

# *living IN CHRIST*



*Together in Christ*





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## **INTRODUCTION**

The first 12 chapters of the Gospel of John deals with the three years of Jesus' public ministry. His message to the world is clearly stated: He who believes in Jesus, will live.

John 13–17 is the “farewell message” of our Lord to his beloved disciples, leading up to His High Priestly prayer for them and for us. Other farewell speeches in Scripture were given by Moses (Deut. 31–33), Joshua (Josh. 23–24) and Paul (Acts 20).

In chapters 13–17 we find Jesus intimately teaching his followers. These five chapters tell of the last meal they had together and of the conversation that took place during the meal. They tell of Jesus' last few hours on earth with his followers before his death. However, it is more than that. It tells of the relationship between Jesus and his church. What Jesus says to his followers is also true for his church through the ages.

In a previous series we have focussed on the importance of a receptive heart for the Gospel and that it would show in the fruit of our lives growing in godliness. In this series we are going to look at what it means to live in Christ –

what should change in our lives and how should it be visible to others.

Warren Wiersbe wrote: *“The evidence of true sonship, discipleship (John 15:8), and friendship (John 15:15) is fruit. “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20). Where there is true fruit, it remains; man-made “results” eventually disappear. Fruit has in it the seed for more fruit, so the process goes on and on. Whatever is born of the Spirit of God has the mark of eternity on it, and it will last.’*

We pray that, as you do this study, you will be encouraged to grow in your faith and to bear fruit.

***Soli Deo Gloria***

# living IN CHRIST

Week **1**

## Serve one another!

**Memory verse:**

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

John 13:15

Together in Christ







## **PERSONAL STUDY**

**Read John 13: 1-17**

### **OPENING REMARKS:**

All people want to have a meaningful life. This is also true for every believer. When Jesus then speaks so clearly and penetratingly to His disciples in John 13-17, each of them becomes part of a new way of following Jesus. Jesus not only delivers a speech, but speaks intimately with His followers. Jesus gives clear guidelines on how to live a life dedicated to Him.

This message also applies to each of us. It is as if Jesus came to place His hand on each of our shoulders to say, "This is how you must do ..."

It is therefore indescribably instructive that John chooses to begin the five chapters on Jesus' conversation and dealings with His disciples the last night before His death, by describing the detail of how and when Jesus washed His disciples' feet.

## STUDY QUESTIONS:

### Read John 13:1-3

What is said about Jesus in verses 1 to 3 that makes us realize His greatness?

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What does it mean that He loved them to the end? Why is it important?

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How had Satan already attacked Jesus and his disciples? What happened to the one who did not love Jesus nor receive his word? (Also see John 6:67-71; 12:4-6) What can we learn here?

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We often forget that Jesus knew what Judas was doing all the time while everything was happening that night around Gethsemane, even though the disciples knew nothing.

You and I would have found it exceedingly difficult to get on normally without thinking about it all the time. Jesus goes on and uses every moment to prepare His disciples for what is to come!

**Read verses 4-5**

What actions do we see Jesus perform, and what are the meaning of each of them?

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What was Jesus teaching his disciples by washing their feet? How is this act an expression of love?

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Foot washing was a common practice at meals during that time. People laid on their sides next to the table, which meant that one person's head was close to the other person's feet that had just walked miles on the dirt roads

in leather sandals or shoes. That is why the host usually had someone to wash their feet.

It was such humiliating slave labour, that Jewish slaves were not asked to wash feet when other slaves were available. If the family was poor and there were no slaves at all, the woman of the house had to do it. The one who was the least important in the group, had to do this work. That is why it is so remarkable that Jesus is doing it here.

What Jesus is doing here is in stark contrast to what they were used to – the One who is the most important in that room was performing the duties usually reserved for the one that holds the lowest position in the household. In the presence of Jesus, the natural relationships are transformed into an unsolicited, and therefore striking, act of humility. This is in stark contrast to the disciples' constant quarrel over who will be the most important in the kingdom of heaven!

**Read verses 6-11**

What did Peter say when Jesus came to him? Why?

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Why did Jesus insist that he wash Peter's feet? Why did Peter surrender?

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Why must one accept the grace of Jesus to have a love relationship with him? What does verse 10 mean? (Also see John 15:3)

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Peter did not want to share in the humiliation of his Master, Jesus. That is why he initially objected to the washing of his feet. Peter's resistance is representative of man's resistance to grace - it is in our blood that we do not want to be dependent on anyone, not even God. What Peter had to learn is that through the cross of Jesus the power and love of Jesus will become clear.

Through His conversation with Peter, Jesus wanted to teach everyone a greater lesson: His Kingdom works differently from the value systems of this world. In fact, it completely overturns the value systems of this world. God's power and love lie in sacrifice. Whoever does not want to accept this will also not understand that God can save people by the humiliation of the cross. If someone

does not want to accept a suffering Messiah, he or she will never be able to share in the salvation that Jesus works.

**Read verses 12-17**

How did Jesus explain the meaning of what he had done?

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How did he want them to express their love for him and for one another?

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How can you show Jesus' love to others practically?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

In his commentary on John 13, Warren Wiersbe wrote: *“Jesus was the Sovereign, yet He took the place of a servant. He had all things in His hands, yet He picked up a towel. He was Lord and Master, yet He served His followers. It has well been said that humility is not thinking*

*meanly of yourself; it is simply not thinking of yourself at all. True humility grows out of our relationship with the Father. If our desire is to know and do the Father's will so that we might glorify His name, then we will experience the joy of following Christ's example and serving others."*

We today, just like the disciples that night, desperately need this lesson on humility. The church is filled with a worldly spirit of competition and criticism as believers strive to see who is the greatest. We are growing in knowledge, but not in grace (see 2 Peter 3:18). *"Humility is the only soil in which the graces root,"* wrote Andrew Murray. *"The lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure."*

Jesus served His disciples because of His humility and because of His love. If Jesus washed feet, we need to do so much more. The believer has no choice but to wash the feet of his brother or sister. Christian love lies in self-sacrificing service and self-sacrificing service is Christian love.

**PRAYER:**

Thank your Heavenly Father for sending you His Son, as your own personal Saviour.

Thank Jesus for showing you the example of love and humility. Ask Him to teach you to follow in His footsteps.

Ask Father to help you to share your Christian love by living a life of self-sacrificing service.

Ask Him to show you opportunities to serve.



## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

### **Memory verse:**

*I have set you an example, that you should do as I have done for you.*

*John 13:15*

### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### **Scripture Reading:**

John 13:1-17

## Discussion questions

According to John 13:1, what is the basis of any act(s) of service?

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Refer to John 13:6-9. Why do you think did Peter not want to allow Jesus to wash his feet at first? What would YOUR reaction be if Jesus would have come to wash your feet?

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What Jesus taught the 12 Disciples the night before His death, also applies to us. Compare John 13:14-17 and John 13:34(b) and discuss what is it that Jesus commands every believer to do.

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Share and discuss practical ways in which you as a group, as well as individuals, could serve others with the love of Christ.

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**Close in prayer**

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**Week 2**

# Love one another!

## **Memory verse:**

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*

*John 13:34*

*Together in Christ*



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## **PERSONAL STUDY**

**Read John 13:31-35 and John 15:9-17**

### **OPENING REMARKS:**

In this passage of scripture, the atmosphere at the table changed. Judas is gone, into the darkness. And the disciples sat looking at one another in amazement. The departure of Judas purified the group, but they are being made aware of a difficult time that lies ahead.

Jan A du Rand writes that Jesus is the only one who can save this situation. He explains to them that life is not a small bundle of big things, but a large bundle of small things.

And then Jesus gave His "As" message: As I love you, so you must love one another. Jesus' words are direct and to the point. This is a new command. This is what Jesus asks of us. This is what we must accept as a calling for life.

John 13: 31-38 can be seen as the agenda for the rest of Jesus' farewell message, which follows in chapters 14 to 17, as each of the subjects raised in verses 31-38 are discussed in broader detail in the following chapters.

## STUDY QUESTIONS:

### Read verses John 13:31-32

What does Jesus say about himself and what does he teach about the relationship between the Father and the Son?

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The Son of Man is going to be glorified. Because Jesus' actions are so intricately linked to God's glory, God's greatness and power will also become clear when Jesus' power becomes clear. God Himself will make the greatness of Jesus visible. These statements of power and greatness, of course, refer to the events of the cross. When Jesus dies on the cross and rises again, it will provide indisputable proof of his intimate relationship with the God of life.

Read John 17:4 What does it mean that Jesus is glorifying the Father?

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The way we all glorify God is by faithfully doing what He calls us to do! From a human perspective, Jesus' death is

a shameful act involving unspeakable suffering and humiliation; but from the divine perspective it was the revelation of the glory of God.

**Read verse 33**

In this verse, what does Jesus say about himself?

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When Jesus leaves, his followers must act as expected of followers. He is their Lord who must teach them.

**Read verse 34**

What new command did Jesus give in verse 34? In what way was it “new”?

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What guideline, or example, does Jesus give of HOW to love?

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The word love is used only twelve times in John 1–12, but in John 13–21 it is used forty-four times! This is a key word in Christ's farewell conversation with his disciples, as well as in his high priestly prayer in John 17.

The word new does not mean "new in time," for even from Old Testament times love was important to God's people (see Leviticus 19:18). It means 'fresh, new in experience'. This is the opposite of 'worn out'. Love would take on a new meaning and power because of Christ's death on the cross (John 15:13).

Coenie Burger says John 15:9-17 can be seen as "a commentary and explanation on the new commandment of John 13:34". In chapter 15:9 John now deviates from the language of the image of the vine, but the matter remains the same: As the Father loves and supports Jesus, so Jesus loves the believers. These words tell of a strong relationship that exists between the Father, the Son and his disciples.

**Read John 15:9-10.**

What command does Jesus give in verse 9 that He repeats in verse 10?



How can we abide in His love?

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**Read John 15:11**

What reason does Jesus give for His call that we should abide in Him?

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**Read verse 12-13**

In verse 12 Jesus repeats His command to Love one another.

What is the greatest demonstration of love? How did Jesus show His love?

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Jesus came to show what the essence of love is - true love comes only from the Father through a relationship with the Son.

John also writes about perfect love in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter - read 1 John 4:7, 9-11. Can you see that perfect, Jesus' love, involves much more than a kind of affection, an intimacy or simply good intentions, intense interest, or attachment? Yes, these things are all part of love, but true love is to be willing to lay down your life for the one you love. It is about sacrificing yourself for the benefit of others. Your own interests are subordinate to the interests of others and are always at the expense of yourself. That is LOVE!

### **Read John 15:14-15**

What recognition or "title" does Jesus give to every follower who carries out His commission, according to verse 14?

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Write in your own words what verse 15 says to you.

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Is this not a wonderful assurance: Jesus is indeed our Master, but He does not treat us as servants. He treats us as friends when we do what He commands.

However, we should not limit the meaning of this word friend, because the Greek word means "a friend of the court" - in other words the "inner circle" around a king or an emperor. The 'friends of the king' would be near him and know his secrets, but they would also be subject to him and his commands. So, there is no conflict between being a friend and being a servant.

### **Read John 15:16-17**

And then, just before he concludes the paragraph, John makes sure that this honour that Jesus shows us does not go to our heads and make us arrogant. Read verse 16 and compare it with John 15:5c - it has NOTHING to do with us, it is Jesus who chose us!

Again, John repeats Jesus' command for each disciple of Jesus. Read verse 17 and compare it with verses 4 and 1 John 4: 7 and 11. Take a good look at yourself and write down what you may not disregard from now on:

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

Our friendship with Christ involves love and obedience. But it also involves knowledge: He "lets us in" His plans. He our Master who treats us as friends.

Friends of the King must not only love Him, but also each other! It makes Him so happy when He sees that His friends love and serve one another and obey His commandments!

**PRAYER:**

Thank your Heavenly Father for His love and mercy.

Thank Jesus for showing you the example of love and for being willing to sacrifice His life for you.

Ask Him to teach you to love unconditionally.

Ask Him to show you opportunities to show your love to fellow believers and to the rest of the world.

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

#### **Memory verse:**

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*

*John 13:34*

#### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### **Scripture Reading:**

John 13:31-35 and John 15:9-17

## Discussion questions

Compare John 13:34 with John 15:12. What exactly is the NEW COMMANDMENT that Jesus gave His church before His death?

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Read verses 9-10 and discuss the PRE-requisite to Jesus's New Commandment and the specific condition to achieve this requirement.

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Read verses 13-15 and discuss the significance of Jesus calling his devoted disciples his friends.

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In verse 17 Jesus repeats His command. Discuss the results that Jesus promise to those who obey Him in the following verses:

John 13:35 \_\_\_\_\_

John 15:11 \_\_\_\_\_

John 15:16 \_\_\_\_\_

**Close in prayer**

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**Week 3**

# Knowing God through Christ

**Memory Verse:**

*If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.*

*John 14:7*

*Together in Christ*







## **PERSONAL STUDY**

**Read John 14:1-11**

### **OPENING REMARKS:**

For many people, their address is particularly important to them, especially if their address is in one of the more affluent neighbourhoods. They like to put a lot of emphasis on the suburb where they live, making sure the other people know exactly where they live.

God gave man the earth and everything He made as their address. But it is at this address that the worst possible sin took place. It was so bad that the people became wanderers after the fall, people without addresses. Jesus says at one point they are like sheep without a Shepherd.

It is here among the wanderers, people without direction, where Jesus, the Son of God, connected Himself to humanity. He comes to give hope and direction again, and He shows the way, the way back to the Father. He promises those who believe in Him, that He is returning to His heavenly address and that He will prepare a new address, a new home, for those who believe in Him.

## STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read verses 1-4 again. What does God's Word teach you about God and your new eternal address?

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How do you feel about your new address? For whom is Jesus preparing a place in His Father's house? How do you get there?

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Now spend some time in prayer. Think about your current life (address). Thank God that Jesus came to build the way, and that is preparing your new home now. Commit yourself to Jesus again. It does not help that we know about the new address, but we do not know the way to the new address. Make sure you know how to get to your eternal address.

Read verses 5-7 again. Jesus reveals some incredible truths in these few verses, which are vital to understand. Make a list of the truths you discover here.

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Now, reflect on each truth and write down what it means to you.

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Jesus is the only way, there is no other way, to our new address. Not our best works, nor a good life, nor church membership, nor a Christian education, will bring us to God, only blind faith and trust in Jesus.

There is no other truth than Jesus. All other religions are false. Many false religions promise a wonderful end, but it is almost impossible to meet all the requirements. Jesus' "requirement" is believing the truth, full stop.

Because He is the only way and the only truth, He can also give life to those who believe in Him. At our heavenly address, we are going to truly live. All the pain, all the tears, all the "wandering around" is over.

Read Matthew 7:13-14. How does Matthew describe the path to your new address? What does it mean to walk on the narrow path? What things do you need to get rid of to enter through the narrow entrance?

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What is the difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus?

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How can you get to know Jesus better and what will change in your life if you get to know Jesus better?

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Read verses 8-11 again. How does John describe the relationship between Father and Son? What can you learn about your relationship with the Father and the Son?

Who is the Father to you?

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And the Son, Jesus Christ?

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And the Holy Spirit?

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The Father is in the first place the Father of Jesus. Jesus reconciles “homeless” people with His Father. If we want to understand God’s Father heart for us, we should look at the relationship between Father and Jesus as Son. The relationship is incredibly special. That is why we are also incredibly special to God. From Jesus' side, He shows us what a special relationship there is between a child of God and God. We need to know that God as Father expects us to obey His will as it befits God’ children.

**CLOSING REMARKS:**

Not all paths lead to God, as many of the other faiths claim. They believe that different religions are all paths to one God. Jesus is truly clear; He is going to prepare a place for believers at their new address.

And the road is narrow, not everyone is willing to give up everything to walk on the right path. The way says Jesus is He, because He alone proclaims the truth and He alone can give new life, there at people's new address. Jesus

makes it possible for all who believe to know Him and His Father.

If you believe this, it requires new devotion and obedience to God from you.

## **PRAYER**

Thank Father that, in Jesus, He also came to show you, who were a wanderer with no direction, the way to your eternal address.

Ask Him to help you to follow Him on this path, in obedience.

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

#### **Memory verse:**

*If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.  
From now on, you do know him and have seen him.*

*John 14:7*

#### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### **Scripture Reading:**

John 14:1-11

## Discussion Questions

How does Jesus describe his “Father’s house” in this passage? What does God’s house represent for you?

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Read verse 6. Jesus describes Himself as the way, the truth and the life. Discuss each term. What is the significance of each of these terms to you?

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The second half of verse 6 says, “no one can come to the Father except through me.” This can sound arrogant, exclusive, and narrow in our multi-faith society. What does it mean for Christians? Do you think God can truly be found in other religions? To what extent? Why/why not?

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What is the difference between ‘knowing about Jesus’ and ‘knowing Him personally?’ Where do you stand regarding your “knowing” of the Father and Jesus?

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**Close in Prayer**



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**Week 4**

# Trust God

**Memory verse:**

*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.*

*John 14:13*

*Together in Christ*





## **PERSONAL STUDY**

**Read John 14:12-14**

### **OPENING REMARKS:**

Jesus and His disciples are in the upper room on the last night of His life. He has spent the last three years with His disciples teaching them and doing ministry with them. And now the time has come for Him to die a sacrificial death on the cross.

He is telling His disciples that He is about to die and then He says: *“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.”*

A Christian’s life starts with faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is faith that enable people to turn their backs on sin. Our works do not save us; the works of Christ save us.

Jesus tells his disciples that every true believer will do the works that He does. They will also show selfless sacrificial love, that loves others for their good and God’s glory. That is what Jesus did on the cross.

We are called to live lives that are marked by Christlike love. We are called to make disciples of all nations. We are to give ourselves to a life of making disciples, because that is what Christlike love does. We must be willing to give our lives for the sake of the Gospel.

Jesus continues and says that we will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. Now by “doing greater things,” He does not mean miracles and spectacular things. But believers, will be able to reach the world on a bigger scale than what Jesus was able to do. God will use the church to reach the nations. After Peter’s first sermon under control of the Holy Spirit, three thousand people came to faith in Christ and the church expanded rapidly thereafter.

Jesus also promised them that prayers in His name will be answered. He says that the reason He will give us what we ask in His Name is so that the Father may be glorified. He is not saying as long as you add, “in the name of Jesus” to your prayer, or if you claim something “in the name of Jesus” that He will grant your request. He is saying if we pray in line with His will for His name’s sake, for His glory, for the glory of God, then He will do what we ask.

## STUDY QUESTIONS:

How can we possibly do greater works than Jesus did?  
What does this refer to?

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When we read John 14:12 -13 we need to consider these verses in their context. They are part of Jesus' teaching about his identity with the Father. They are not stand-alone snippets about Christian miracle-working or Christian prayer.

We must think deeply before we automatically assume that Jesus is saying that we will do greater miracles than He did. The key concept in the context is that Jesus has revealed the Father. If we believe in Him, we also will reveal the Father.

The revelation of God in Jesus Christ was limited to a small number of people. Its total impact was small. Yet, the good news about Jesus' salvation was spread to the ends of the earth, in a short time, by the small group of first believers.

What does it mean for you to pray in the Name of Jesus?

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Do you think that the promises Jesus makes about prayer in verses 12-14 are “blank cheque” promises - you can just ask what you want, and you will get it? Explain your answer?

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Jesus said, “in My name,” which immediately puts a boundary around it. We do not use the name of Jesus as a “formula,” to get what we want. It is rather a prayer that proceeds from faith in Christ, prayer that gives expression to a unity with all that Christ stands for, prayer which seeks to set forward Christ himself.

When the Lord Jesus answers our prayers made in his name, with Him and his agenda at their centre, the purpose and result of his response to our prayers is the glory of his Father. It is not about us and our needs and our difficulties.

Is praying, “Your will be done” opposed to praying in faith? Why/why not?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

God desires that we will glorify Him by holy lives. We should pray as best we know in line with His revealed will or desire, while at the same time submitting to the fact that we do not know His will of decree. Jesus promises to do whatever we ask in His name, but He did not say when He will do it. God may be glorified as we faithfully wait on Him for years for answers to our prayers. He may be glorified by answering at a distant time even beyond our lifetimes for reasons that we cannot fathom now.

God often accomplishes His purposes in ways that seem backwards to us. We pray for the gospel to spread, so God sends persecution. We do not understand all that God is doing, so we may go to our graves not knowing why He seemingly did not answer our prayers.

## PRAYER

Pray daily, *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* This is what He wants. If you pray this, He will do it.

Pray that God will grow your faith, daily.

Ask God to teach you to trust Him more.

Ask Him to reveal to you, your purpose and how to live a life that will glorify Him.



## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

#### **Memory verse:**

*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.*

*John 14:13*

#### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### **Scripture Reading:**

John 14:12-14, James 4:2-3 and Matthew 7:7-8

## Discussion questions

Do you think that the promises Jesus makes about prayer in verses 12-14 are “blank cheque” promises - you can just ask what you want, and you will get it? Discuss.

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Read verse 13-14, James 4:2-3 and Matthew 7:7-8. What does Jesus mean when He said that He “will do whatever you ask in my name?” What do you learn about prayer?

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How can we pray in faith if we do not know God’s will or decrees? Can we pray in faith that God will save a specific person?

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How can we possibly do greater works than Jesus did? What connection does Jesus’ going to the Father have to do with us doing greater works?

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**Close in prayer**

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**Week 5**

# **Obey Christ and His Spirit**

**Memory verse:**

*If you love me, keep my commands.*

*John 14:15*

*Together in Christ*



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## **PERSONAL STUDY**

**Read John 14:15-26**

### **OPENING REMARKS:**

This passage opens with the theme of love that was introduced in John 13, but here it has a slightly different focus. In John 13:34–35 the focus was on loving one another, as Jesus loved them. That idea will be repeated in Chapter 15:12–13.

But here the focus is shifted in the condition to loving Jesus, namely, “if you love me”. To fulfil the condition, the text specifies “you will obey or “keep” what I command.”

The impact of the verse really means that obedience is a test or indication of loving Jesus.

Jesus knew very well that His requirement of love and keeping his commands would necessitate a resource of divine proportions and he prayed that his followers would have “another” resource. We do not earn the Holy Spirit any more than we can earn our salvation. But in the process of responding to the Son of God we discover that Jesus has provided a divine agent to us for living in this world.

## **STUDY QUESTIONS:**

### **Read verses 15, 21a and 23a**

How does Jesus want us to express our love for Him?

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Bible reading and biblical sermons teach us about Jesus and are important, but the proof of our love for Jesus is obeying His instructions.

### **Read verses 16-17**

Whom did Jesus promise the Father would send?

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Who is “the Spirit of Truth”? (Also refer to John 14:6)

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Jesus has promised to send us his own spirit, his own breath, his own inner life. Here, and for the next two chapters, he uses a special word to describe the Spirit. In

verse 16 he says that Father will give us ‘another helper’. This ‘helper’ is the Spirit.

But the word translated as ‘helper’ is rich and many-sided. It does not simply mean someone who comes to lend assistance in our various tasks. It certainly does mean that as well: the Spirit, as we will be seeing, comes to give God’s people the strength and energy to do what they must do, to live for God and witness to his love in the world. But it means two other things as well. The two words sometimes used to describe what “helper” means are comforter and advocate.

Define the two words using your own understanding of these words:

Comforter: \_\_\_\_\_

Advocate: \_\_\_\_\_

Comfort is a strange and wonderful thing. Have you noticed how, when someone is deeply distressed, after a bereavement or a tragedy, the fact of having other people with them, hugging them and being alongside them, gives them strength for the next moment, then the one after that, then the one after that? Outwardly nothing has changed, but other human support changes our ability to cope with

disaster. It gives us strength. When the Spirit is spoken of as the 'comforter', this kind of extra strength to meet special need is in mind.

An advocate stands up in a court of law and explains to the judge or jury how things are from his or her client's point of view. The advocate pleads the case. Jesus assumes that his followers will often find themselves, as He found himself, on the wrong side of official persecution. He saw the situation, as centuries of Jewish tradition had done before Him, in terms of the heavenly court with God as the judge. In that court, his people can rest assured that their case will be heard, that God will constantly be reminded of their plight, because the Spirit will plead on their behalf.

It could also refer to Satan who constantly accuses God's children before Him as Judge. The Holy Spirit as advocate, comforts us as accused in this Heavenly court case.

Why can the world not receive this Comforter, and why could the apostles receive Him?

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**Read verses 18-21**

Why would the world no longer be able to see Jesus and in what sense would the apostles be able to see Him?

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What blessings are offered to those who love Him?

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What does it mean to “have” the Holy Spirit in your life? (Refer to verses 16,17,18,20 and 23)

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God dwells in the believer – Father, Son and Spirit all dwell in the believer. This indwelling is specifically the action of the Spirit, but because of the unity and identity in the trinity, it is also the Father and the Son dwelling in the believer. This gift of the Spirit makes each individual believer the dwelling place of God. This gift of the Spirit makes each individual believer, and believers corporately, the holy temple of God.

**Read verses 22-26**

Some people claim that obedience is not important if you love Jesus. What does these verses teach us about obeying Jesus?

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What will the Holy Spirit do for the disciples? And for believers today?

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Where can we find everything that Jesus said to us?

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By studying the Bible, we will understand everything that Jesus taught us and commanded us to do. Without studying the Bible, we will not understand how to follow His commandments and we will be open to distortions and lies that Satan and false prophets say about Jesus.

## **CLOSING REMARKS:**

To really hear, is to believe, to believe is to obey Christ's command to believe in him and to obey his teaching that faith in himself is essential. To do all of this is to love him. The Holy Spirit is thus given, as stated in John 7:38,39, to those who believe in Christ. Not those who superficially align with him because of the perceived benefits, but for those who really know that in seeing Jesus Christ they stand face to face with God.

The believer's courage and confidence will be sustained by remembering what Jesus had done. He did what he did so that 'the world' might know that He loved the father. Called to follow Him, we are to act in such a way that 'the world' will know that we love Him.

## **PRAYER:**

Thank your Heavenly Father for His love and mercy.  
Thank Jesus for sending His Spirit to teach and guide you.  
Tell Him that you love Him.  
Ask Him to help you follow the guidance of the Spirit to show the world that you love Him.

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

### **Memory verse:**

*If you love me, keep my commands.*

*John 14:15*

### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### **Scripture Reading:**

John 14:15-26

## Discussion questions

While Jesus was preparing his disciples that He was about to die and that He was not going to stay with them, He made them a promise: *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you* (verse 18).

Read verse 16. Who, did He say, would He send to be with them forever?

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What would He do? (refer to verse 18)

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How would Jesus still “come” to them (verse 18 ) and live in them (verse 20c?) (Also refer to verses 19b - 20, 23b)

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What is the main pre-requisite for the above to happen in a disciple’s life, that Jesus repeats throughout this paragraph?

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How does Jesus expect His disciples to express our love for Him? See verses 15, 21a and 23a.

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**Close in prayer**

*living IN CHRIST*

**Week 6**

# His Peace

**Memory verse:**

*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you.*

*John 14:27*

*Together in Christ*



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## **PERSONAL STUDY**

**Read John 14:27-31**

### **OPENING REMARKS:**

Peace! This is the second great legacy that Jesus gives to the believers according to John 14.

Wishing someone peace, was an integral part to saying goodbye in biblical times.

When Jesus wishes his disciples peace, it is not just a reference to a feeling of satisfaction or absence of any conflict or struggle. This peace refers to the state of salvation that arrived after God sent His Son to be slain as a Lamb for the atonement of our sins. This peace brings peace with God, peace with your neighbour and peace with your own inner self.

The world promises peace, but cannot give genuine peace. Only Jesus's peace secures composure amid trouble and dissolves fear.

### **STUDY QUESTIONS:**

**Read verse 27**

What blessing did Jesus promise in verse 27?

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What do the following verses teach us about the peace of Christ?

John 16:33	
Philippians 4:7	
Colossians 3:15	

Explain how Jesus' concept of peace differs from the world's concept of peace. Why can't the world give this peace?

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G.L. Borchardt explained the peace that Jesus gives as follows: *"This peace was the gift of Jesus which would calm their troubled hearts and ease their fears of his*

*departure. It is the peace that Christians would come to experience in the post resurrection era of the Spirit, when Paul could proclaim the peace of Christ Jesus that goes beyond all human understanding and guards believers "hearts and minds" (Philippians 4:7).*

**Read verse 28**

Why should the disciples rejoice that Jesus is leaving?  
(Refer to John 16:17)

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Why did Jesus say: "for the Father is greater than I"?

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Jesus is equal with the Father and one with the Father (John 10:30 and 12:45), yet while He is in his incarnate state, the Father is 'greater'. When Jesus returns to the Father, He will resume his total and essential equality and unity with the Father. Going back to the Father means returning to his rightful position.

**Read verse 29**

Why did Jesus explain these things before they happened? How would this help the disciples' faith?

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Although Jesus has spared them the horrific details of what is about to happen, He has told them enough to prepare them to understand the deep spiritual meaning of those events once the resurrection and the return to the Father occur. Then the Spirit will show them that meaning, and they will understand and believe.

**Read verse 30 and John 12:31**

Whom did Jesus say was coming?

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What did Jesus mean by "he has no hold over me"?

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"He has no hold on me" is a forensic idiom meaning 'he has no valid charge against me'. This is a further reminder of the motif of Jesus' trial. Satan could only have a claim

on Jesus if he could accuse him of something, and Jesus was sinless.

**Read verse 31**

What was Jesus about to do?

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How would that show His love for His Father?

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Jesus was about to die on the cross. This event, this death that looks like defeat, is the final evidence of the Son doing the work of the Father. This event, this death, is the culmination of the Father's saving work in and through his Son, planned and purposed before the beginning of time.

The world (like Satan) may think that Jesus is defeated by his death, but Jesus' obedient death vindicates Him and displays how deeply He loves the Father.

## **CLOSING REMARKS:**

When Jesus said: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you,”* it was more than the usual farewell blessing of peace in Jewish and Greek convention. Jesus did not want his departure to leave the disciples insecure, because the confidence, love and joy that characterized Jesus’ life amid opposition and conflict are to be made available to them.

The contrast is not primarily between Jesus’ peace and the world’s peace, but between the manner of Jesus’ giving and the manner of the world’s giving. The world’s granting of peace is a conditional, negotiated, and contractual matter, whereas that of Jesus is unconditional and incalculable.

Like God’s giving of the Spirit to the Son, without measure, Jesus’ own giving of peace through surrendering his life to violent death is characterized by the excessive generosity of love.

Therefore, we can already experience the security of eternal life with Jesus. His peace must be made visible through our beliefs and our lifestyle of love. Where peace reigns, fear or distress has no control.

**PRAYER:**

Thank Jesus for His peace.

Thank Him for sending the Holy spirit to guide you and to comfort you.

Ask Him to help you to live a life that shows that He is in control. A life where peace reigns and where fear and distress have no control.

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

#### **Memory verse:**

*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you.*

*John 14:27*

#### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### **Scripture Reading:**

John 14:27-31



## Discussion questions

Share with the group what you have learned about Jesus' promise of peace to all His followers. Discuss what you understand Jesus meant with the concept of "peace."

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The peace of Jesus is different than the peace of the world. What are the two differences that Jesus mention in verse 27?

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Read verse 30-31. Discuss with one another if you can recognise how Jesus was demonstrating these two differences in his own life.

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What does the following verses teach about Jesus' peace?

John 16:33	
Philippians 4:7	
Colossians 3:15	

**Close in prayer**

*living IN CHRIST*

**Week 7**

# Remain in Jesus!

**Memory verse:**

*Remain in me, as I also remain in you.*

*John 15:4a*

*Together in Christ*



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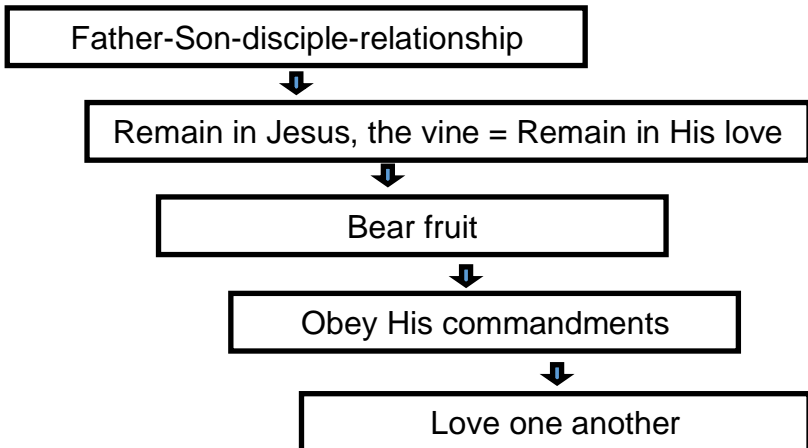
## PERSONAL STUDY

Read John 15:1-17

### OPENING REMARKS:

One of the most pressing questions of modern man is the question of how to understand God. People keep asking: How can we describe the relationship between God and man? How is it possible to have a personal relationship with God? How can we understand that God lives in us and that we must live in God?

Jan A du Rand writes that John 15 paints a clear picture, namely: Our Christian lives are like a silhouette against God's new sunrise. He says John 15 can be represented as follows:



## STUDY QUESTIONS:

This week we will focus on the first demand flowing from the Father-Son-disciple-relationship, namely: Remain in Jesus (verses 1-4a) .

### Read verse 1

What does Jesus' statement, "I am the true vine", imply?

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Like many of the previous '*I am*' claims of Jesus (*'I am the bread of life'*, *'I am the light of the world'*, *'I am the good shepherd'*) - this claim: "I am the vine", presupposes certain knowledge in his hearers. This is an exclusive claim. It prohibits and denies the existence of any valid and viable alternative. In this claim Jesus explicitly identifies himself as the true vine, that is, the genuine vine, as opposed to false vines. This identification renders invalid and unproductive any relationship with any other source of spiritual nourishment and life.

As the vine, Jesus is the one true source of spiritual life. We have seen this repeatedly in John's Gospel.

Who is the gardener?

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The Father is the one ultimately in charge – for example, it is the Father who sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, so that we can have this life in and through the Son; it is the Father who sends the Spirit to indwell, instruct and transform us.

**Read verse 2**

What is the work of the gardener?

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Who is represented by the branches? What is the difference between fruitless branches and fruitful branches?

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Why is the pruning process important? What happens when the branches are pruned?

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The gardener (vinedresser) ensures increased fruitfulness by removing the dead branches (cutting it off) and by removing undesired parts from the fruitful ones. By pruning the fruitful branches, the gardener ensures an abundant harvest.

**Read verse 3**

How does the gardener (vinedresser) prune each branch?

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What must all Christians continue to absorb and obey to remain "clean"?

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The Word of God is the only way believers can remain clean and fruitful. It is the pruning tool the gardener uses.

**Read verse 4a**

What does the word "remain" (abide) mean?

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Remain or abide means to continue or persist in a particular condition; to last; to endure. The same Greek word that we translate with remain or abide, are used in the following verses. What does these verses teach us about remaining (abiding) in Christ?

John 6:56	
1 John 2:6	
2 John verse 9	
James 1:25	

Verse 4a is a command, with a promise. Whose responsibility is it to make sure that the branch remains in the vine?

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The command to remain in Jesus implies that believers are responsible to maintain that vital connection with Jesus. How do we remain in Jesus? Be practical with your answers.

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It is our responsibility to ensure that we study His Word and live according to His commandments. We need to seek an intimate, living, growing relationship with Jesus. Jesus remains in us when His Word remains in us.

**CLOSING REMARKS:**

In a time where everything is temporary and ever changing, remaining in Christ is an unusual command. People are used to giving up after little effort, and the saying: *“It is too hard”*, has become part of our language from an early age.

Just as the strength of this branch comes from the vine, so does the strength of the Christians come from Jesus Christ. We cannot grow unless we stay with Jesus. The sad thing in many Christians today is they do not stay in Jesus.

Most expect God to be there when there is a need in their life, but they do not feed upon the Word of God. The nourishment comes from the branch. Without that daily feeding upon the Word, the branch will die. To do God's will, we must know God's will. God's will in your life is found in His Word. Daily Bible reading and study gives Christians good solid growth and makes us a strong branch.

For believers, the only way to grow in faith and to bear fruit, is to remain in Christ. To abide in Jesus means to keep his commandments and to keep his commandments means to love God with all our hearts and souls and minds and to love our neighbour as ourselves ( Matthew 22:37–39 ).

Abiding in Christ is not a feeling or a belief, but something we do, a way of living. It means to “remain” or “stay” and entails far more than only the idea of continued belief in the Saviour. We abide through a relationship. We pursue that relationship in love. We nurture that relationship through obeying His Word.

**PRAYER:**

Thank Jesus for His love and mercy.

Thank Him for abiding in you and guiding you through the Holy Spirit.

Ask Father to help you to walk by faith and to engage in intentional actions, to share His love with others.

Ask Him to help you to spend focused time in His Word, for you to learn from Him.

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

### **Memory verse:**

*Remain in me, as I also remain in you.*

*John 15:4a*

### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### **Scripture Reading:**

John 15:1-17

## Discussion questions

In this passage, who is represented by:

The Vine: \_\_\_\_\_

The Gardener: \_\_\_\_\_

The Branches: \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this “*I am*” statement of Jesus so important? What does I mean to you?

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Read verse 2. Why is the pruning process necessary? What happens when branches are pruned? What two options does the gardener have in respect of pruning?

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Discuss why pruning is necessary for believers who already bear fruit.

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Read verse 4. What does the command to remain in Jesus mean in practise? How does it impact the way you live? Discuss.

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What are the results of remaining in Jesus?

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**Close in prayer**





*living IN CHRIST*

**Week 8**

# Bear fruit!

## **Memory verse:**

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

*John 15:8*

*Together in Christ*





## **PERSONAL STUDY**

**Read John 15:1-8**

### **OPENING REMARKS:**

Spiritual fruitfulness is impossible to achieve on one's own, apart from Christ. It means living in communion and oneness with Jesus Christ.

No Christian can really live without a sustained and total dependence on Jesus.

God expects us to be fruitful not just for His own pleasure, but He wants us to be fruitful because it is good for us. God loves us and He knows that bearing much fruit helps us to have a more fulfilling, meaningful, happier, and blessed life.

### **STUDY QUESTIONS:**

This week we will focus on the second command flowing from the Father-Son-discipleship-relationship: Bear fruit.

**Read verse 4-5**

What do believers - i.e., branches of the vine - have to do to "bear fruit" for God?

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Just as the strength of this branch comes from the vine, so does the strength of the Christians come from Jesus Christ. We cannot grow and bear fruit, unless we stay connected to Jesus.

Can you remember an example of when you tried to produce something on your own? And something in Christ? What was the main reason for failure as opposed to success?

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The power to be fruit-bearers only exists as we draw our strength from Him. To be broken away from the body of the vine (Jesus), we would be but a broken dead branch. The power to be what God would have us to be lies within our relationship with Jesus Christ (the vine).

**Read verse 6**

What is the reason that branches will be cut off the vine?

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What happens to these branches?

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What does this mean in terms of your own personal life?

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The imagery here is one of destruction. It pictures the judgment awaiting all those who were never saved. It refers to people who are supposed to be Christians and are in fact hypocrites.

Just as dead branches from a vine are gathered and burned, those who have separated themselves from God, will *go into hell, where the fire never goes out (Mark 9:43)*.

**Read verse 7**

What promise did Jesus make in verse 7?

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It sounds as if all prayers will be answered. However, there are two prerequisites for answered prayers mentioned in verse 7. Lists them below.

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The promise of answered prayer is based on the disciple acting as the agent of Jesus' will (refer to John 16:23-26). The promise is for unlimited resources to do the works of God.

Jesus is saying here that those, who abide (dwell continually), in Him and store the Word of God in themselves, are pleasing God. These are Jesus' followers who have completely lined up their will with His will. Their prayers will be according to the will of God. They are full of His will, as well as His Word. Their prayers are answered positively, because they line up with the will of God (refer to James 5:16).

**Read verse 8**

How is the Father glorified?

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How did Jesus describe the amount of fruit we should bear?

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What does this teach us about zeal and diligence in God's service? (Refer to verses 2, 5 and 8)

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Make a list of the fruit that believers should bear, as many you know. (Refer to Galatians 5:19-24 and 2 Peter 1:5-7 for help)

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Those who are strengthened by their relationship with Jesus Christ should have no problem being fruit bearers for the kingdom. Jesus is not only our source of strength, but our example as well. We should be an extension of His work.

We are the working arm of our Master, Jesus Christ. Jesus works through us to bring more people into the kingdom. The Father is pleased in us when we carry out the wishes of His Son. The amount of fruit we bear depends entirely on our dependence on the vine for our strength. A disciple is a disciplined person who follows his master.

### **CLOSING REMARKS:**

In Scripture, fruit is a metaphor used to describe the outward demonstration of one's inward disposition. Our "fruit" includes things like our behaviour, attitude, words, and thoughts. Fruit can be either good or bad.

Naturally, all people produce bad fruit (i.e., sinful actions, deeds, or behaviour). Our bad behaviour/fruit is a natural result of being born with bad hearts (Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:3; Romans 5:12). Many people believe that doing outwardly "good" deeds, going to church, or being born to Christian parents, makes them Christian. However, God's word teaches that a Christian is one who has been born again through faith in Jesus Christ and is therefore a new creation who is indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:9–11).



Being a fruitful Christian is not accomplished by checking off a "to do" list, but by having our essential being and character changed, renewed, and progressively conformed to the image and likeness of Christ (Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18). To be fruitful means to follow Christ. To love what He loves. To do what He commands from a loving motive and with a joyful spirit.

**PRAYER:**

Praise God for being your Father.

Thank Him for sending His Son to save you from eternal death.

Ask Father to prune you and help you to bear fruit in abundance.

Ask Him to glorify Himself through your life.

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

#### **Memory verse:**

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

*John 15:8*

#### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### **Scripture Reading:**

John 15:1-8

## Discussion questions

Read verses 4 and 5. The way to glorify God is to bear fruit “in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8) What should believers do to bear fruit, according to Jesus?

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Is it enough just to bear a bit of fruit? Why/Why not? (Refer to verse 8)

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Read verse 7. How should believers understand and interpret Jesus’ promise in verse 7? Does it mean that all prayers will be answered with a “yes”? Discuss.

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Do people (the world) see the fruit of the Spirit when they look at the way you live and act? Discuss reasons why the fruit might not be present. What should change? Be practical in your answers.

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**Close in prayer**



*living IN CHRIST*

**Week 9**

**Do not be  
discouraged!**

**Memory verse:**

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

*John 15:18*

*Together in Christ*





## PERSONAL STUDY

Read John 15:18-27

### OPENING REMARKS:

The message of salvation, life and hope must be carried into the world by fragile people. The world hates Jesus' community of love – not for sociological reasons, but for theological ones. That is why, from a human point of view, it is such a risky venture.

Jan A du Rand writes as follows; *“in a world that unravels because of the aggressive attack on the Christian message, the believer must offer resistance as part of perseverance. Not just to survive, but to overcome.”*

In John 15:18-27 Jesus warns his disciples that the world will hate them.

### STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read verses 18-19

What warning is Jesus giving to his disciples in verses 18-19?

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By warning them in advance, Jesus ensures that His disciples will not be surprised when they experience persecution.

Why does the world hate the disciples? Refer to the verses indicated for help.

Verse 19	
Verse 20	
Verse 21	
Verse 22	
Verse 23	
Verses 24 and 25	

From these verses we learn that ‘the world’ has a completely different origin and identity from those who belong to Jesus. Though we once belonged to the world and shared its values we now belong to Jesus. We now identify with his origin and his values and therefore we are outcasts to the world.



**Read verse 20**

Why is Jesus saying that a servant is not greater than his master?

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The world hated Jesus and therefore the world will also hate Jesus' followers.

According to verse 20, how is the world's hatred of Jesus' followers expressed?

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Are things any different today?

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**Read verse 21**

Why do persecutors of Christians hate the name of Jesus so much?

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What about those people who claim they serve God by persecuting Christians?

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If they truly knew God, they would recognize who Jesus is. To hate Jesus is to hate the Father. People's responses to Jesus' followers depend on who Jesus is, not on who they are.

**Read verses 22-24**

Explain John 15:22-24 in your own words. In what sense is it true the world would not have sin if Jesus had not come? What "sin" is this?

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In the context of forewarning his friends of the world's hatred, Jesus gives them coping mechanisms.

Read the following verses and in your own words, describe the coping mechanism that you find in that verse.

Verse 26	
Verse 27	
John 16:1	

Persecution and hatred have a high potential, humanly speaking, to make people give up and turn aside from their 'faith'. Jesus, knowing that these eleven disciples, his friends, will face hatred and persecution said: *'All this I have told you so that you will not go astray'* (John 16:1). And here we have the one coping strategy above all others: that we keep going back to the teaching of Jesus, because it is the truths contained in that teaching that will continually remind us of and strengthen our faith.

What does this mean in terms of your own personal life?

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## **CLOSING REMARKS:**

Jesus' teaching in the preceding chapters (John 13:1 to John 15:17) were to strengthen the disciples to understand the hatred of the hostile world and to persevere despite their hatred. Jesus gives His followers the Holy Spirit to strengthen them to continue His work, but as a response to faith, He also asks that the new commandment of love will be visible as He made it visible through His sacrifice on the cross.

As a community of love, the followers of Jesus must bear fruit and their unity with Jesus must be visible, even though He ascended to heaven. Even the hatred of a hostile world should not put them off.

For faithful followers of Jesus, the challenge is to show the world the love of Christ and to live according to it, even though the world rejects Jesus and hates Christians. Therefore, the answer to this hate, is loving involvement and caring.

The Spirit will continue Jesus' work by convicting the world of sin and revealing the truth about Jesus. Believers need to testify about Jesus, and not be discouraged by hatred.

**PRAYER:**

Thank God for sending His Son to save you from eternal death.

Thank Jesus for sending the Holy Spirit to help and guide you in your faith walk.

Ask Father to help you not to be discouraged by hatred and persecution of the world.

Ask Him to help you to testify of His love and to glorify Himself through your life.

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

### **Prayer**

### **Memory verse:**

*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.*

*John 15:18*

### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### **Scripture Reading:**

John 15:18-27

## Discussion questions

Read verses 18-19. What warning does Jesus give His disciples? Why does He warn them?

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Read verse 20. Why did Jesus say: “*A servant is not greater than his master*”? Discuss.

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Read verse 21. Why do persecutors of Christians hate the name of Jesus? Discuss.

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Read verses 26 and 27. What promises and coping mechanisms does Jesus give His followers, to persevere in the face of persecution and hatred? Discuss how these promises and coping mechanisms impact your faith journey.

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**Close in prayer**





## **MEMORY VERSES**

### **WEEK 1:**

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

John 13:15 ( NIV)

### **WEEK 2:**

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 13:34 (NIV)

### **WEEK 3:**

If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.

From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

John 14:7 (NIV)

### **WEEK 4:**

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

John 14:13 (NIV)

**WEEK 5:**

If you love me, keep my commands.

John 14:15 (NIV)

**WEEK 6:**

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you.

John 14:27 (NIV)

**WEEK 7:**

Remain in me, as I also remain in you.

John 15:4(a) (NIV)

**WEEK 8:**

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

John 15:8 (NIV)

**WEEK 9:**

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

John 15:18 (NIV)

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