever before. We long for You working in us and through us. Lord, we want that we would be a church of individuals and collectively with stories of great transformation from the inside out; about learning new expressions of being completely dependent on Your Spirit working in us, breaking out, fruit just happening because it has to happen if we're abiding, if we're clinging, if we're remaining.*

*Lord, make us people in a church that just tell stories about Your glory working in us in spite of us. And help us understand our part as we come to understand what you'll be doing in our lives. So, thank You, Lord, for loving us in this way. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*