

The Ultimate LOVE STORY

John 13-17

“The Final Hours Before the Cross”

Study Number Four – Love Union – John 15:1-16

We’ve called this series of studies “The Love Story.” We’ve seen:

LOVE SERVING by Christ washing their feet in the Upper Room.

LOVE HURT in the betrayal of Judas when Christ says, “Do what you have to do quickly. Hurry, it hurts. You’ve made your decision, leave, depart.”

LOVE COMMUNICATING and we saw Christ in these final hours before His own death, spending time answering the questions of His men.

First it was Peter, “Where are You going? And why can’t I go with You?”

Then for Thomas it was, “We don’t know where You’re going, how do we know the way?”

And for Philip it was, “Show us the Father.”

And for Judas Thaddeus Lebbaeus it was, “How are You going to reveal Yourself unto us and not to the world?”

As soon as these questions were answered satisfactorily, Christ said, “Let us be leaving from here.” So they got up and left the Upper Room.

They left, walked through the city, toward the eastern gate, and then on down into the Kidron Valley. It’s a full moon, there’s a large vineyard in the Kidron Valley before they get to the Garden of Gethsemane. There are a number of things that could have precipitated the parabolic fashion of the words that are about to be spoken.

Perhaps there was a vine on the window of the Upper Room. Perhaps He looked down into the grape juice and thought of the fruit of the vine as they celebrated the Passover at the Lord’s table.

Or perhaps there was a vine inscribed on the temple doors, and that reminded Him of it. Or the fact that Israel was the vine of God, and now Christ is going to be that vine. So all of these things could have brought about what He’s getting ready to say.

There’s one big question that hasn’t been answered yet:

What kind of relationship is Christ going to have with His

men, now that He's leaving?

And so that's the question that is uppermost in our minds. There is some tremendous truth in these verses. We're not even going to scratch the surface as we look at them, but our prayer is that each mind and heart will be open to receive and to be concerned about what we see.

Frances Schaeffer, our twentieth century philosopher, wrote a book called *Death in the City*. And in the book he has one of the best statements on the fact that we are supposed to be bearing fruit:

(Death in the City by Frances Schaeffer)

The Bible tells us plainly that Christ promises to bear His fruit through us. In Romans 7:4 Paul says a very striking thing, "Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ in order that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead in order that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

This verse says that each of us as a Christian, is feminine. At conversion, we are married to Christ, who is the bridegroom. And as we put ourselves into His arms, moment by moment, He will produce His fruit through us in the external world. That's beautiful and overwhelming.

Just as with the natural bride who gives herself to her husband and puts herself into his arms, there will be children born into a home. The bride can't just stand with the bridegroom at the wedding ceremony. She must give herself to

him, existentially, regularly and then children will be born to him through her body into the external world.

As an example, let us think of Mary and Christ's birth. When Mary heard the annunciation, she did not say to the angel, "I won't give myself to God in order that the Messiah may be born." What would Joseph think? It would have been reasonable to say that because we know that Joseph was indeed later disturbed.

On the other hand, she did not say, "Now you've told me what's to happen, I can do it on my own."

Mary herself could no more bring forth that baby than any other girl can will a virgin birth. She said the only thing she could say that could be right, "I am Your servant. I give my body into Your hands. Do with me as you will."

(source unknown)

That was ACTIVE PASSIVITY. She was passive in that God brought forth the baby. But she was not passive in her will. She gave herself to the Lord for the purpose of bearing the fruit of the womb, the child.

After coming into living union with Jesus Christ, it is the purpose of Christ to bear fruit through our lives.

Now we need to define a lot of terms. So be paying attention as we move through these verses.

Life is a very precious possession and we can either use it or we can lose it.

The thief comes to kill it and to destroy it. Of course that is Satan. Christ comes that we might have life and we might have it more abundant.

There are secrets in this passage. Let's look at a few:

1. The secret of LIVING is FRUIT BEARING.
2. The secret of FRUIT BEARING is ABIDING IN CHRIST.
3. The secret of ABIDING is OBEYING. To do that, we have to give God our will.
4. The secret to OBEYING is LOVING—we have to give God our heart.
5. The secret of LOVING is KNOWING—we have to give God our mind.

As we surrender to the Lord, our will, our heart and our mind, God is going to begin to work and He's going to begin to bear fruit in us and through us.

Now let's take a look at the verses and see them one at a time.

v. 1 “I am the genuine vine, and my Father is the tiller of the soil.

“I am the genuine vine, and my Father is the tiller of the soil.”

Christ starts out saying, “I am the vine.”

The Father’s relationship to the vine is He’s “the tiller of the soil.”

What is that in the parable? That means that the Father’s function in relationship to this vine, is that He will create any kind of climate He can for maximum productivity. If that means stirring up the soil, aerating the soil around the roots, if it means fertilizing, if it means watering, if it means pruning—whatever the Father has to do to bring forth that fruit, He will.

Watchman Nee in his book *The Normal Christian Workers* says:

He has the resources to transform our characters even as He transformed Peter’s. He can deal with every type of weakness that mars our lives and can so reconstitute us that we become suited to His purpose.

(source unknown)

And that is, to bear fruit.

So Christ says, “I am the genuine vine”—not the false one. “I’m a real vine,” and of course, “my Father is the tiller of the soil.”

Now before we go any further, remember one part of this parable that will become clear when we get down to about

verse 5, and that is, we in our relationship to Christ, become branches. We are branches in the vine.

And we will see now what He does to the branches and so we will get personal when we get to verse two. Verse two is going to disturb us just a little bit, because we don't know whether we want to be one or the other. Because we're between a rock and a hard place. Look at it.

v. 2 Every branch in me not bearing fruit, He is taking away (lifting up); and every branch bearing fruit, He is cleansing (pruning) it, in order that it may keep on bearing more fruit.

“Every branch in me not bearing fruit, He is taking away (lifting up);”

It's in the PRESENT TENSE. He is lifting it up or He's taking it away.

“and every branch bearing fruit, He is cleansing (or pruning) it, in order that it may keep on bearing more fruit.”

He's the “tiller of the soil.” He comes into the vineyard and He sees branches that aren't bearing fruit and He does something to them. And He sees branches that are bearing fruit and He's doing something to them. So we're going to get it either way.

He is going to tend the branches. He's going to do some things to them.

Now in the study we're going to see a FRUITFUL branch, we're going to see a FRUITLESS branch, and a WITHERED branch.

The Father's attitude toward both of these branches will be with the ultimate purpose of getting a response, which is going to be fruit from it. And that He will do whatever He needs.

All of our lives are a process of the Father trimming us, clipping us, allowing stuff to come into our lives to make us fruitful.

For instance, Abram, the Lord says, "Get up out of Ur of the Chaldees and go to Canaan." What does he do? He takes dad along with him. They stop at Haran, until daddy dies, he can't go on. Now daddy's gone, he takes Lot with him. So he goes onto the land, finally goes down into Egypt, comes back, has to be separated from Lot.

Sarah can't wait to have babies. She thinks that she's got to help God out and so Hagar goes in and Ishmael's born. Then Abram's got to be separated from Ishmael. And then Isaac, 25 years after the promise had been made, finally comes. And God has to finally put His hand on Isaac.

The Lord is constantly at work in each of our lives, doing whatever He needs to do to make us fruitful.

In the Song of Solomon, Shulamith and Solomon are very much in love. And one of the things that Shulamith says to Solomon is, “We must catch the foxes, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards while our vineyards are in blossom.” (ref. Song of Solomon 2:15)

She’s saying, “Solomon, we’ve got to commit ourselves to deal with the little foxes that are eating the vines in the vineyard as they begin to blossom.” She’s speaking of their relationship to each other.

That’s a tremendous commitment to make to each other as they begin to fall in love. To realize there are going to be offenses, there are going to be hurts. And those little foxes will grow up to be big ones and they’ll eat the whole relationship if we don’t deal with them diligently on a regular basis.

The Lord does that. Both of these vines are going to get it.

Proverbs 24:33-34

A little slumber, a little sleep, the little foxes are running the vineyard.

And as a result, there isn’t going to be fruit.

What does that mean?

Fruit is not an activity. In other words, we aren’t bearing fruit by the fact that we go to church. And we don’t bear fruit by

the fact that we come to Bible class instead of going to a million other places. That's fungus. That's a parasite.

Activity always ministers to our pride. It eats us alive, too.

Some people really think that their fruit is their activity, and it isn't. If we were to define fruit, fruit is anything which the Spirit of God has produced in the life of the believer to the glory of God.

Fruit is anything produced in the life of the believer for the glory of God. And we're going to see some of that.

Alright, now let's get back to these phrases. Let's say as we look at our branch, we're scared. We have no fruit. And that's shaking us up a tad.

And because we have no fruit, we are that first one. He is lifting it up and we're worried.

When Christ walks through the vineyard and He sees no fruit in our life, and we're part of the vine and no fruit is there, what does He do? He starts the three-point program for recovery. It's known as getting us fruitful.

1. CIRCUMSTANCES—He'll start working around us to get us to surrender and respond.

The reason there is no fruit is because we're resisting Him. Either we're grieving the Holy Spirit by sin in our life or we're

quenching Him by saying no.

He'll stir up the circumstances to create a climate where we'll say yes and it will be very painful. And we can yield and we can surrender, and fruit will start to be born again.

2. CHASTENING

Now let's say we don't get the message on the first go-around. Then the Father says, "Come my fruitless branch. We are going on a whaling expedition to the woodshed to apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge, and you're going to sing the Stars and Stripes Forever for a while." And that hurts.

But there's a verse in Hebrews chapter 12 that says it just exactly that way.

Hebrews 12:11

No chastening seems joyful for a present, but eventually it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Isn't that neat? There's the verse. He chastens us. He spanks us. It hurts, but there's a reason for that.

Mark 4:19 says: "And the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word and it becomes unfruitful."

All these other things are coming into our life and they're cluttering up our life and we're not fruitful. And so the Lord just starts cutting away. And it hurts! And He does whatever He has to do in order to create a climate for fruitfulness with this branch in which there is no fruit.

Much of the suffering of the believer is explained right at this point. It's not because God's mad at us, it's just because He wants to get what He wants to get, and that's fruit from us.

Are you as concerned about Christ getting fruit through us as He is about seeing it in us? We have to ask ourselves that question. If we're really naming the name of Christ, the Lord's top priority is to get something out of us before we go to glory. And that's fruit.

Now if that's true, we better be all ears and we better be paying attention to what He's trying to do in our lives so that life will be a blessing to us instead of a real drudgery.

We get a good spanking and we don't respond, we're still stubborn and we're still digging our heels in. We have our feet spread and we aren't going to budge. He's going to say:

3. COME ON HOME—He's going to blow the whistle. He's going to take us out of the game. He's going to say, "Come on to the house."

No fruit—"I need you home. You're of no benefit to Me there. Come on." And that's PHYSICAL DEATH.

First Corinthians 11 talks about it. First John chapter 5 talks about it. James chapter 5 talks about it. The Bible is filled with it. First Corinthians 5 talks about it.

So all these passages vindicate the fact that this is what He does. And the “lifting up” is a literal “lifting up.”

Now, what does it mean He cleanses the branch that’s bearing fruit? Now that involves suffering too. Christ only had one Son without sin, but none without sorrow. Christ Himself was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. And all of us will experience that in our lives. That’s part of the cleansing process. That’s part of the separation that takes place. That’s part of the laying aside. That’s part of the Lord’s surgery in our lives to bring about fruit.

The instrument He uses is the Word of God so He could be using it right now on us.

Hebrews 4:12 says: “The word of God is quick, alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.”

Psalms 119:9 and 11: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word...”

One writer said:

The Father’s hand is never closer to His child than when He’s pruning him.

(source unknown)

We don't like that. He's real close when He's at work on us.

The Lord is going to do whatever He needs to. And He will never let the knife cut in our life without some purpose in mind. And the big thing we have to do is to discover that purpose and cooperate.

That's James 1. Come to Him and ask for wisdom if we need it to properly relate so we can understand what He's trying to do. And then let Him begin to bear fruit.

Let's go onto verse 3 because we're going to see some more of this as we get further in the passage.

v. 3 You already are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

“You already are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”

Remember earlier in John 13 He said, “You're clean, but not all of you,” because Judas was still there.

Now He says, “You are clean because of the word I've spoken to you.” We are clean in that sense and the Word, the agent, that has been used for that cleansing.

Now in verse 4 He gives us a **COMMAND**.

v. 4 Be abiding in me, and I in you. Just as the branch is not able to be bearing fruit from itself, unless it keeps on abiding in the vine, so neither can you, unless you keep on abiding in me.

“Be abiding in me, and I in you. Just as the branch is not able to be bearing fruit from itself, unless it keeps on abiding in the vine, so neither can you, unless you keep on abiding in me.”

“Be abiding in me, and I in you.”

Now that is ACTIVITY and PASSIVITY both.

One is our RESPONSIBILITY, the other is our RESOURCE.

We are commanded to “be abiding” in Him. And our resource, He is abiding in us.

Now what does it mean to “be abiding” in the Lord? Well, we either are or we aren’t, right?

Remember when the Lord said to Peter, “If I don’t wash your feet you’re not having a part with Me”? Now that’s fellowship.

“If you’re going to resist Peter, and you’re not going to go along with this, then you’re not abiding in Me.”

Any point of resistance to the Father’s work in our life, we immediately cease to abide in Him.

1. If we're abiding in Christ, we are DRAWING upon all that He is. We just have ourselves wide open to draw upon all that He has available for us.

2. We're DEPENDING upon all that He can do.

“Ye can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.”
(ref. Philippians 4:13)

3. We're beginning to DEVELOP into His image because He's changing us into His likeness.

And that's the way we begin to tell that we're abiding in Him.

He says, “That's your responsibility. To see that there's nothing offensive between you and Me, that you accept what I'm doing in your life, that you trust Me and you're not troubled. You have confidence in My ability. And from an activity point of view, your responsibility is to be in fellowship with Me.”

And then PASSIVELY, “I am abiding in you as the resource to do whatever needs to be done. I will bear the fruit through you.”

Now that's really neat. That brings a lot of joy and relaxation when we really see those two things together. On the one side, we're abiding in Him. And on the other side, He is abiding in us, because a branch can't bear fruit by itself.

v. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who is abiding in me, and I in him, this one is bearing much fruit; because apart from me you are not able to be doing anything.

“I am the vine, you are the branches;”

Now see He defines it:

“the one who is abiding in me,”—that’s FELLOWSHIP—“and I in him,”—that was back in verse 4—“this one is bearing much fruit; because apart from me you are not able to be doing anything.”

A branch can’t bear fruit by itself. It can’t perform and work as a separate entity and bring forth fruit. The fruit comes from the vital union of the branch with the vine.

David Brainerd in his life and diary speaks of one time when he was preaching:

(The Life and Diary of David Brainerd by David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards)

I never saw God work so independent of means at this time. I discoursed to the people and spoke what I suppose had a proper tendency to promote conviction, for God’s manner of working upon them appeared so entirely supernatural and above means that I could scarce believe that He used me as an

instrument, as I spoke to them.
(source unknown)

“It’s not me! It’s not me! It’s the Lord bearing fruit in lives.”

Annie Johnson Flint speaks of “The Pruned Branch.” Talk about a branch that was really pruned.

It is the branch that bears the fruit that feels the knife,
To prune it for a larger growth and fuller life.

Though every budding twig be lopped and every grace
of swaying tendril springing leaf be lot a space,
Oh, thou whose life of joy seems reft of beauty shorn
Whose aspirations lie in dust all bruised and torn.

Rejoice, though each desire, each dream, each hope of thine
Shall fall and fade, it is the hand of love divine
That holds the knife, that cuts and breaks with tenderest
touch,
That thou, whose life has born some fruit, may now bear
much.
(source unknown)

When we think of the term “fruit,” we see it in 5 areas:

1. Our CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER.

Galatians 5:22 and 23—that’s the fruit of the Spirit. It’s our Christlike character. People can see that. It’s what we are as a

result of His work in us.

As His life flows through us, we begin to change. Self-righteousness is always external. Christ's righteousness is changing us from the inside out and we are what we are because the Spirit of God and the life of Christ is flowing through us.

2. The CONFESSION OF PRAISE.

Hebrews 13:15—"Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that gives thanks to His name."

Ever stop to think that every time we sing a hymn, every time we praise the Lord, we're bearing fruit? That is the fruit of lips giving praise to God. That's an overflowing heart. It's the fruit of a relationship that has brought joy and we express it by singing it in praise and expressing it in words of adoration again.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS—this is our giving.

Philippians 4:17 and 18—Paul says, "I don't talk to you about this because I need money. It's not the gift. But it is a fragrance. It is fruit accruing to your account."

That's why the Lord says, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

As we learn to give and to let go and to make provision for the Lord's work, that is fruit to the glory of God.

4. Our CONDUCT.

Colossians 1:6—it is bearing fruit as a spreading out around the world.

5. It's CONVERSIONS—that's people who come to know Christ because of us.

Paul says, "You are my joy and my crown of rejoicing."

We always think of fruit as the last one, don't we? And some of us, when we think of fruit, think, "I haven't led anybody to the Lord. There's been no fruit through me."

Fruit is a lot bigger than that. Fruit, first of all, starts with what the Spirit of God's doing inside of us. And man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. And only we know how we've changed and how our life is growing and how much fruit is being born in that life—if there is any.

And only we know whether we can express with a joyful heart as we're driving, praise to God by singing to Him. And only we know whether we're hung up on material things to the point that we cannot turn loose and give to the glory of God. And only we really know our private conduct, whether it's a big phony mess or whether it's a real person, revealing by our actions and our conduct that we are a Christlike individual.

And only we know the people that have been touched by the gospel of Christ and whose lives have been changed because we have shared Christ with them.

“Without Me, you can do nothing.”

Now verse 6 can kind of scare people. We don't lose our salvation in verse 6, because salvation isn't in verse 6. We're talking about fruitfulness. We are not talking about salvation. These people are believers.

v. 6 If anyone is not abiding in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they are gathering them, and they are throwing them into the fire, and they are burned.

“If anyone is not abiding in me,”

What is that? That's a person out of fellowship, isn't it? We're either in fellowship or we're out of fellowship.

Here's a guy who has sin in his life or he's quenching the Holy Spirit by resistance. So he's not abiding. If he:

“is not abiding in me,”

What's the Lord going to do to him?

“he is thrown away as a branch, and he dries up; and they are gathering them, and they are throwing them into the fire, and

they are burned.”

Okay, now if the believer is unwilling to surrender and he’s unwilling to submit he isn’t going to bear fruit and he’s in trouble.

Five things are going to be true:

1. “he is thrown away as a branch”—what does that mean?

Paul said, “I’m careful that when I have preached to others, I myself might not be called a cast-away.” (ref. 1 Corinthians 9:27)

That is throwing the branch away.

2. “[the branch] dries up”

“David said, ‘When I kept silent about my sin, my bones waxed old. Through my roaring all day long. Life became a desert. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me and my vitality was drained away with a fever heat of summer.’” (ref. Psalm 32:3, 4)

He says, “I’m dried up inside. My well water went dry, no matter how I tried to find the pump. All the vital uses dried up. And as the heat of conviction came upon him:

3. “they are gathering them,”

“We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in His body. Whether it be good or bad.” (ref. 2 Corinthians 5:10)

They are throwing the men to the fire and they are burned.

That’s not hell:

1 Corinthians 3:11

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid with Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold silver and precious stones, wood, hay and straw, each man’s work will become evident for the day will show it.

Because it is to be revealed with fire. Now here it is:

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

The fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work, which he has built upon it remains, that is fruit so it’s gold, silver and precious stones. He shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

He’s still saved. It’s just everything he loved is wood, hay and stubble, and that just goes up in smoke and there’s nothing but our salvation.

And how embarrassing to go into the presence of the Lord with nothing to present to Him—a fruit—and that’s the one thing we wanted. That’s what ought to just tear our heart out.

If we’re a fruitless branch, to think that if we died today, we have to go into the Lord’s presence without anything. But their number one priority they want from our life, and that was fruit.

To be abiding in Christ is an experience of continually learning how to turn over to our Lord the complete control of our lives and to trust Him to do His good work and to work all things together for good; and to thank Him for the blessings He bestows. It is when we fail to turn it over to Him, to trust Him and to thank Him for what He is doing that we are no longer abiding in Him.

To be abiding in Him is to turn it over and to thank Him for what He’s doing and to trust Him to know that He’s doing what’s best to bring forth fruit in our lives.

Now that is Hebrews 4, entering into His rest. The children of Israel never did go into the land of Canaan. Their bodies were strewn as corpses in the wilderness. They never knew the rest that could be theirs. They never entered into that land.

A lot of Christians are running around as fruitless branches and they’ll never know the joy of seeing fruit born through their lives and what a tragedy.

Christ says, “Come unto me all ye that weary and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (ref. Matthew 11:28-30)

v. 7 If you are abiding in me and my words are abiding in you, ask whatever you are desiring, and it will become yours.

“If you are abiding in me and my words are abiding in you, ask whatever you are desiring, and it will become yours.”

Now two things:

1. “If you are abiding in me”—and that is we’re doing what we need to be doing. Surrender to Him and His word is “abiding in you,”—now that’s a question.

Jeremiah says, “Thy word was found and I did eat them, Thy word was the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” (ref. Jeremiah 15:16)

The Psalmist said, “I meditate in His law day and night and I will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth His fruit in a season.” (ref. Psalm 1:2-3)

Are we chewing on the word? Are we bringing it into our life so that our priorities are being changed by the word? Are our goals and aspirations in light of the word?

If our life is in accord with the teaching of the word as we know it, the word is “abiding in you,” and so is Christ.

Psalm 37:4 says, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

We just talk to Him and that’s the hotline to heaven.

1 John 5:14, 15

This is the confidence we have, we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know He hears us, we have the confidence that we know that we have those things which we have asked of Him.

Now verse 8 has the phrase in it that is key.

v. 8 In this my Father is glorified, that you are bearing much fruit. So shall you become my disciples.

“In this my Father is glorified, that you are bearing much fruit. So shall you become my disciples.”

Want to glorify the Father? The one thing that will glorify the Father in the years that we have left to serve Him, is “much fruit.” A real good crop will glorify the Father.

“So shall you become my disciples.”

The aim of our Lord's life was to glorify the Father and to finish the course that was set before Him. And the aim of our life, if it's to glorify the Father, is that we'll bear "much fruit."

v. 9 Just as the Father loved me, I also loved you; abide in my love.

"Just as the Father loved me, I also loved you; abide in my love."

Now what does it mean to "abide" in His love?

It is critical that when the Lord is pruning our branch that we keep on loving Him. Because if we don't we're going to short-circuit His work and there isn't going to be any fruit. We have FOUR F's:

1. FOOD from His table keeps us abiding in His love. As we come to the table to eat the food of the Word, we're abiding in His love.

2. FELLOWSHIP with Him on a daily basis.

He said of the twelve disciples, "I chose them to be with Me, not to serve Me." (ref. John 15:16) It delights Him to have us fellowship with Him, to pray to Him, to praise Him by singing, to fellowship with Him and share, surrender and submit the direction of our life to Him.

3. FAITHFULNESS—He can count on us every day. We'll be

right there.

“It’s of the Lord’s mercies you’re not consumed because His compassions fail not. They’re new every morning.” (ref. Lamentations 3:22)

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross”—when he feels like it?—“take up his cross daily and follow Me.” (ref. Matthew 16:24)

We’re abiding in His love when we’re faithful. That’s the one quality He loves more than anything else, because out of faithfulness is going to come fruitfulness as we’re consistent.

4. FRUIT—as the fruit is being born, we’re abiding in His love. It’s evidence of that.

Now the reason that love is so critical to fruitfulness is that oftentimes when the Lord begins to prune, we get bitter and resentful, don’t we? And that’s what James warns us about.

Marcus Rainsford wrote a book on John 17. This is what he says:

...circumstances will arise to lead you to question my love. You will oftentimes feel alone, deserted, utterly weak, apparently forgotten. Oh, please remember that my eyes are always on you, my heart is always with you, and my arms are always around you. Trust still in me, hope still in me. I change not. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

(source unknown)

James 1:12

Blessed is the man that perseveres under trial, for once he's been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Love is evidence of the fact that we are unmoved in our devotion, even though it hurts a lot.

God always comes along and takes us by the hand, gives us some fruit and says, "Now come on. It's not you anyway. You're just a channel. Let me bear it. Just keep on teaching it. Let it flow through you. God's going to work and bear the fruit." Just continue in His love. As we abide in His love, He's going to keep on doing it.

v. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept the commandments of my Father, and I am abiding in His love.

"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept the commandments of my Father, and I am abiding in His love."

LOVE will issue in OBEDIENCE and

OBEDIENCE will issue in JOY and

JOY is evidence of FRUITFULNESS.

If we were to try to put together some kind of an equation in all of these things it would be just that. Love makes us want to do what He wants us to do. And with an obedient heart we express our love by our obedience to Him. And out of that obedience comes joy.

v. 11 These things I have spoken to you, in order that the joy which is mine may be in you, and your joy may be made full.

“These things I have spoken to you, in order that the joy which is mine may be in you, and your joy may be made full.”

That verse is spoken just a few hours before the cross.

“These things I have said to you, I’ve told you all this so that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

An evidence of this:

“Joy is the flag that flies when the King’s in residence.”

He says, “I want you to have fellowship and these things we right that our joy may be made complete.” (ref. 1 John 1:4)

Joy is the single evidence that we are abiding in Jesus Christ. Joy is the evidence that no matter how rough it gets, and we are trusting the pruning God, that He’s doing what He needs

to bear fruit. That's submission.

Instead of running around looking like we've been weaned on a dill pickle or baptized in vinegar, and feeling terrible under the circumstances, the joy is there because it's a joy of expectation.

“For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in this later.” (ref. Romans 8:18)

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4: “These little troubles which are really so transitory are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward, out of all proportions to our pain.” (ref. 2 Corinthians 4:17)

What He's saying is that joy is a joy of expectation. For as we demonstrate our abiding life by our love, and that love is revealed by an obedient heart, the result of that is joy.

If there is no joy in our life, we're not abiding.

The first evidence to go when we're out of fellowship is our joy. We never find David singing praise and speaking of joy the year that he was out to lunch. There was no joy in Jerusalem.

David prays, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me and”—WHAT?—“restore to me the joy of my salvation.” (ref. Psalm 51:10)

So the evidence of it's there. If the joy is there, then the fruit's going to be there.

“The joy of the Lord is my strength.” (ref. Nehemiah 8:10)

If love equals obedience and obedience equals fruit, and love, obedience and fruit equal joy, then where is it?

John Powell in *Unconditional Love* says: “The waters of pleasure are always bright on the surface, but sadly only one inch deep. We always come up with sand in our mouths.”
(source unknown)

Where is the real joy?

Let's look at FIVE Fs:

1. FELLOWSHIP—when us and the Lord are on speaking turns we're out of sight, aren't we? Fellowship produces it.
2. FAITHFULNESS produces it—we feel good about ourselves and so does the Lord.
3. FRUITFULNESS—Paul says, “You are my joy and my crown of rejoicing.”
4. FINISHING—just think of the joy that will be ours when we fought a good fight and we finished the course and we kept the faith.

5. FUTURE—it's the anticipation of what God has in store for us.

1 Corinthians 2:9

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him.

v. 12 This is my commandment, that you keep on loving one another, just as I loved you.

“This is my commandment, that you keep on loving one another, just as I loved you.”

Have we seen that before? Isn't that incredible? We're going to see this THREE TIMES.

When the Lord says something once, we pay attention. When He says it twice, it's the gospel. And three times it is really something to pay attention to.

Why does He say it now? Because Peter missed it in our last passage, remember? It just went right over his head.

The Lord said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another. By this shall all men know that You're my disciples if you have love one for another.” And Peter says, “Where are you going Lord?” Like he didn't even hear Him!

“Okay Peter, since you missed it then, you’re going to get a second shot. Here it is.”

“You keep on loving one another just as I love you.” (ref. John 15:12)

Peter’s going to miss it again because he’s going to get another shot in verse 17. It’s going to come right back again.

See why the whole emphasis is upon love?

LOVE SERVES in “The Love Story.”

LOVE GETS HURT,

LOVE COMMUNICATES and

LOVE IN UNION produces fruit.

That’s the whole thesis of our study. The Holy Spirit, out of that oneness, can produce fruit. And the thing that’ll just blow us away if we think we’re a reject and we don’t have a chance is to realize that God used the son of thunder to write this thing.

Talk about a guy who was the furthest away from love John was! He was so selfish and egotistical he had to strive through Momma Salome to get him a place on the right hand of the Lord in the kingdom.

And He had to always go about thinking about John. And now as a result of agape love in his life, he's the one that's writing about it.

Do we have evidence of the Spirit of God in our life? Look at verse 13. If we do, this is the kind of love we have.

v. 13 Greater love than this no one is having, that anyone lay down his life on behalf of his friends.

“Greater love has no man than this, than a man would be laying down his life on the behalf of his friends.”

The evidence of our love is our willingness to sacrifice our interests for others. And He says, “Greater love hath no man than this, than a man will lay down his life for his friends.”

Someone has said that sacrifice is the sheer ecstasy of giving the best we have to the one we love the most. And Jesus Christ is the perfect demonstration of this love He's talking about.

Most of the modern manifestations of love is not love, but selfishness.

If we really have Christ's love abiding in us, the SIX S's are there:

1. We'll SACRIFICE no matter what. We'll give ourselves in the best interest of the one loved. A husband is to love his wife

just like that.

2. We'll **SHARE** and **SERVE** the one loved. We'll share everything we have and we'll serve that one love because we want to be a blessing to that person.

3. We'll **STICK TO IT**. There will be **STABILITY** in that love. We'll never leave nor forsake. We'll hang in there.

4. We'll **SURRENDER** the one loved. It is never right to possess another person in the name of love.

Jesus Christ never possessed us. He gave us a sovereign will to choose and He surrendered us and set us free to let us, by an act of our will, respond.

Agape love is setting one free to respond however they want to the love which we give. And agape love does not need response to be real. It's not dependent upon response.

5. **SECURITY**—the one who is loved by this self-sacrificing kind of love has the security of knowing that love is eternal and unconditional and it will never change.

6. **SELF-IMAGE**—it always builds up the self-image because that person is a gem of great price. So precious and so valuable that this one would lay down their lives on their behalf.

One says we must love with God's kind of love in deed and in

truth. Can we really love like that?

These guys in the Upper Room don't qualify, do they? They're sitting around with dirty feet and one of them betrays and another denies. And basically they don't know anything about this kind of love.

As soon as the Spirit of God starts working in these guys' lives, they're going to catch the real disease. And they're going to love to the point that they lay down their lives. At least ten out of the eleven that are left are going to die, sacrificing their life for the Lord Jesus. So they're going to get it. It's going to happen.

John Powell in his book says:

Under every crucifix depicting the Lord with His heart open and His hands stretched out as if to embrace all the weak and the wounded of this world, there should be a caption reading, "This is what I mean when I say I love you."
(source unknown)

v. 14 You are my friends, if you keep on doing what I am commanding you.

"You are my friends, if you are doing what I am commanding you."

v. 15 No longer am I calling you slaves; because the slave is not knowing what his master is doing; but

you I have called friends, because all things which I heard from my Father I made known to you.

“No longer am I calling you slaves; because the slave is not knowing what his master is doing; but you I have called friends, because all things which I heard from my Father I have made known to you.”

And then the last verse:

v. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, in order that you might keep on going and keep on bearing fruit, and that your fruit might keep on remaining, in order that whatever you might ask the Father in my name, He may give to you.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, in order that you might keep on going and keep on bearing fruit, and that your fruit might keep on remaining, in order that whatever you might ask the Father in my name, He may give it to you.”

It was Dr. G. Campbell Morgan who said:

I’m glad the Lord chose me, therefore I’m His responsibility and I can trust in that.

(source unknown

There was one dear old man who came to know the Lord late

in life. He was a thief during the years before he became a believer. And one night after he'd been preaching he was heading home and he passed a hen house and he had a real temptation. And he stopped and he said, "Lord, Your property is in danger and I don't mean the chickens." And it's wonderful to call upon the Lord.
(source unknown)

He chose us and He had a purpose in that. That we bear fruit and that fruit should remain.

Here are the lessons we got out of this study.

Lesson #1: It is the Father's function to create a climate for maximum productivity.

Lesson #2: The Father's hand is never closer to His child than when He's pruning him.

Lesson #3: The branch has one purpose and that is to bear fruit.

Lesson #4: The Father is glorified when you are bearing much fruit.

The Father's hand is never closer to His child than when He's pruning him. The branch has one purpose and that is to bear fruit.

Lesson #5: Love, joy and obedience are evidences of the abiding life.

Lesson #6: Christ's joy is independent of external circumstances.

Lesson #7: Surrender and submission are the keys to abiding.

We close with the following poetic piece:

He chose you not to bitter tears,
 Though dark your life may seem.
He chose you not to foolish fears,
 And not to sit and dream;
He chose you in His loving grace,
 To action, patience, and trust,
To show upon a smiling face
 What God can do with dust.
(source unknown)

Father, we come to You. We love You and praise You for who You are and thank You for what You've taught us. We ask now that the very presence of the Holy Spirit will apply the truth to our lives for we need to be met with that truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Ultimate LOVE STORY

John 13-17

“The Final Hours Before the Cross”

Study Number Four – Love Union – John 15:1-16

NOTES

v. 1 “I am the genuine vine, and my Father is the tiller of the soil.

v. 2 Every branch in me not bearing fruit, He is taking away (lifting up); and every branch bearing fruit, He is cleansing (pruning) it, in order that it may keep on bearing more fruit.

v. 3 You already are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

v. 4 Be abiding in me, and I in you. Just as the branch is not able to be bearing fruit from itself, unless it keeps on abiding in the vine, so neither can you, unless you keep on abiding in me.

v. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who is abiding in me, and I in him, this one is bearing much fruit; because apart from me you are not able to be doing anything.

v. 6 If anyone is not abiding in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they are gathering them, and they are throwing them into the fire, and they are burned.

v. 7 If you are abiding in me and my words are abiding in you, ask whatever you are desiring, and it will become yours.

v. 8 In this my Father is glorified, that you are bearing much fruit. So shall you become my disciples.

v. 9 Just as the Father loved me, I also loved you; abide in my love.

v. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept the commandments of my Father, and I am abiding in His love.

v. 11 These things I have spoken to you, in order that the joy which is mine may be in you, and your joy may be made full.

v. 12 This is my commandment, that you keep on loving one another, just as I loved you.

NOTES

v. 13 Greater love than this no one is having, that anyone lay down his life on behalf of his friends.

v. 14 You are my friends, if you keep on doing what I am commanding you.

v. 15 No longer am I calling you slaves; because the slave is not knowing what his master is doing; but you I have called friends, because all things which I heard from my Father I made known to you.

v. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, in order that you might keep on going and keep on bearing fruit, and that your fruit might keep on remaining, in order that whatever you might ask the Father in my name, He may give to you.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read John 15:1-16 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What is the Father's relationship to the vine, according to verse 1?

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3. What is done to the branches that are bearing fruit and the branches that are not bearing fruit, according to verse 2?

4. What are we commanded to do, according to verse 4?

5. What happens to the branch that is not abiding, according to verse 6?

6. How is the Father glorified, according to verse 8?

7. What is the purpose for speaking these things, according to verse 11?

8. What is the Father's purpose in choosing us according to verse 16?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: It is the Father's function to create a climate for maximum productivity.

LESSON #2: The Father's hand is never closer to His child than when He's pruning him.

LESSON #3: The branch has one purpose and that is to bear fruit.

LESSON #4: The Father is glorified when we are bearing much fruit.

LESSON #5: Love, joy, and obedience are evidences of the abiding life.

LESSON #6: Christ's joy is independent of external circumstances.

LESSON #7: Surrender and submission are the keys to abiding.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
