



FRUIT, MORE FRUIT, MUCH FRUIT
COURSE WORKBOOK

Also used for
Retreat/Small Group Leader Guide

FRUIT, MORE FRUIT, MUCH FRUIT COURSE WORKBOOK

Leader Guide

WORKBOOK

RICHARD T. CASE



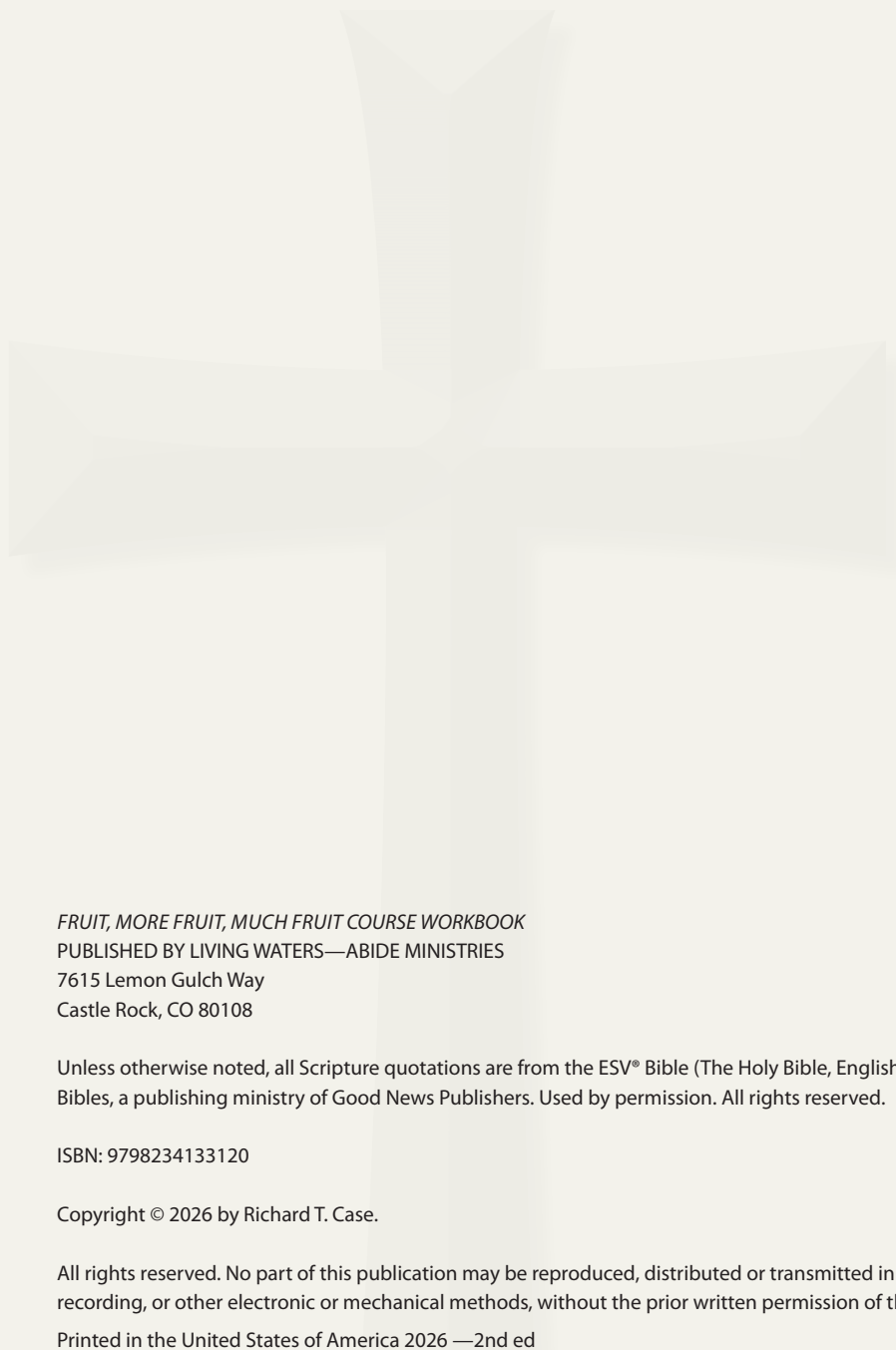
To my wife, Linda, whose keep us reminded of John 15: 16: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain." She is a beautiful example of bearing fruit—her own character transformation; connecting to people who are led to abide in the Vine and experience the result—fruit in their lives; and changed circumstances as we abide in Him & His Words abide in us, bringing His grand solutions and answers to the things of life. She always is discussing the fruit, where are we fruitful, where is God working to create and complete the fruit. As a result, we become very excited about God's work, and "other" centric. He has appointed us to bear fruit which is absolute for all believers. Thus, our focus is not to be on self, but rather the fruit that the Lord is creating; and we are not to define our own fruit—what we think is good or worthwhile. Rather, the result (fruit) is His and we are strictly branches through which His life and spiritual power through His words flow to produce fruit. Ephesians 5: 9 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth. God assures us that we will experience this fruit if we walk with Him in love, in the light and in wisdom. With Linda's reminder that we are called to bear fruit, we keep this wonderful truth in front of us and thus see the fruit that God so creates—a true joy to experience in us and in others.

Acknowledgments

We wish to honor all the leaders of our **Abide Ministries**—who all understand and are committed to living this out. We all know that we are appointed to bear fruit and that our fruit will remain. Thus, our leaders remind each other of the personal fruit, the fruit of leading others to abide and follow the Spirit, and to know that God will change circumstances (What He calls fruit) so that we experience the grand, covenant life – because His answers are grand and based upon the covenant. There is nothing better than for all of us to experience the fruit of giving it away and seeing fruit multiply in so many ways. A real privilege to do this together.

These leaders are:

Jake and Mary Beckel
Caden and Lauren Cardie
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Heath and Rebecca Cardie
Rich and Janet Cocchiaro
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LESSON 1:

UNDERSTANDING THE DEPTH OF GOD'S PURPOSE



"The essence of our relationship with God is for us to bear fruit, as He defines it. And that will be a key element of our lives—to be bearing fruit."

As we've been developing content in our ministry, it's based on John 15—that if you abide in Him, you will bear fruit. We've always discussed what that looks like and explained that you're going to experience fruit. What this course is going to do is go into the depth of that: What is fruit really? And how does it play out?

Everything we've taught—abiding in the vine, the covenant, the kingdom of God—it's all rooted in this concept of fruit and the essence of fruit that God says is important to live out life. So we're going to spend a lot of time talking about what fruit is, how we receive it, and how we give it away.

Before we begin: Take a moment to write down some of the issues in your life, decisions you're facing, and circumstances involving other people. Keep these in mind as context throughout the course.

GOD'S PURPOSE: TO BEAR FRUIT

As you read John 15:1-8 and verse 16, consider: What does Jesus say is the primary purpose He has assigned to every believer? What is required to fulfill that purpose?

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the

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at the back of the workbook

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branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. [. . .] You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

—John 15:1-8, 16

Jesus makes a statement that He has appointed us. The word there is "I've assigned you this important element in life." Now, who is "you"? All of us. It's not just pastors or heads of ministries—He has assigned everybody a certain thing. And what does He say? "I've appointed you to bear fruit."

The essence of our relationship with God is for us to bear fruit, as He defines it. And that will be a key element of our lives—to be bearing fruit. The key to it, He said, is "apart from me, you can do nothing." So if you're going to bear fruit, you have to be in abiding relationship. You have to be connected to the life.

Think about how the fruit comes from the nature of God Himself. The purpose of God is "I want to bear fruit and I use you." You're the physical representative of the invisible God. He is the source of it. But you will bear fruit. You will have result. You will have the opportunity to see all that He is going to fulfill through you.

What does it mean that Jesus "appointed" you to bear fruit? How does this change your understanding of your purpose?

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God's purpose for fruitfulness was established from the very beginning. Read Genesis 1:22-29 and notice how many times God uses the word "fruitful."

And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

—Genesis 1:22-26

The original purpose, as He brought and created man—Adam and Eve—He gave them this command twice in those verses: to be fruitful and multiply. You are to be fruitful because that's His purpose. And multiply so that the fruit continues to multiply—it's not static.

We teach in the covenant that you're going to be blessed, but it continues: you're going to be blessed to be a blessing. You will receive and then you will bear fruit as the essence. His intention for everybody is to continue to expand all the beautiful fruit that He's going to provide through you.

Where are you currently experiencing fruit in your life? How can you remain in that place to be fruitful and multiply?

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Paul writes to the Philippians about the fruit of righteousness. As you read, notice the connection between God completing His work in us and being filled with fruit.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

—Philippians 1:3-11

Paul says that He who began a work in you will complete it. Think of the work as developing the result—which he calls fruit. As you approve, receive, and understand the excellent will of God for you and the work you're part of, you will be filled with the fruit of righteousness.

What is the **fruit of righteousness**? It's the Spirit of Christ, the fruit of Christ Himself. Your life begins to exhibit all the fruit of righteousness, which is His fruit that He delivers through you, coming from Him. The work He assigns you, He'll complete. He wants you to approve the excellence of it—which means you stay on the path. While you stay on the path and connected, you will exhibit the fruits of righteousness.

What does it mean to "approve what is excellent"? How does staying on the path relate to bearing fruit?

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Paul reinforces this teaching in Colossians. Notice the phrase “bearing fruit in every good work.”

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

—Colossians 1:9-10

Remember, the word *knowledge* doesn’t mean “know about”—it means experience. “I have the experience of the life of God.” He says that you would understand His will, which is to bear fruit.

Think about the purpose of our relationship with God. He states it in different ways, but His purpose is that we bear fruit—that we experience the life of fruit. It’s universal. God wants everybody who’s connected to Him—every believer—not to stay static, but for their life to actually bear fruit.

That’s why we talk about the covenant: it’s always a flow through. It’s never static—“Well, just bless me.” No, it’s “Bless me so that the fruit comes with it.” That’s His purpose: to bear fruit.

How is “bearing fruit in every good work” different from simply doing good works? What’s the distinction?

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GOD’S NATURE: REDEMPTION AND RENEWAL

As we go deeper, we discover that fruit is rooted in God’s very nature. Let’s look at several examples that reveal His nature.

In Exodus, the Israelites face an impossible situation—bitter water they cannot drink. Watch for the symbol God uses to bring sweetness.

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the Lord made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, saying, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer.”

—Exodus 15:22-26

The situation: they came and wanted to drink the water, but they couldn’t because it was bitter—undrinkable, unpleasant. There were things going on that made it unpleasant, and because of its unpleasantness, they couldn’t receive it.

What did God have Moses do? Throw a tree into the water. And when he threw the tree in, what happened? It became sweet—not just okay, but it went from bitterness to very pleasing, beautiful.

Think of the tree. What’s that a symbol of? **Jesus on the cross.** The crucifixion was literally being hung on a tree. They put the pole—the tree pole—into a stand and attached the crossbar. When it said “carry the cross,” He actually carried the crossbar to the place where He could be hung on the tree.

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This symbol shows us that the nature of God is to bring redemption and purification. Prior to knowing Christ, you have bitterness because you can't taste the life of God. The requirement is perfection, and because of what Adam and Eve did, the sin nature dominates. Everybody in life begins at that point with a life of bitterness. The solution is the tree. And what does that do? Purification—to allow us to have the relationship to bear fruit and turn bitterness into sweetness.

One of the first primary fruits is that we get to live a sweet life because of redemption. How have you experienced this transformation from bitterness to sweetness?

In Joshua 5, a new generation finally enters the Promised Land after forty years of wandering. Notice what they do immediately and what stops.

While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho. And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

—Joshua 5:10-15

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This is where Joshua crosses the Jordan to begin possessing the promised land. The promise was given forty years before to Moses and the two million Israelites. But what happened? They were scared because there were giants there, and they decided they were not going to go into the land of promise.

As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

—Hebrews 3:15-19

The word *unbelief* is refusal to be persuaded that what God said is true. It's different than "I believe, help my unbelief"—that's wanting God to finish the belief, being willing to go. This is "I'm not willing to go."

God said, "I'm not going to force you to go because My will is by invitation, and it's based on faith that you trust what I say." They said, "We don't trust it." Joshua and Caleb said, "Yes, we agree, but God said let's go." They believed it, but they couldn't go by themselves. So God said, "Okay, we'll just wander around for forty years." They all died outside of His will.

The next generation was born in the wilderness. "Would you like to go?" "Yes, we're willing to go." "Let's go." And Joshua led them across.

When Joshua crossed the Jordan before going to the first battle of Jericho, he did two things. First, they reinstituted circumcision—which they had stopped doing for forty years because they understood the covenant was no longer being experienced since they refused to meet their side of the deal. Second, they did the Passover—even though it wasn't the prescribed time—because they were going to reinstitute deliverance.

The fruit necessary, the food, the elements—were across the river. God intended them to go now and continue the Passover, which was redemption, deliverance, freedom. And as soon as they ate the Passover and ate the fruit,

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what stopped? The manna. "I had provided you heavenly food because you needed it. But actually, you were never intended to have it. Now let's go. Now you're in the land of fruit again and bearing fruit."

The element of redemption and deliverance is the very nature of God Himself. How does unbelief—refusing to be persuaded—prevent us from entering God's fruitful purposes?

In 2 Kings, Elisha encounters a city that is pleasant but unfruitful. Notice the remedy God provides.

Now the men of the city said to Elisha, "Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful." He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, "Thus says the Lord, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it." So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

—2 Kings 2:19-22

They go to the city, and their observation is: it's a very pleasant place, very valuable, there are some wonderful elements here—but there's a problem. The water's no good. And because the water's no good, there's no fruit. It's barren.

This is a picture of the life of a believer. You can be delivered, you can be redeemed, you are in a pleasant place—and that's okay—but there's no fruit. How come the water is bad? Your source that's coming through you is not of God. That's why there's no fruit.

The remedy: Let God provide new water. You have to get connected to Him, and He will give you renewal in your situation. Why? Because that's His nature. His purpose is for you to bear fruit.

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If you're an unbeliever, you can't bear fruit—the offer to you is redemption. For believers who have the possibility of bearing fruit but aren't, the offer is renewal: get connected to the source. That's His nature, and it comes from Him.

Are there areas in your life that feel “pleasant” but are unfruitful? What would it look like to let God provide “new water” in those areas?

The symbol of salt appears throughout Scripture in connection with offerings and the covenant. Read these passages about salt's significance.

You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt. If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the Lord, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering.

—Leviticus 2:13-15

As you present your offering, you season it with salt—every offering. Our offering now is our will—my surrender of my will. I sacrifice my flesh, put to death my flesh, to receive His life that produces fruit. And He says you have to bring salt with that—your soul, your nature—offering all of it, permeated with the life of God. Salt is part of the covenant.

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"Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. Peace. And now I make a decree that anyone of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom, who freely offers to go to Jerusalem, may go with you. For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand, and also to carry the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem. . . . Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons."

—Ezra 7:12-15, 23 (selected)

And importantly, in verse 22, Artaxerxes decreed that Ezra should receive "salt without prescribing how much"—an unlimited supply.

Remember, the Israelites were destroyed and carried away because of sin. Jeremiah kept telling them to repent; they didn't repent. They got captured by Babylonians, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and everybody was carried back to Babylonia.

Fifty to seventy years later, Artaxerxes agrees to let Ezra and Zerubbabel go back and build the temple. He said, "Anything you need, I'll pay for it. Rebuild the temple to your God." He provided animals for sacrifice, wealth, and everything else—but everything else was limited. Salt, however, was unlimited.

Why did Ezra ask for unlimited salt? Because every offering had to have it. When do they need it? Every time. All the time. They can't run out of salt because that's the essence of the sacrifice.

He's saying to you: How often are you going to have to sacrifice? An unlimited number of times. It's not once and for all. You're going to have to sacrifice your will all the time. And God provides you the ability to make those sacrifices all the time because you season it with salt—which is the essence of His nature—allowing you to sacrifice your flesh and go to the spirit.

The nature of God is redemption, renewal, and the ability to fulfill it through sacrifice—which we do all the time. What does it mean to you that God provides "unlimited salt" for your daily sacrifices?

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GOD’S SPIRIT AND HEART

Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit in terms of God’s very nature. Notice the qualities he lists.

(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

—Ephesians 5:9-10

The fruit of the Spirit is righteousness—and what else? **Goodness** (the word there is spectacularly miraculous, excellent, the very best) and truth (all the things you need to know to follow Him about your situation).

He actually doesn’t say, “I’m going to give you an element of righteousness.” He says, “I am righteousness. I’ll give it to you. I am goodness. I am truth.” The fruit of the Spirit is delivering that because that’s His nature.

So if you’re going to have righteousness, the spectacular, and truth—and you are experiencing the fruit of life—what will you be experiencing? His nature, which is spectacular. Fruit isn’t just a pure object; it’s the nature of God Himself that you get to experience. There’s a quality about that. If He’s producing the fruit, He’s producing the spectacular based on the truth you’re going to know.

How does understanding that fruit is God’s nature—not just something He gives—change how you pursue fruitfulness?

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In Song of Solomon, we see God’s heart toward us—His delight and affection. Listen for the imagery of sweetness.

As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

—Song of Solomon 2:3-4

He’s describing Himself and the object of His affection. His nature is delight in the relationship. He has great pleasure, a sweetness about this relationship. And the banner over you is love.

What does that mean—“His banner over me is love”? That’s your title. That’s who you are. The word means He has extreme affection for you. He loves you to the point that He would like to be with you, spend time with you, and demonstrate His heart toward you—which is great affection.

As a couple, you understand this: Why are you having a sweet life? It involves the affection that you develop as God produces the fruit of that. His banner executes and implements love—you’ll experience it. His standard over you is love.

And when He does that, He brings you to the banqueting house—where the sweetness is. It’s not just “Oh yeah, good.” You’ll experience the benefits at the banqueting house, which is all the sweetness. That’s His nature. He wants us to understand that He loves us because He has great affection for us—to experience all that, knowing that you will bear fruit through that relationship.

What does it mean to you personally that God’s “banner over you is love”? How does His affection enable you to bear fruit?

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In addition to love, holiness is an essential element. Notice what God must do for us to experience fruit.

In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy. There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

—Isaiah 4:2-6

You'll experience the fruit as you become holy—set apart and covered by His holiness, which is pure. That's why holiness can't touch unholiness. That's why the requirement is perfection. We as unbelievers are not holy, and we can't become holy on our own. We have to receive it through His work.

What does He do? **He washes away the filth** and cleanses us to be purged of basically the sin nature. His view of sin is filth—literally the word means excrement. Stinky. Awful. He says, "I'm going to wash that away and replace it with holiness so that you are purged to be able to have this relationship so that you can bear the fruit, experience the fruit."

For us as believers, we now know that our sin nature no longer puts us in a place where we have to become perfect—that's been taken care of. However, in order to live out the life, you have to live an abiding, holy life. It has to be washed away all the time in order for us to be in the place where we bear fruit.

He doesn't exempt you from holiness. And the only way you can become holy is to connect with Him by surrendering your will and putting to death the filth—when? Every day. All the time.

So His affection for you is true. His requirement for you is holiness. But

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He'll give it to you—He loves you so much He'll just give it to you. The only way you can't receive it is if you don't spend time with Him. When you walk away from Him, you go back to filth. The remedy is just come on back and He'll give it to you. His nature is holiness. You have to stay there, and He gives you the opportunity to receive it all the time.

How does daily surrender—putting to death the flesh—enable you to remain in the place where you bear fruit?

Isaiah describes what happens when the Spirit rests upon us. Notice the sevenfold description of the Spirit.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

—Isaiah 11:1-7

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You'll bear fruit, which He'll cause you to experience by you living in the Spirit. His nature: wisdom—how do I walk to receive the power to produce fruit? The life, the strength, the supernatural, the might, the advice He would give, understanding, and the knowledge of what it means to walk with Him.

All of that is spiritual stuff—not your natural skill. It's the Spirit. It's His nature that comes upon you in order for you to bear fruit. You will receive His righteousness. What you won't do is make decisions based on what you observe in your own flesh. The real decisions have to come spiritually, and He'll give it to you so that you can bear fruit.

So it's not about you working. Even ministries sometimes gauge what they think is fruit by numbers. You can get numbers all kinds of ways—but is that fruit? Not if it's not producing transformation. Why? Because that's spiritual. It's not your effort—it's His effort through you in a spiritual way. You receive the Spirit of Who He is, which is to bear fruit.

What decisions in your life have you been making “by what your eyes see” that might need to be made spiritually instead?

God describes the conditions under which we bear fruit and yield increase. Notice the themes of peace and security.

“I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them.”

—Ezekiel 34:25-27

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The place where you will bear fruit and yield fruit—which is His goal—is where you're living in shalom: His extreme favor, His peace, His tranquility that He gives to you. And you'll feel safety.

He doesn't say you're not going to have things around you that come against you—He puts this in the middle of the wild beasts. He just says He's going to place you in a place where you're not afraid. He can give you security.

It actually isn't a badge of honor to say, "I need to feel unsafe so I can demonstrate my faith." The opposite is true: if you're living in faith, you'll have a sense of security and safety, and then you can operate from there. Why? Because that's where fruit is going to yield.

If you're always afraid and stressed, what are you spending your time on? Worrying and fixing that stress. One of the common elements in our time is financial stress—"I'm always in financial stress" and "Shouldn't I just trust God that He'll provide for me tomorrow?" Sometimes the answer will be yes, but fundamentally He says, "Actually, I would like you to feel secure. I want you to have enough income. I want you to have enough safety. I want you to live a life of security—not to build it on your own, but let Me give it to you so that you have the freedom to bear fruit." It's all about the freedom of it.

How does fear or stress affect your ability to bear fruit? What would it look like to receive God's security in a specific area of your life?

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All of this is based on free will. Joshua presents the choice clearly.

"I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant." Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

—Joshua 24:13-15

Remember we talked about Joshua crossing the Jordan and beginning the Passover? This is five years later. Step by step, they possessed the promised land and got there—they're at peace, beautiful. They're experiencing the fruit, receiving the fruit and bearing fruit.

Joshua says, "That's terrific, but you have a further path down the road. What's next? You're going to have to choose to stay following Him, to be in that place of fruit-bearing." And he said, "As for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord"—we're going to stay there and say, "Okay, Father, how do we stay in Your path now to keep bearing fruit?"

If you stop—"Hey, we got there and I'm fruitful, that's enough, I don't need to go any further"—God says as soon as you say that, you start losing the fruit and you're going to have trouble. It's based on free will, which is His nature.

What would it look like for you to declare, like Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"? What choice is before you right now?

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FIRSTFRUITS: THE CIRCLE OF BLESSING

One of the most profound aspects of fruit is the concept of firstfruits—and how Christ being the firstfruits creates a cycle of blessing that flows to and through us.

Paul explains the relationship between Christ as firstfruits and us as the branches grafted in. Pay attention to who supports whom.

So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened . . . So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. . . . If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

—Romans 11:5-7, 11, 16-18 (selected)

This is a profound discussion about Israel and Gentiles. The truth is that the firstfruits—who is Christ—has come, and they haven't received it. Now, if you receive it and begin, the holiness permeates the whole. The leaven that comes of Christ starts to permeate all of it. All you have to do is receive Him and then live with Him and let His holiness permeate your life.

Don't let it be a stumbling block. What's the stumbling block? If He's the firstfruits of His holiness—which is required to bear fruit—the stumbling block is our will. "I don't accept that." It's a truth and a choice. You can't just do all the law and think you're there. It's actually Him. You have to start with Him and end with Him. Let it happen.

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And remember verse 18: "It is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you." Fruit isn't what you produce because you think you're doing the work for the root. The root provides the fruit through His nature, which is the firstfruits. Receive the firstfruits and let it become His fruit. The only way it happens is He has to be first. The first element of fruit is "I'm offering this to you and you receive it." Don't let it be a stumbling block—including as a believer. "Yeah, but I'm saved." Well, you still have to let the root support you.

What does it mean practically that "it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you"? How does this change how you approach fruitfulness?

Paul elaborates on Christ as firstfruits and the order of what will happen.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

—1 Corinthians 15:20-28

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Christ is the firstfruits, and our role is to receive the firstfruits. You have to let Him reign—and that means rule your life to be able to continue to bear fruit.

We are to do that until ultimately He destroys heaven and earth and creates a new one. We get to fully participate with Him in eternity because of allowing Him to reign and making everything subject to Him.

In your life, to receive that firstfruits, you have to let Him reign. Let Him be the King. As He's the King and you subject your life to Him, you will bear fruit and join Him in the life that He has for you—and ultimately for everything, which is where we're going to live in eternity with the beauty of that. He is firstfruits, and we have to receive it.

What does it look like to “let Him reign” as King in a specific area of your life? What might you need to subject to Him?

James makes an interesting statement about what we become as we receive the firstfruits.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

—James 1:16-18

Every good gift is from Who? From the Father. The good gift is the firstfruits—and that's Christ. Receive that good gift and keep receiving that good gift. He is the firstfruits from the Father, intended to be given to you.

And then this verse says: you become **firstfruits of His creatures**. So you see how that works? He is firstfruits. He gives it to you. You let it permeate you—always by letting Him reign as you do—and you become firstfruits to others.

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Now, if you become firstfruits for others—Christ living in you—what are you in fact bringing them to? You're bringing them to Him. It's not independent of that. You are connected to Him, the firstfruits. You become the firstfruits, and you're the physical representative of the invisible God. That fruit is going to be coming through your life, and others are going to be drawn to that because you're an extension of Him. The firstfruits—you become Him, He becomes you. You don't connect them to you; you connect them to Him. But He is firstfruits, and you become firstfruits.

How does understanding that you are to become "firstfruits" change how you see your role in the lives of others?

Paul describes what we have and what we're waiting for.

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

—Romans 8:23-28

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While you're being the firstfruits, you're waiting for the complete freedom and liberation of life. He makes that purposeful: you will experience freedom and liberation, but will it be complete? No—because we still live in a world of sin nature and entropy and control by the enemy to kill, steal, and destroy.

But while you're waiting for that—and by the way, He's implying it's going to happen; someday this earth will be destroyed and you'll join the new heaven and new earth—in the meantime, you're experiencing it because of the hope and certainty that Christ will deliver to you freedom and liberation while you're waiting for the fullness of it. You can trust it.

And the Spirit is doing what while that's happening? He's interceding according to God's will, to have you walk in His will to experience liberation and freedom. And by the way, "all things work together for good." What things? All things. No matter what's happening.

"Here I am in a pickle, in a situation." He says, "How about if you just let Me make it all work for your good—and by the way, spectacular answers where you'll experience fruit and bear fruit? Trust Me, and stay awaiting, connected to the will of God as the firstfruits that you are, to serve."

How does knowing that "all things work together for good" change how you respond to difficult circumstances? What situation do you need to trust Him with right now?

Finally, God describes the beautiful cycle: as you give firstfruits, He returns blessing to you.

Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, "Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due. This shall be yours of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering of theirs and every sin offering of theirs and every guilt offering of theirs, which they render to me, shall be most holy to you and to your sons. In a most holy place shall you eat it. Every male may eat it; it is holy to you. This also is yours: the contribution of their gift, all the wave

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offerings of the people of Israel. I have given them to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. All the best of the oil and all the best of the wine and of the grain, the firstfruits of what they give to the Lord, I give to you. The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours."

—Numbers 18:8-14

Remember, Aaron is a priest. Remember our living out Christ as the firstfruits—and your role is to be the firstfruits to others. As you do, the others are going to give their firstfruits, which God then gives back to you.

How cool is that? He says, "Receive Me as firstfruits. Become full of Me. Remember, you don't support Me—I support you. Stay connected. You'll become the firstfruits. As you give the firstfruits, you will receive more fruit—the blessing of what I have for you."

It's a circle. This whole aspect is why the essence of God's relationship is all about the fruit He's offering you—Him, Who is the firstfruits. You live it out and become firstfruits to others. As you do and give it away, He'll return back to you the blessings in order to have you stay in that sweetness that allows you to keep being firstfruits to somebody else.

Circle, circle, circle—**blessed to be a blessing**. It's a beautiful element describing what the fruit is.

How have you seen this "circle of blessing" at work in your life—receiving, giving, and receiving more?

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CLOSING REFLECTION

As you finish this session, consider how profound this really is—all the depth of it: the purpose of God, the nature of God, the essence of all these elements that will create fruit through us and bear fruit through us while we stay connected to Him.

He is firstfruits, and we become firstfruits because of that relationship.

Before the next session, go back over these verses and really soak in the depth and truth of this. Because if we can really grab hold of it, we'll start to understand how to live this out.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Scriptural Understanding

1. In John 15:16, Jesus says He “appointed” us to bear fruit. What does the word “appointed” suggest about the importance and intentionality of this calling? How does verse 5—“apart from Me you can do nothing”—relate to this appointment?

2. Compare the imagery in Exodus 15 (the tree making bitter water sweet) with Isaiah 4 (washing away filth for holiness). What do these passages together reveal about God’s nature and how He enables us to bear fruit?

3. In Romans 11:18, Paul warns us that “it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.” What does this teach us about the source of spiritual fruit? How does this connect to the concept of Christ as “firstfruits” in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23?

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Deeper Understanding

4. This session presents a "circle of blessing": Christ is firstfruits, we receive Him, we become firstfruits to others, and then receive more blessing. How is this different from simply "doing good works"? What makes this cycle distinctly spiritual rather than merely transactional?

5. Rich explained that the Israelites stopped circumcision and Passover during their 40 years of wandering because they understood the covenant was no longer being experienced. What warning does this provide about the relationship between obedience, faith, and experiencing God's fruitful purposes?

6. Why did Ezra need an "unlimited supply" of salt for the temple sacrifices? What does this reveal about the ongoing nature of our surrender and sacrifice in the Christian life?

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Personal Application

7. Where in your life are you experiencing “pleasant but unfruitful” circumstances—like the city in 2 Kings 2? What would it look like to invite God to “heal the water” in that area?

8. Ezekiel 34 describes bearing fruit in a place of peace and security, not fear and stress. What fears or stresses are currently consuming your energy that could otherwise be directed toward fruitfulness? How might you receive God's shalom in those areas?

9. Joshua challenged the people to “choose this day whom you will serve” even after they had received blessing. What choice is before you right now regarding staying on the path of fruitfulness versus becoming complacent with what you've already received?

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“Jesus said we are the salt of the earth, and you need to be providing that in an unlimited supply.”

TYPES OF FRUIT

We spent a lot of time in Session 1 setting up some very profound truths: God’s purpose is for all of us to bear fruit—and that’s true from the very beginning. He is the nature of fruit Himself. He is the firstfruits. And then we become the firstfruits to expand His offering of fruit to us and others.

Think of yourself on a circle—you’re going to be experiencing it all on that circle. It’s not a sequence or a line. While you’re on that circle, you are living out Him as firstfruits. He’s been giving you the life. You become the firstfruits to others, and you will then receive the blessings. So you just stay on that circle.

Another element we talked about last time: you need an unlimited amount of salt for the sacrifices and covenants being made by God. Jesus said we are the salt of the earth, and you need to be providing that in an unlimited supply. While you’re on that circle, it requires constant surrender—a sacrifice of my will to stay on that circle. You become the sweetness, and you need to keep offering that life back into the process. You are the salt. Secondly, salt preserves—it maintains the quality and taste of things so it will last through adversity. You’re both the sweetness and the preservation, all the time offering yourself as the salt of the earth into the system.

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TRANSFORMATION: HIS NATURE IN US

The first type of fruit is transformation—receiving His nature. As you read Galatians 2:19-21, notice who is living and who is not.

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

—Galatians 2:19-21

Paul says it is no longer I that live—I no longer live on my own in the flesh—but rather Christ is living in me. Think of the vitality of that life now operating in me. That's why we become firstfruits: we actually are living out the nature of Christ Who's living in me, and He now exudes that life of vitality.

He is the sweetness that we then experience, that we are to offer as our salt. And we live out that life of preservation because it's no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me.

Paul says the way for that to happen is you have to put to death the self—which is your sacrifice. When you sacrifice, you're saying, 'I want to stay in the life of the salt. I am the salt. Why would I want to relinquish that and go back to the flesh, where now it's just me living and no longer Christ living within me?'

Remember, it's life. It's not that He's merely present in me—a lot of believers think, 'Well, I have the Holy Spirit, He's present.' The question is: now that He's present, is He living, and is His life being lived through you?

What's the difference between the Holy Spirit being "present" in you versus "living" through you? How do you know which one you're experiencing?

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Paul describes the result of Christ living in us. Notice that he uses the singular word “fruit”—not “fruits.”

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

—Galatians 5:22-23

One of the fruits is the nature of Christ now living in you. Does he say “fruits”? No—it’s singular. What does that mean? You eat the whole thing. You have the whole thing. It’s not that you have some of them. He said no, the nature of Christ will be exhibited in you—the fruit of the Spirit, the life of God living in you.

Love: We looked at love last time—the banner of love. It’s affection. You have great affection that God has you experience, and then you willingly have affection for His people, your spouse, your family, your inner circle.

Joy: Extreme gladness. You’re experiencing the joy of walking with Him because He’s delivering all these fruits. It’s not as the world defines it—‘When everything works, I’m joyful.’ No, you can be joyful all the time in the middle of it because you’re experiencing the fruit of God and you know He’s going to resolve your issues.

Peace: Shalom. Tranquility. The ability to have great favor. You know how to work through conflict. Can you be in the middle of great difficulty and still be peaceful? Yes—because you’re experiencing His nature.

Patience: The word there is perseverance—you’re persevering through things to get God’s will, consistently staying with it to allow Him to deliver His will. Impatience means ‘I’m going to quit and take over.’ That’s not steadfast endurance.

Kindness: We tend to think of kindness as just softness. It’s actually integrity—you treat people with honor and respect regardless of what’s happening. You can still have integrity even if you have to go through the process of dusting off your feet.

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Goodness: You live in the excellent life of God, the spectacular of God. You're experiencing the spectacular, and it's happening to you.

Faithfulness: You're responding to the assignments God has given you. You're in—you're going to follow through, be obedient to the steps He's asking about this particular assignment.

Gentleness: Where you are with your spirit and heart—not hard toward people. You have a gentleness of being willing to talk, willing to listen, not getting into overreaction.

Self-control: This seems like an oxymoron—doesn't self-control mean I'm controlling self? Actually, it's a gift. He gives you the ability to let Him give you the best, not you deciding on your own what you want. It's a spiritual gift where He guides you to live out His life.

The fruit of the Spirit is singular—it's all one fruit. How does this change how you think about growing in these qualities? Which aspect of this 'one fruit' do you most need God to develop in you right now?

Paul describes what this transformation looks like—a metamorphosis from glory to glory.

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

—2 Corinthians 3:16-18

He says as He's doing this, He's going to lift up the veil—start showing you something—and He will transform you. The word there is metamorphosis: a caterpillar to butterfly. You will change. And it will be from glory to glory—step by step.

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The life of God is not just knowing about it. The question is: do you have His nature? When you don't have it and you think you do, what will He do? He'll show you that you don't quite have it yet. Stay with it, because He's going to transform you step by step.

Ten years from now, will you still be being transformed? Yes—because we still have part of our nature that needs deeper transformation. Does He ask you to be completely transformed tomorrow? No. One, you can't be. Two, you couldn't handle it all at once. Just walk with Him, step to step to step.

Who determines those steps? He does. Transformation is unique to you in the steps. Your role is to ask: Where is God working with you to transform you, to give you new insight?

Transformation happens 'from glory to glory'—step by step. Where is God currently working to transform you? What 'next step' is He inviting you to take?

HIS BEST: CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES

Another fruit is 'His best'—where God changes circumstances for the best. As we're transforming you from step to step, glory to glory, there's another element of life He's going to give you as His nature.

Jesus promises two specific fruits for those who remain in Him. Look for them as you read.

So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." [. . .] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

—John 8:28-32, 36

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If you remain in Him, there are two specific fruits. One: you'll know truth. The word there is experience, understand completely, have discernment about truth. What truth? Truth about your stuff. He's going to give you truth about your circumstances so that you understand it, know where He's headed, and He'll give you the answers—His truth for the truth you're experiencing.

Two: when you know the truth, it will set you free. You'll experience the freedom of His answers. His nature is freedom—He wants you to live in freedom. If you're free, then you're not worried, not fearful, not anxious, not stressed out.

He said, 'I want you to live that way all the time.' Recognize that He's leading you to truth, which will be His result for you. That truth will result in freedom. When can you live in freedom? All the time. It's not 'when I get the resolution.' Knowing He's going to resolve it and lead you to the truth—including His promise—should give you the freedom. You don't need to be burdened by the circumstances because His nature is freedom, and He'll give it to you.

Jesus promises that truth leads to freedom. What circumstance in your life do you need His truth about? What would it look like to live in freedom even before the resolution comes?

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David expresses certainty about God making known the paths of life. Notice what accompanies that certainty.

For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence."

—Acts 2:25-28

He says, 'I have certainty that You're going to make known to me'—so that I understand it—the ways, the paths, the journey of life where you have the fullness of all the covenant blessings that God will give you.

He's going to change circumstances to provide the very best to you. And you can trust that. It's not just a spiritual thing of 'Your life's going to be miserable but you should spiritually accept that.' No—He will change circumstances. He will give you His best along the path of life for you.

And you can have certainty that He's going to do it. Because when you do, what does he say you'll wind up with? Joy. You can be joyful during the walk into the resolution because you know He's going to do it. Then He does it—does that bring you joy? Yes. And it's His best. Walk with Him and let Him do it.

David had certainty that God would make known the paths of life. What path are you currently on where you need certainty that God will bring His best?

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Jesus connects abiding to answered prayer—and to glorifying the Father. Watch for the conditions and the result.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

—John 15:7-8

If you let Him provide the life—remember, He’s the firstfruits, so you stay with Him—and His words abide in you, they’ve got to get inside of you. What has to get inside? What He’s saying to you. His words, His scriptures that He’s going to say apply to you.

You have an issue, a circumstance, a decision, something you can’t handle. What does He have to say? He promised: if you abide in Him, He’ll speak it. As He speaks it, you have to receive it and process it. Do you have clarity about the words He’s speaking to you about the situation? As you do, you can come to a point where you can pray it.

He says pray what you will—but it doesn’t give you license to just say, ‘I want you to solve it this way.’ The conditions: if you abide in Him (the relationship, the life) and what He says abides in you. Now you know what to pray because He’s told you. You pray that.

What will be the result? It will be done—circumstances change. He calls it fruit. Fruit is a changed circumstance. Fruit is an answer to a dilemma. Fruit is a result of Him resolving an issue.

If it’s going to glorify Him, it must be supernatural—extraordinary. If you can do it in the natural, you do it. But when you can’t, the supernatural can be wisdom and guidance to take a step, then be in position where He could demonstrate the result. First it has to be supernatural. Then you share with people out of joy—you tell the whole story, illustrating the process: ‘I was abiding, I heard what He said, I had the words abide in me, I prayed, He did it.’ Now you can glorify Him because everyone knows it wasn’t you.

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For prayer to bear fruit, His words must 'abide in you.' What is God currently speaking to you about a situation? How can you let those words get inside you so you know what to pray?

Paul describes the fruit of light. Notice the word 'goodness' and what it implies.

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

—Ephesians 5:8-10

He wants to focus on goodness. The word goodness is: He will give you resolution to your circumstances in a spectacular way, and you'll experience that. You can trust it.

We live in a world of difficulty. We have adversity. We have tough decisions—often called enigmas: 'I don't know where to go with it.' He says, 'I'll resolve it for you—even the most sticky things.' He has a resolution because that's His nature.

You will experience the goodness because of the life He has for you. If that's His nature and that's what He delivers, can He do anything else? He can't deliver mediocrity. Why not? He's not mediocre. His nature is this—you'll experience His nature. He'll deliver it.

God's nature is goodness—spectacular resolution. He cannot deliver mediocrity. How does this truth change how you approach your current 'sticky wicket'?

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Solomon describes wisdom and her paths. Pay attention to the words 'all' and 'pleasant.'

She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.

—Proverbs 3:15-18

Happy are you who receive wisdom—'I am wisdom'—and who gain understanding. What do you need? Wisdom and understanding about your stuff. It's important to you. You're living it out, and you've got stuff that has to be resolved. Everybody has that.

Happy will you be if you come to Him and let Him show you, guide you to the way. All of His paths are pleasantness—the word there is delightful, favorable, fantastic. How many paths are that? All of them. All His paths for you are that.

Does that mean some paths won't be pleasant? That's what people think. But He didn't say 'some' or 'maybe' or 'perhaps' or 'once in a while.' How many paths? All. You can trust Him. All the path you're on, with all the difficulty you've got, is going to be pleasantness and peace—shalom, great favor.

If you're on a path and you've got trouble, what does God say? You can expect pleasantness, delightfulness, favor—fantastic resolution. He will resolve every issue. You can count on it.

Changed circumstances is a big piece of the fruit you'll experience. And when you do, you'll tell other people, and their thought will be: 'Is that possible for me?' Your answer: 'Yes—if you learn to let God be firstfruits, you become firstfruits, you offer the salt, and you continue to live in that circle of blessed to be a blessing. He will resolve your issues.'

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'All her paths are peace.' Not some—all. What path are you on right now that feels anything but pleasant? How does God's promise change your expectation?

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Another beautiful fruit is fellowship—and it begins with fellowship with God.

David describes what happens in God's presence. Notice what brings fullness of joy.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. [. . .] For you make him most blessed forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence. For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.

—Psalm 16:11; 21:6-7

He says it twice: in God's presence you have fullness of joy. You have the joy of walking with Him along the path, and He says, 'I delight in you because that brings Me great joy and pleasure.'

'I love being with you, and I want you to be with Me while you're walking down the path.' Does He say, 'I want you to be in My presence only when you want Me to do something for you'? No—just walk with Me all the time. In the middle of the trouble, you'll have joy because of Who you're with and what you know: He'll resolve it.

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He says, 'I want you and I to have fellowship.' Fellowship looks like fellowship. What does that feel like? Being together, experiencing fun, having joy, laughing, dialoguing, talking, helping each other through stuff.

That's what His relationship with you is supposed to be like. He's not up there requiring you to do all this stuff—'You better do it and I'm very unhappy with you.' He says, 'I delight in you. I just want you to walk with Me.'

Our relationship with God is personal dialogue. Fun. He talks in funny ways, challenges in funny ways, rejoices in funny ways. It's fun to be with Him. It's a lifelong thing—not 'I spent my 20 minutes with Him in the morning, see you later.' You get to be with Him all day long, talk to Him all day long, have that dialogue all day long because you're in His presence.

In His presence there is fullness of joy. Does your time with God feel like fellowship—fun, dialogue, delight? What would need to change for it to look more like that?

Paul describes how near God actually is. Notice where we live and move and have our being.

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'

—Acts 17:24-28

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Where does God live? In the kingdom. In order to be near Him, you have to be with Him in the kingdom—which means surrendering your will and walking with Him, letting Him lead you and guide you, abiding with Him.

He's near you because the kingdom of God is just a step away. It's not about 'You've been living this miserable life' or 'You haven't been faithful.' The kingdom of God is just a step away. Just say, 'Let's go.' He says, 'Welcome back. Let's go.'

'In Him we live and move and have our being.' We're walking with Him. That's the key—to enjoy the fellowship with Him. And that's critical if we're going to experience fruit. If you're going to experience fruit, where do you have to be? With Him, in fellowship.

It's not 'You better perform.' It's 'Why don't you just walk with Me and enjoy Me, and then you'll produce fruit.' Your fellowship is with Him.

'In Him we live and move and have our being.' The kingdom is just a step away. What step do you need to take today to re-enter fellowship with Him?

This is Jesus' prayer at the end of His upper room discourse—just before He went to Gethsemane. Listen for what He prays about oneness and love.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. [. . .] I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they

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also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

—John 17:1-5, 20-26

First, He wants you to know eternal life. How does He define that in verse 3? 'That they know You, the only true God.' The word 'know' means experience—not know about. Christians say, 'I know about God.' He says, 'No, I want you to experience God. Participate with Him. Have the life of Him. Join Him in His work.'

That will lead you to complete the work He has for you. Jesus said, 'I've completed the work He has for me.' That's part of the life of God—following His assignments as we have fellowship with Him.

He prays that we become one—as Christ and the Father are one. They're in perfect fellowship. Do they have any difficulty communicating? No. Christ says, 'I would like them to experience the love that You have for Me and I have for You—what great affection in being in fellowship. I want them to have that feeling.'

Do you feel loved by God? How do you experience love? By being in fellowship with Him, you will experience that love. Here's a question: while you're abiding, are you having joy? If you're having joy, then you're experiencing the love of God. If you're not having joy, something's off—you're probably drifting back into intellect and releasing the opportunity to have fellowship with Him.

Think of all the things He prayed about. What did He really say? The most important thing is that they just join us in our life together through fellowship. You will have fellowship with Him as one of the fruit of walking with Him. And you'll have the joy and the glory that creates.

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Jesus prayed that you would experience the same love the Father has for Him. Do you feel loved by God? If not, what might be blocking that fellowship?

FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHERS

As you have fellowship with God, you will start to have fellowship with others. This is the next fruit.

This is the outcropping of Peter's sermon at Pentecost. Notice what the early believers devoted themselves to and what happened as a result.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

—Acts 2:42-47

After Peter's sermon at Pentecost, 3,000 people came to know Him that day. Did they say, 'Hallelujah, you've got a ticket to heaven, see you later'? No—they started gathering in fellowship, in house churches. They shared fellowship with God and with each other.

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What happened? They kept getting more and more people attracted to it. Why? Because they saw this spectacular life they were living. They were in awe of the miraculous happening all the time. They were sharing that, breaking bread together, processing the truth, helping each other with His will, helping each other physically when needed. Daily, people were being added to the fellowship.

Why? Because outsiders asked, 'Is that possible for me?' The people who joined that day didn't know all the stuff the disciples had experienced for three years. They knew nothing about it. They weren't coming because of theology. They were coming because they said, 'What a life that is! Can I have that too? You're joyful. You're having fun together. You're experiencing life together.'

Were they in the middle of an awful place? Yes—the Jews were against them, the Romans were oppressive, it was difficult. Did it matter? No, because they had fellowship with each other.

We operate together. Do we have spectacular? Yes. Do we have joy? Yes. Do we have fun? Yes. The life of God plays out in our relationships—joyful, because there's no ego, no 'You should be better,' no 'I'm better than you.' We just get to rejoice at the life of God. That can't happen unless we have the life of God. It would become mechanical otherwise. But ours lasts because He said, 'Develop that inner circle.'

The early church was devoted to fellowship—and daily people were added because of the life they saw. Does your community look like that? What would need to change?

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The writer of Hebrews connects our privilege of access to God with our gathering together. Notice the purpose of gathering.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

—Hebrews 10:19-25

Because of the privilege you have to be with God—and everybody has the same privilege—you can march in with boldness and great confidence: ‘I need answers. I need to talk to You. I’ve got to share my heart. I need overcoming. I’ve got adversity. I’ve got a decision.’

He says, ‘Together, don’t forsake gathering together.’ Encourage each other to walk with God and stay in that place of fruit. Because you’re experiencing freedom, you’re experiencing joy. Yeah, you’ve got a problem—but we know Who’s going to solve it. We’re going to walk with you to resolve it. What we bring is encouragement.

Why do you need encouragement? Because you’ve got a difficult thing, and it’s hard by yourself to walk that through. But in fellowship with your inner circle, it’s ‘Let’s go.’ That’s why he attaches this to the privilege of being in the throne room. My encouragement to you isn’t ‘Here’s your answer.’ My encouragement is ‘I know Who to go to. Let’s go there and see what step He wants you to take. We’ll walk with you, and you can rejoice.’

Then it happens. And together, we get to experience the result. That’s fruit—and it comes from fellowship.

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We are not to neglect gathering together, but to encourage one another. Who in your inner circle can you walk with through a current difficulty? Who might need you to walk with them?

Paul makes a brief but powerful statement about mutual encouragement. Pay attention to who gets encouraged.

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

—Romans 1:11-12

Most people skip this little statement. What did Paul just say? 'I want to be with you and impart a spiritual gift to help establish you and your faith.' And what does it do? It encourages both of us.

It's not a duty—I've got to go do that, I've got to make sure.' What do you have to do? Just be together. If you're together, what's going to happen? It's going to encourage you—and guess what? It encourages me too. We all get it.

You might think the other party needs to be encouraged. But how does that encourage me? Because I see the results of their lives when they're encouraged. And anytime the Lord uses us to encourage somebody else, that recognition that 'I was just used by the Creator of the universe to bless somebody else'—it's a spectacular feeling.

You feel His love. You feel His affection when you're working in fellowship with another and you're mutually going to encourage each other. If I encourage you and that thrills me, and I need encouragement, what are you going to do? You're going to encourage me right back.

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This is a beautiful picture of Abide Ministries: we experience this, we give it away to others, they experience it, we get more joy from it. It's just a snowball. Would you ever think, 'I don't want to do this anymore'? You wouldn't—because it's not a system. It's having a heart to learn to live in joy. As you do, people who get exposed start to say, 'Can I be part of that?' Sure, let's go.

Encouragement is mutual—when you encourage others, you get encouraged too. Think of a time this happened for you. Who could you encourage this week?

BEARING BURDENS

There's something important to understand about fellowship. Bearing burdens is different from owning burdens.

Paul gives instructions about restoring others and bearing burdens. Pay close attention to what 'bear' actually means.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

—Galatians 6:1-2

As you're in fellowship, particularly your inner circle, your role is to be a truth-teller. If you're giving someone a message that you see them drifting, or they're saying they're going one way but God isn't seeing it that way, you're spending time on the past but God says 'Let's get going'—you are to be a truth-teller.

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Not a 'You better, you better, you better.' Rather: 'Let me help you see the beautiful thing that God wants to do here and show you the truth of that.' Don't be afraid of that.

It's not happy-go-lucky, whatever. If we're in fellowship together, our role is not to say 'Whatever you want to do is fine.' It's to confirm you're on God's path—or maybe not. I'm supposed to join God in presenting the truth to you. Not harshly, but out of love. And you would say, 'Okay, great, I'll receive that.'

Number two: bear each other's burdens. We have to understand what that means—it doesn't mean you own each other's burdens. Big difference.

If I'm going to bear your burden, here's what I'm going to do. The word 'bear' means: carry you to the One Who can release your burden. I'm going to walk with you and carry your load with you. But I'm not going to own the load, and I'm not going to let you keep the load—because we're going to Him. To 'bear' a burden means to carry someone to the One Who can release it—not to own it yourself. Is there a burden you've been owning that you need to release? Is there someone you need to carry to Christ?

Jesus gives the invitation to those who are burdened. Notice what He promises to give.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

—Matthew 11:28

All who are heavy laden and burdened—come to Him. And He will give you rest. You will be yoked with Him and walk with Him. He will resolve your issue because He'll give you the freedom of the resolution in your soul. His burden is light and He can handle it.

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If we're going to bear somebody's burdens, what do we do? We come alongside them and take them to Him—where they're going to release it right now. As soon as they release it, they get a little bit of 'Oh, okay, good.' Is it resolved yet? No. 'Come and learn of Me. Yoke up. Are you walking with Him?' We walk alongside of them.

When we walk alongside someone with Christ, where is the burden? He's carrying it. We don't have it. You can't own the burden, and you can't own the outcome.

What if somebody decides 'I'm not going'? Nothing you can do. You offered to carry the burden, to bear it and take them to Christ, and they won't do it. Is that your responsibility? No. If they choose not to—regardless of whether it's an adult child or someone around us—we can't force them. Why? Neither does Christ. He says, 'You've got to come if you want to. If you don't, you're not going to get it released. You're going to live in pain if you don't take this to Me.'

The only thing we can do is say, 'Come on, we know Who can do it. Come on, stay with it. I'll stay with you.' If they choose not to and walk away, I stop walking with them because it doesn't do any good. People think we should feel sorry for them and coddle their refusal. Actually, no—that harms them more because they keep wallowing in it and you keep helping them share it.

I will keep continuing to say, 'I know you still haven't got it resolved. God can do it, come on.' The invitation will always be there. I won't eliminate the relationship, particularly with family. But I'm not taking on the burden. I'm not going to own the burden. He says, 'I want you to encourage each other as fruit, but be careful not to own the burden when it's not necessary. The only role you have is to take them there.'

We carry people to Christ, but we don't own their burden or their outcome. Is there someone whose burden you've been carrying instead of taking them to Jesus? What would it look like to release that?

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CLOSING REFLECTION

As you think about what we just learned about fruit, it's a variety of different things. He says these represent the depth of fruit: 'I'm going to transform your nature. I'm going to resolve your issues. I'm going to have fellowship with you. You will then have fellowship with others, and your life will turn into a life of encouragement and joy.'

In essence, the highest level of fruit is joy and excitement and encouragement. How? By you receiving the fruit and giving it away.

Between now and Session 3, go back over these things and look at where God is communicating with you that He'll resolve your issues. What are they? Let Him give you the fruit of that. It's important to bring an inner circle around you who can encourage you to come to Him. Gather other people—your spouse, close friends—who could learn together how to abide. When you're in fellowship, think about how much easier life is. We have that circle, that connection, and it really makes the difference.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Scriptural Understanding

1. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul uses the singular word 'fruit'—not 'fruits.' What does this teach us about how the nature of Christ is expressed in a believer's life? How does this differ from viewing these as separate qualities to develop?

2. Jesus prays in John 17 that we would be 'one' just as He and the Father are one, and that we would experience the same love. What does this prayer reveal about the kind of fellowship God desires with us? How does fellowship produce fruit?

3. In Galatians 6:1-2, Paul says to 'bear one another's burdens.' Based on the teaching, what does the word 'bear' actually mean? How is bearing a burden different from owning it?

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Deeper Understanding

4. Rich explained that transformation happens ‘from glory to glory’—step by step—and that God determines the steps. Why is it important to understand that transformation is progressive and personalized? How does this protect us from comparing ourselves to others?

5. The teaching emphasized that ‘all’ of God’s paths are pleasantness—not some, but all. How can this be true when we experience real difficulty and pain? What is the difference between a pleasant path and an easy path?

6. The early church in Acts 2 attracted people daily—not because of theology, but because outsiders saw their life together and asked, ‘Is that possible for me?’ What made their fellowship so attractive? What would it take for our communities to have that same effect?

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Personal Application

7. The fruit of the Spirit is singular—you get all of it as Christ lives in you. Which aspect of this 'one fruit' feels weakest in your life right now? How might you be trying to develop it in your own strength instead of letting Christ live it through you?

8. Jesus promises that truth leads to freedom. What circumstance are you facing where you need His truth? Are you living in freedom even before the resolution, or are you carrying the burden of worry and anxiety?

9. To 'bear' someone's burden means to carry them to Christ—not to own their burden or outcome. Is there a relationship where you've been owning a burden that isn't yours? What would it look like to release that while still loving the person?



LESSON 3:

HIS WORK, WISDOM, AND THE SUPERNATURAL



“God is doing a workmanship in us—developing the fruit of the Spirit, teaching us to trust Him in difficult circumstances, deepening our fellowship with Him and with others.”

In the first two sessions, we explored God’s purpose—inherent in His nature and love—to have us bear fruit and become fruitful. We learned that fruit is transformation: experiencing the fruit of the Spirit, finding freedom, seeing God change circumstances and resolve our issues, enjoying fellowship with Him, and then expressing His love to others.

In this session, we discover further dimensions of His fruit: His work and assignments for us, the wisdom we need to walk them out, the supernatural that accompanies the fruitful life, and our calling to multiply what we’ve received in others.

GOD’S WORK AND ASSIGNMENTS

As we consider the fruit of walking with God, what is His purpose for the “work” He is doing in us?

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

— Ephesians 2:10 ESV

Notice the profound truth here: we are a work in progress. God is doing a workmanship in us—developing the fruit of the Spirit, teaching us to trust Him in difficult circumstances, deepening our fellowship with Him and with others. He doesn’t demand perfection overnight; He says, *“Walk with Me, and I’ll do this work in you.”*

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As He does this workmanship in us, He creates good works for us to join. The word “good” here means spectacular—it’s His spectacular work that we get to participate in. This isn’t limited to what the church often calls “ministry.” It’s whatever assignment God gives you *now*, in this season of your life.

Your calling is to walk with God and bear fruit. Your assignments are the delivery mechanism for that calling—and they will vary according to the season of life you’re in.

Consider: if you’re a young couple with children, God’s assignments likely include developing unity in your marriage and shepherding those kids—helping them learn to walk with God. That’s His good work for you right now. As empty nesters, the assignment changes. Grandchildren become a new assignment, with its own seasons. When Rich and Linda’s grandchildren were young, weekends meant time with them—not work, not the computer. As they grew into high school sports, it meant showing up at games and relating to them before and afterward. Life happens on assignment.

What does the verse say our role is?

We are to *walk* in them. It’s a path, not a destination—not a one-time task to complete and return from. Walking implies ongoing movement with Him as He demonstrates His good work. The fruit becomes your enjoyment of the good work He’s given you.

What happens when we tend to the work God has assigned us?

Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored.

— Proverbs 27:18 ESV

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This is a beautiful picture of stewardship. Whose fig tree is it? The Master's. God points out His fig tree and says, *"Take care of it. Tend it."* The word for "master" here is *Lord and King*. As we tend to what He tells us to tend, guard it, follow His instruction—we will be honored by bearing fruit. We join Him in honor.

For those engaged in business, this means being a steward of your role, taking care of it as His assignment. If that's true, what should you be doing continually? Asking: *"What do You want me to do now? How do You want me to handle this situation? What about this conflict, this difficult person, this complicated issue?"* He'll tell you. Pay attention to the stuff He gives you, and you'll be honored—because you'll be experiencing fruit.

What "fig tree" has God assigned you to tend in this season?

What confidence can we have about the work God begins in us?

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

— **Philippians 1:2–6 ESV**

He begins the good work—His spectacular work—by giving us an assignment with clarity about its direction. Does He tell us everything? No. When God said, *"Rich and Linda, your assignment is to work with your grandkids,"* it didn't come with a complete manual. It simply said, *"I'm beginning a good work. I'll fill in the blanks. I'll tell you what to do, how to do it, and when—it's dynamic, a path."*

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He who begins the work will finish it. This also means there may come a moment when a particular assignment is complete, and He gives you something new or the assignment evolves. Both grandsons are now in college, headed toward marriage and careers. The amount of time with them changes. The earlier season is complete; now the nuance shifts. What He begins, He completes—and we experience the goodness of it.

What does it mean to “work out your own salvation,” and who actually does the work?

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

— **Philippians 2:12–13 ESV**

This verse often confuses people. “Work out your own salvation”—does that mean we have to earn it?

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The confusion comes from misdefinition. If we define salvation merely as a “ticket to heaven,” then there’s nothing to work out. But that’s not the full meaning. Salvation is *wholeness*. Salvation is *deliverance*. Salvation is living the full life God has set for us—experiencing fruit and becoming fruitful. Eternal life starts now; spending eternity with Him is part of it, but not all of it.

“Working it out on your own” doesn’t mean you do it by yourself. Keep reading: *“For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”* It’s not your responsibility alone; it’s uniquely yours to walk out *with* God. He gives you the ability to know His will, the desire to pursue it, and the power to follow it.

The simplicity: First, deny self and say, *“I want Your will.”* Then He tells you His will—you hear Him speak it. You process it to understand. You obey by taking the step He’s asked. You experience the covenant blessing, the fruit He gives. That’s working out your salvation—it’s yours, unique to you.

How does understanding that “God works in you” change your approach to following Him?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: GOD'S WORK AND ASSIGNMENTS

Scriptural Understanding

1. According to Ephesians 2:10, what is the relationship between God's workmanship in us and the good works we do?

2. Proverbs 27:18 uses the image of tending a fig tree. Whose fig tree is it, and what promise comes with faithful stewardship?

3. Philippians 2:12–13 says to "work out your own salvation." What role does God play according to verse 13, and how does this change the meaning?

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Deeper Understanding

4. What is the difference between your “calling” and your “assignment,” and why does this distinction matter for avoiding burnout or confusion?

5. Rich describes God’s “good work” as “spectacular.” How does this differ from the typical church view of “good works” as ministry tasks?

6. Why does God give assignments in seasons rather than a single lifelong directive? What freedom does this offer?

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Personal Application

7. What assignment has God given you in this current season of life? How clear is it to you?

8. Where have you been trying to “work out your salvation” through your own effort rather than letting God work in you?

9. What would change if you viewed your daily work—job, family, relationships—as tending God’s fig tree rather than your own?

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WISDOM AS FRUIT

As we're working out our salvation and following God's assignments, what do we need? Wisdom. Consider why: Whose path are you on? It's *His* path for *you*. As He moves and leads, you need the practical understanding to take the right steps, be in the right place at the right time, with the right people for Him to do His supernatural work.

Can you figure this out on your own? No. You need His wisdom because He knows it and knows how to guide you. And here's the beautiful connection: wisdom itself is fruit. The work you do produces fruit; the work itself is fruit; and what you need for the work—wisdom—is also fruit.

Where does wisdom ultimately come from, and what can it reveal?

Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

— Daniel 2:20–23 ESV

The scenario: King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and demanded his wise men not only interpret it but tell him what he dreamed—without him revealing it. "If you're that wise, you'll know," he said. And he began executing wise men when they couldn't.

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Daniel, learning of this, didn't pray for God to change the king's mind. He knew something: God can actually give me the answer to this impossible demand. He asked for time, went to God, and prayed: *"We need wisdom and understanding—all the way from the absurdity of this situation to the answer itself."*

And God gave it. He gave Daniel both the dream and its interpretation. Daniel acknowledged that God reveals *"deep and hidden things"*—secrets that couldn't be guessed in ten years of trying. This is wisdom as fruit: God's secret given to you for your situation. When Daniel received that wisdom, it was fruit all by itself—the fruit of his relationship with God. And then it became the answer he gave the king.

What kinds of problems can God's wisdom solve?

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

— Proverbs 1:1–7 ESV

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Notice the language: wisdom, instruction, understanding, insight, prudence, discretion. And then this striking phrase: to understand “the words of the wise and their riddles.”

A riddle: someone gives you clues, but the answer isn’t obvious. Your first guess is wrong, your second, your third. You keep trying until finally you give up. Then the person reveals the answer, and you say, *“Oh! How clever!”* God says, *“How about if I give you that answer?”*

An enigma: something seemingly unsolvable. No matter which direction you try, nothing works—every path creates more problems. You’ve worked it through and concluded, *“There’s no way out.”* And God says, *“I have the answer to that enigma. I’ll give you the wisdom, the secret. I know what to do.”*

That’s why you can say with confidence: *“I guarantee God will answer this.”* Not because you know the answer, but because you know Who does. Your role is simply to take someone to Him to receive wisdom—and that itself is fruit. When you receive the answer to an enigma, how do you feel? Excited. Relieved. *“Man, there’s a way through this!”* That joy is fruit all by itself.

Many people fall into resignation: *“Whatever happens, happens—I guess that’s God’s will.”* But God says, *“Actually, I have an answer. If you’re willing to receive it, I’ll give it. But if you don’t ask and don’t expect, I won’t tell you—I’ll let you wander in the pain of the enigma.”*

What “riddles” or “enigmas” are you facing where you need to ask God for His wisdom?

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How can we distinguish between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom?

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

— James 3:13–17 ESV

Two kinds of wisdom are contrasted here. Earthly wisdom—which can even come from well-meaning friends giving their best human thinking—produces confusion, oppression, and complications. It’s “demonic” because it plays into the enemy’s plan to kill, steal, and destroy. When you follow worldly advice for your situation, you often dig yourself deeper, feel more burdened, less clear.

But wisdom from heaven? It’s pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits. When God’s wisdom comes, things click together. The gears mesh. Understanding falls into place.

When Rich and Linda were building their home, they prayed for God’s wisdom on each contractor. Some came highly recommended, but the “gears were hitting each other”—nothing coming together. At one point, Rich was ready to hire a stucco contractor just because the man was available. Linda said, “No. We don’t have God’s wisdom yet. Don’t do it.” So they kept looking. Eventually someone appeared—and everything clicked into place. That’s what it looks like: Is it coming together, or is it creating more confusion?

Where have you experienced the difference between “gears hitting each other” and “gears clicking together” in a decision?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WISDOM AS FRUIT

Scriptural Understanding

1. In Daniel 2:20–23, what did Daniel say God reveals? What does this tell us about the nature of divine wisdom?

2. Proverbs 1:6 speaks of understanding “riddles” and enigmas. According to this passage, who has the answer to these unsolvable problems?

3. James 3:15–17 contrasts two kinds of wisdom. What are the marks of earthly wisdom versus heavenly wisdom?

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Deeper Understanding

4. Why is wisdom considered “fruit” rather than merely a tool? How does receiving wisdom connect to your relationship with God?

5. Rich says many people fall into “resignation”—assuming whatever happens is God’s will. How does this differ from actively seeking God’s wisdom?

6. What does it mean practically when decisions “click together” versus “gears hitting each other”? Why is this an important signal?

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Personal Application

7. Where have you been accepting “worldly wisdom”—good human advice—without seeking God’s specific wisdom for your situation?

8. What enigma in your life have you resigned yourself to rather than asking God for a breakthrough answer?

9. How might your decision-making change if you paid attention to whether God’s peace and clarity accompanied each option?

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EXPERIENCING THE SUPERNATURAL

As we receive wisdom and walk out God's assignments, something remarkable happens: we experience the supernatural. This isn't reserved for the "super spiritual" with special gifts. If you're walking with God, you're going to experience supernatural things. And He wants to engage you in them.

What does Jesus promise about the works His followers will do?

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

— John 14:10–14 ESV

Notice: God does the supernatural, and you will do the works. "Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do." You join the works. The power comes from His authority, but you're doing it. And Jesus says, "Greater works than these."

Greater doesn't mean more impressive miracles; it means *more* of them. Because now Jesus is in you and in the next person *and* the next. What the disciples experienced physically walking with Jesus, every believer now experiences through the Holy Spirit. The supernatural will happen through you because you're there.

The supernatural isn't just dramatic healings (though it can include that). It's God doing something unique that prompts you to say, "*Look at what He did! Look at how He did it!*" Joel shared a story where he saw a business situation going wrong. His tendency was to fix it himself, but God said, "*Hold on—watch what I'm about to do.*" God gave him a verse, asked him to believe it, and within

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two hours the answer came—a complete surprise. Was it healing cancer? No. Was it supernatural? Absolutely. It happened, he knew it, and he could even share with others in business that it was supernatural.

Linda had a different experience. She and Rich were praying about becoming like a little child—having that giddiness where everything is just fun. Rich received it during their walk; Linda didn't. She went to bed still waiting. The next morning, she ran an errand to the cleaners. When she walked out, a button appeared that wasn't there when she walked in—it said, *"I'm a Child."* That's how God speaks to Linda—giving her physical confirmations. Supernatural.

Pay attention. Rehearse with each other: *"Hey, look at what cool thing happened this week!"*

How does Jesus involve His disciples in supernatural work?

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves

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and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

— Mark 6:30–44 ESV

When the disciples asked Jesus to send the crowds away to buy food, what was likely their real concern? They wanted to eat themselves! “Enough is enough—we’re hungry too.”

Jesus’ response: “*You* give them something to eat.” They thought He was asking them to spend a year’s wages. But He was implying something different: “We’re going to do something special. What have you got?” Five loaves, two fish. “Bring them here.”

He didn’t explain everything—He just guided them into the supernatural. After blessing the food, He said, “Now you take them. Organize the people into groups and distribute.”

They had to intuitively know this wasn’t going to go far. But He said, “*Watch what’s going to happen.*” And they went. Willingly. As they distributed, the bread multiplied in the baskets—they saw it happening. *They* got to experience it. Everyone was fed, satisfied, with twelve baskets left over.

Jesus didn’t say, “I will perform this miracle.” He said, “*You* give them something to eat.” The power came from Him, but He engaged them in faith and trust to actively participate. The fruit for the disciples: “Oh, look at this! We get to join Him in this work!” Their faith grew. Their enthusiasm for the supernatural increased.

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What happens when we step out in faith to join Jesus in the supernatural?

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

— Matthew 14:22–33 ESV

The disciples were in a storm—a Galilean storm that could swamp a boat. They were terrified, and Jesus wasn't there. Then He comes, walking on water. They think it's a ghost: *"This is it, boys. We're done."*

In the Greek, Jesus doesn't just say "It is I"—He says, *"I AM."* The very name of God: "I'm here. I am everything you need. Don't be afraid."

Peter's response: "If it's really You—since we see You doing the supernatural—bid me to come do it too!" He was testing, not fully expecting to actually walk on water. But Jesus said, *"Come."* And Peter, to his credit, got out of the boat. *That took faith.* Jesus gave the word; Peter obeyed.

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Peter walked on water—until he shifted focus from Christ to the circumstances. He saw the wind, became afraid, began to sink. “Lord, save me!” Jesus grabbed his hand. And here’s the beautiful part: Peter walked back to the boat—still on the water, now with Jesus. He experienced it again, this time without thinking about whether he could do it, because he was with Christ.

Peter’s strength of faith increased because of the supernatural he participated in. And this is what we’re invited to: *“Father, I want to experience the supernatural, and I want You to involve me in it.”* Not fear it. Not dismiss it. Ask for it.

INVITATION TO JOIN

Rich shared a story from a retreat held at their home years before COVID. A similar highly contagious disease called SARS was spreading. Everyone asked beforehand: *“How will you make sure no one comes with SARS?”* They agreed to simply ask people not to come if they had it.

Friday night, they gathered at the dining room table. A woman who had traveled a long distance didn’t think she had it when she left—but now it was obvious. Sweating, coughing, clearly infected. Everyone was upset: *“We’re all going to get this.”*

Rich asked God what to do. The answer: *“Get up, lay hands on her, and heal her.”* Rich had already learned that healing was possible and had experienced it. So he stood up and said, *“Everyone, I know you don’t understand what’s going to happen. But God says you’re not going to catch this, and we’re supposed to lay hands and heal her. Come join me.”*

Rich and Linda laid hands on the woman. The others, more hesitant, laid hands on Rich’s shoulders. They prayed in the name of Christ. Then Rich said, *“Now go to bed. We’ll see what happens tomorrow.”*

The next morning, she walked out of the bedroom not only healed but glowing—beaming with a literal lightness. Everyone was overwhelmed: *“Oh my gosh, look at what just happened!”* God wanted to do the supernatural, but He wanted to involve them. And for Rich, it increased his understanding that he gets to participate more and more.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: EXPERIENCING THE SUPERNATURAL

Scriptural Understanding

1. In John 14:12, Jesus says His followers will do “greater works.” What does “greater” mean in this context, and why?

2. In Mark 6:37, Jesus tells the disciples, “You give them something to eat.” Why does He involve them rather than doing it Himself?

3. What caused Peter to sink in Matthew 14:30, and what does this teach about maintaining faith in the supernatural?

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Deeper Understanding

4. Rich says the supernatural isn't just dramatic healings—it's "God doing something unique that prompts you to say, 'Look at what He did!'" How does this broader view change your expectations?

5. Why do you think Jesus often involves people in supernatural work rather than simply doing it alone?

6. Peter walked on water, sank, then walked back with Jesus. What does the "walk back" teach us about growing in faith?

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Personal Application

7. Have you been saying, "I'm not spiritual enough for supernatural things to happen through me"? How does this session challenge that?

8. What supernatural things have happened to you recently that you haven't "rehearsed" or shared with others?

9. If you were to pray, "Father, involve me in the supernatural," what fears or hesitations would you need to surrender?

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PARTICIPATION AND MULTIPLICATION

Is experiencing the supernatural dependent on spiritual maturity? The following passages show that Jesus sends both seasoned disciples and complete rookies to do supernatural works.

Who did Jesus first send out to experience the supernatural?

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

— Luke 9:1–6 ESV

Jesus sent the twelve disciples out two by two, giving them authority to experience the supernatural. Notice the conditions: they were to offer this ministry, and people could receive or reject it. If rejected—"don't worry about it, don't force it, just move on." But where received, they preached the Kingdom and healed everywhere.

They came back saying, "That was fantastic!" And people around them heard and asked, "Can You send us too?"

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What happened when Jesus sent out people who had even less experience?

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”

— Luke 10:1–12 ESV

Here’s where it gets remarkable. These seventy-two weren’t the twelve who had walked with Jesus. They were newer, less experienced—rookies. We might have expected Jesus to say, *“Not yet. You haven’t followed Me deeply enough.”* Instead: *“Do you have a heart to go?”* Yes. *“Then let’s go.”*

Where people received them, supernatural things happened—healing, the Kingdom of God coming near. Where rejected, nothing happened. The supernatural depended not on their spiritual maturity but on their willingness to go and the receptivity of those they encountered.

Be careful not to disqualify yourself: *“I’m not there yet. I’m not far enough along.”* God says, *“No—let’s go. Just have a heart to go. I’ll show you. I’ll be doing supernatural things right now if you have a heart to go.”*

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What is the commission Jesus gives to all who experience this life?

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

— Matthew 28:19–20 ESV

With the authority of the supernatural, Jesus commissions us to make disciples—not by teaching a three-step Bible study, but by teaching them to live out this life. A life of fruitfulness, supernatural work, joy, freedom—everything we’ve been learning.

If I’m living it out—abiding, experiencing the life of God, surrendered to His will—then discipling someone else simply means: *“Come on, let me take you to Him.”* I show them how to get connected, to abide, to hear, to follow, to experience the supernatural. I walk with them into it. And when they learn it, what will they do? The same for someone else. Because people are lining up who want to know this.

Usually it starts with someone saying, *“I’m in a pickle. I heard you can help.”* And the response is: *“Yes, but not because I have the answer. I guarantee you the One Who will resolve it. Let’s go find out together.”* When they experience that, they learn it—and give it away. Multiplication.

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What is the purpose of building up the body?

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

— Ephesians 4:11–16 ESV

The purpose of equipping and building up is to connect people to the Head—Christ—and encourage them to learn what it means to live the life of God by learning to abide.

The key phrase: *speaking the truth in love*. What is the truth? Simple questions: Are you following God or not? Are you abiding in Him or not? Are you having joy in abiding? Are supernatural things happening? If the answer is no, the response is: *“Do you want to go there? Would you be willing to learn what you’re not participating in, not understanding? Let me help you get to that place where you truly abide—because that’s where it all happens.”*

Build each other up with encouragement. What do we encourage? Staying with God, experiencing His beautiful life.

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What was Paul's driving passion in ministry?

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

— Colossians 1:24–29 ESV

Because Paul was experiencing this life, his heart was to strive for others to experience it too. He wanted to reveal the key, the mystery: *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. When Christ is in you, you live the life of God—supernatural, overcoming adversity, experiencing love and joy.

His goal: to present everyone *mature*—completed by learning what this life looks like. Offer the truth. If they accept, stay and walk with them. If not, don't worry. But work toward multiplication. As others learn and walk the same path, what will they do? They'll multiply too. It's not "you better go do it"—it's the privilege of sharing truth with someone who doesn't know it.

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What qualification matters most for multiplication?

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

— 2 Timothy 2:1–2 ESV

Entrust what you've learned to faithful people—those who will be able to teach others. What's the definition of faithful?

People with a heart to go—and who actually go. Sometimes someone asks for help: "Here's your assignment—get in the Word, write what it says, come back." But they say, *"I just want you to solve my problem."* Without the answer to your problem, I can only point you to the process. If they don't do the work, they prove unfaithful—and multiplication won't happen through them.

Faithfulness is this: they actually learned to abide, and they stay with it. That's why leaders are chosen based on demonstration. "Are you enjoying abiding?" "Yes." "Tell me how it works." When they can show it—share their stories, describe the supernatural—you know they're faithful. Now help them multiply.

It doesn't help to take someone who says, "I know all about abiding, so I want to teach it" but isn't abiding right now. A simple question reveals it: "What's God saying to you?" If they can't answer, they're not faithful—and teaching from that place is worthless. The church has too many who say "you should" without doing it themselves.

The definition of this ministry: to join, you must be doing it, then have the thrill of giving it away. If you're not, it's worthless. And if you take on too much burden—"I've got to do, I've got to do"—you've lost it. It's self-defining.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: PARTICIPATION AND MULTIPLICATION

Scriptural Understanding

1. Compare Luke 9:1–6 and Luke 10:1–12. What similarities do you see?

What does the inclusion of the seventy-two tell us about who qualifies for supernatural ministry?

2. According to Matthew 28:19–20, what does “making disciples” actually involve? What are we teaching them to do?

3. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul says to entrust the message to “faithful” people. Based on the context of this session, how would you define faithfulness?

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Deeper Understanding

4. Why do you think Jesus sent both experienced disciples and rookies to do the same supernatural works? What does this say about our excuses?

5. Rich says discipleship isn't teaching a "three-step Bible study" but showing someone how to live the life. What's the difference?

6. How does "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) differ from just giving advice or encouragement?

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Personal Application

7. Who in your life might be “lining up” wanting to know what you’re experiencing with God? What would it look like to walk with them into it?

8. Have you been waiting until you’re “ready” or “mature enough” before sharing what God is doing in your life? What would change if you started now?

9. What is one area where you need to be more faithful—actually doing what you know—before you can multiply it to others?

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MOVING FORWARD

In this session we've explored additional dimensions of fruit:

God's work and assignments—His spectacular work that He invites us to join, varying by season

Wisdom as fruit—His secrets given for our situations, solving riddles and enigmas

The supernatural—Not reserved for the “super spiritual” but available to all who walk with Him

Multiplication—Taking what we've received and walking others into the same experience

We would encourage you to particularly consider the supernatural. Are you willing to receive it? Are you willing to ask God to involve you?

Before you can multiply, you must be receiving it yourself. In the sessions to come, we'll continue toward a full understanding of bearing fruit, more fruit, much fruit.



LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT



“As we seek God’s will, we must understand that we cannot try to figure this out on our own through our own logic...”

SECTION 1: FRUIT IS ROOTED IN THE COVENANT

In previous sessions we learned that God’s purpose—inherent in Who He is—is for us to bear fruit as we remain connected to Him, serving as physical representatives of the invisible God. We’ve explored the areas of fruit: transformation, changed circumstances, fellowship, and the supernatural. We’ve also learned that our assignments are where we experience both the fruit of the work itself and the results that flow from it.

Now we go deeper to understand the conditions for bearing fruit and the foundation upon which fruitfulness rests. The fruit of God’s blessing flows from His covenant promise—what we’ve learned is simply this: “I will bless you to be a blessing.” Fruitfulness is your experience of that blessing as you extend it to others.

As you read this passage, consider: What did God promise to do for Abram, and what did He expect Abram to become as a result?

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 12:1–3 ESV

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

The covenant is elegantly simple: God blesses us so that we become a blessing. According to Galatians, this promise has been transferred to Christ, and as we walk with Him in the Kingdom, He transfers it to us. How does understanding this covenant reshape your view of what “blessing” really means?

This blessing encompasses every dimension of the abundant life—marriage, relationships, family, work. As you receive it, God places you in situations to pass along what you’re learning. Why is it important to see blessing as something that flows through you rather than stopping with you?

As you read, notice how long the covenant lasts and what characteristics describe being in God’s presence.

He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant. [...] For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place.

1 Chronicles 16:14–17, 25–27 ESV

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The covenant lasts forever—which means even in eternity we will continue to be blessed in order to bless one another. What does the permanence of this covenant reveal about God’s heart toward His people?

In God’s presence there is “splendor and majesty... strength and joy.” These words suggest something spectacular, grand, and beyond normal life—like the awe you feel in a majestic cathedral or castle. How does this description change your expectations of what life with God can look like?

Pay attention to how blessings arrive according to this passage—and what direction you’re facing when they come.

“And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. [...] and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”

—Deuteronomy 28:1–3, 14 ESV

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The blessings “come upon you and overtake you.” If they overtake you from behind, what direction must you be facing? What is God teaching us about pursuing blessings versus pursuing Him?

There’s a profound insight here: when you turn around to chase the blessing, it stops. The only way blessing can come is if it overtakes you while you’re focused on God. How might this truth change how you approach areas where you’re seeking breakthrough?

This Psalm paints God’s picture of the “highest and best” blessing. Notice the specific areas of life it addresses.

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!

—Psalm 128:1–6 ESV

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God's vision of blessing includes enjoying your work, flourishing in marriage, celebrating family around the table, peace in your community, and seeing your grandchildren. This is the "essence of blessing." Which of these areas resonates most with where you need God's blessing right now?

Many believers think that service and ministry are "better" than enjoying work, marriage, and family. But these blessings are meant to overflow into service, not be replaced by it. Why is this distinction so important to grasp?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — SECTION 1

Scriptural Understanding:

1. What does Genesis 12:1–3 reveal about the two-part nature of God’s covenant—what He does for us and what we become for others?

2. According to Deuteronomy 28, what is the relationship between obedience, blessing, and which direction we face in our walk with God?

3. How does Psalm 128 define the “highest and best” picture of a blessed life, and what areas does it encompass?

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Deeper Understanding:

4. Why does turning to chase the blessing cause it to stop, while keeping your eyes on God allows it to overtake you?

5. How does understanding the covenant as “forever” change your perspective on both this life and eternity?

6. What is the danger of replacing the blessings of work, marriage, and family with service and ministry activities?

LESSON 4:

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Personal Application:

7. In which area of blessing from Psalm 128 do you most sense God inviting you to trust Him for breakthrough?

8. Are there ways you've been chasing blessings rather than pursuing God and letting blessings overtake you?

9. How might you practically "fear the Lord and walk in His ways" this week in your work, relationships, or family?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

SECTION 2: THE FOUNDATION OF ABIDING AND TRUST

Having established that fruit flows from the covenant, we now examine the conditions that build and sustain our abiding in Christ. A simple chart helps clarify this: Are you abiding—connected to God in relationship, surrendered to His will, walking with Him in the Kingdom? If yes, then the next question is: Are you remaining in that abiding? You cannot exit the process and expect fruit. If you abide and continue abiding, fruit is inevitable. If you don't abide, or start but don't stay, there will be no fruit.

The good news is that even if you find yourself on the “no fruit” side, restoration is possible. God invites you right back to the beginning: “How about now? I can start it now and reproduce fruit.” The question is: What builds abiding and keeps us there?

As you read, notice the connection between trust and fruitfulness—especially what happens when difficulty comes.

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

—Jeremiah 17:7–8 ESV

The one who trusts is like a tree whose roots go deep to the water source—it doesn't fear heat and isn't anxious in drought because it continues to bear fruit. How does trust enable fruitfulness even in difficult circumstances?

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Some say, “I don’t have time to abide because I have all these problems and stress.” What would God say to this reasoning? How does difficulty actually call us to deeper abiding rather than less?

Notice the phrase “whose trust is the Lord”—not just trusting in Him, but making Him the very object of trust. What’s the difference between occasionally trusting God and making trust your settled posture?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — SECTION 2

Scriptural Understanding:

1. According to Jeremiah 17:7–8, what enables the tree to continue bearing fruit even during drought and heat?

2. What does the image of a tree “planted by water” sending “roots by the stream” suggest about how we position ourselves spiritually?

3. Why does the text emphasize both “trusts in the Lord” and “whose trust is the Lord”—what’s the significance of that distinction?

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CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Deeper Understanding:

4. How does the simple “abiding chart” clarify whether we will bear fruit or not—and what hope does it offer those currently without fruit?

5. Why does difficult circumstance actually strengthen fruitfulness for the one who trusts, while destroying it for those who don’t?

6. What does it mean to learn that God is faithful—and how does that learning build confidence to trust Him more?

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CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Personal Application:

7. Where are you currently facing “heat” or “drought”—and how is that circumstance inviting you to deeper trust rather than anxious striving?

8. On a scale of occasional trust to settled trust, where would you place yourself—and what might help you move toward making the Lord your trust?

9. What specific step could you take this week to “send your roots deeper” into the stream of God’s presence?

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SECTION 3: DYING TO SELF—THE WAY TO LIFE

Everybody hears about dying to self and surrender. Very few people actually learn to do it. Yet there is no way around this truth: in order to bear fruit, you must die. Just as a seed must fall into the ground and die to release the life within it, and a caterpillar must go through death to become a butterfly, so we must put to death the self to experience the resurrection life Christ offers.

Jesus explains the paradox at the heart of fruitfulness. Watch for what must happen to the seed—and what that means for us.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”

John 12:24–26 ESV

The seed that doesn’t die “remains alone”—but when it dies, it bears “much fruit.” Why is death to self the only pathway to the multiplication of life?

Jesus says the key is to be “where I am.” Where is Jesus? In the resurrection, in the Kingdom. How do we join Him there?

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Paul connects dying to self with bearing fruit for God. Consider what we're dying to—and what we're alive for.

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

—Romans 7:4–5 ESV

We “have died” so that we may “belong to another”—Christ, Who has been raised. Why is belonging to the Risen One essential for bearing fruit for God?

The flesh bears “fruit for death.” Does the sin nature improve over time? Why must we continually put it to death rather than trying to reform it?

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Paul unpacks the theology of death and resurrection life. Notice the tense of the freedom from sin.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.

—Romans 6:1–7 ESV

Verse 7 makes an astounding statement: “One who has died has been set free from sin”—past tense. If we have been freed, why do we still experience the effects of sin?

The purpose of dying and being buried with Christ is to “walk in newness of life”—the vitality, substance, and essence of resurrection. How does this change your understanding of the Christian life?

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Paul continues to explain how our freedom works—and the choice we face.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

—Romans 6:8–18 ESV

Here's the conundrum: to be free, you must become a slave. You choose either to be a slave of Christ (and experience freedom) or by default become a slave of sin. Why is there no neutral ground?

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Think of it this way: You're in prison, and Christ comes with the key saying, "I've paid your penalty. You're free—if you'll be my slave." If you say yes, He opens the door. If you refuse, you stay imprisoned. How does this picture clarify the nature of freedom and slavery?

Paul completes the progression showing what flows from our choice.

I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 6:19–23 ESV

Paul builds a progression: freed from sin (v. 7) → became slaves of righteousness (v. 18) → receive the fruit of holiness (v. 22). Holiness is fruit, not something you achieve by effort. How does this change your approach to spiritual growth?

LESSON 4:

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — SECTION 3

Scriptural Understanding:

1. According to John 12:24–26, why must the seed die to bear fruit, and what does Jesus say about where His servants must be?

2. What progression does Paul trace in Romans 6—from freedom in verse 7, to slavery in verse 18, to fruit in verse 22?

3. How does Romans 7:4–5 contrast the fruit that comes from living in the flesh versus belonging to the Risen Christ?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Deeper Understanding:

4. Why is there no neutral ground—why must we either be slaves of Christ or by default slaves of sin?

5. How does the prison illustration clarify the relationship between slavery and freedom in the Kingdom?

6. If holiness is a fruit we receive rather than a goal we achieve, what is our role in the process?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Personal Application:

7. In what areas of life are you trying to reform the flesh rather than putting it to death?

8. How often do you find yourself “going back to prison” after tasting freedom—and what pattern leads you there?

9. What would it look like to surrender your will to Christ’s every day, “all the time” as this teaching suggests?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

SECTION 4: THE THINGS OF GOD VS. THE THINGS OF MAN

One of the most sobering moments in the Gospels occurs when Peter—fresh from receiving spiritual revelation about Jesus’ identity—suddenly finds himself rebuked as “Satan.” What caused such a dramatic shift? He moved from the things of God to the things of man. This passage shows us how quickly we can exit the Kingdom life and how clearly Jesus defines what it means to follow Him.

Watch the rapid transition from spiritual insight to satanic thinking—and notice Jesus’ explanation for what went wrong.

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

—Matthew 16:21–28 ESV

Peter had just received divine revelation (“You are the Messiah”) and Jesus blessed him for it. Minutes later, Jesus calls him “Satan.” What caused the shift? Peter was setting his mind on the things of man—his own thoughts—not the things of God.

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If Peter had asked, “Lord, what do you mean? Help me understand”—staying with Jesus rather than deciding for himself—that would have been the things of God. What would have been a better response when Peter heard something he didn’t understand?

Jesus immediately gives the prescription: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Me. Where is Jesus? In the resurrection. What is the simple but daily requirement for living the resurrection life?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — SECTION 4

Scriptural Understanding:

1. What specifically did Peter do wrong—wasn't he trying to help Jesus?

2. According to Jesus, what is the distinction between “the things of God” and “the things of man”?

3. What three actions does Jesus say are required for anyone who wants to “come after” Him?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Deeper Understanding:

4. Why is deciding on your own—even with good intentions—actually “following Satan” rather than following Christ?

5. What does it mean practically to “stay with” Jesus when you don’t understand what He’s doing or saying?

6. Jesus says gaining the whole world but forfeiting your soul is a bad trade. How do we make this trade in subtle, everyday ways?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Personal Application:

7. Can you identify a recent situation where you decided on your own rather than asking God for understanding?

8. What would it look like for you to “deny yourself” this week in a specific relationship or decision?

9. How might your daily life change if you learned to deny self “pretty quick” as this teaching suggests?

LESSON 4:

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SECTION 5: THE WELCOMING HEART AND GODLY COUNSEL

A fruitful life depends not only on dying to self but on the condition of our heart when we receive God's Word. Jesus' parable of the sower shows that the same seed produces vastly different results depending on the soil. Additionally, we need the right people around us—an inner circle that points us to what God is saying rather than offering worldly counsel.

In this parable, the key variable is the soil—the condition of the heart. Notice what prevents fruitfulness and what enables it.

"Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

—Matthew 13:18–23 ESV

LESSON 4:

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In every case, people hear the Word. But the hard heart lets it be snatched away. The shallow heart shows growth but withers in difficulty. The thorny heart is choked by worldly cares. What characterizes the good soil that produces fruit?

The thorny soil shows growth but no fruit—which can be deceiving. You think, “This is okay,” but the cares of the world are choking out fullness of life. How might you recognize “thorns” growing alongside the Word in your own life?

A seed in a plastic bowl has nowhere to grow. A seedling in a pot that stops getting water dies. But a seed planted in welcoming soil breaks through, and with continued nurture produces 30, 60, 100 fold. Many people celebrate “breakthroughs” but stop there. What’s required to move from breakthrough to fruit?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

This Psalm connects meditating on God's Word with choosing the right inner circle. Notice who the blessed person avoids.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

—Psalm 1:1–4 ESV

While trying to meditate on God's Word, if you're spending all your time with worldly people getting worldly counsel, the Word gets choked out. Who should be in your inner circle, and what should they be asking you?

Godly counsel asks: "What is God saying to you? What are you learning? What's the truth? What's the next step?" How is this different from the counsel most people seek or give?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Paul models godly counsel—praying for others to know God’s will and walk worthy of Him. Notice the vastness of Christ’s domain.

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

—Colossians 1:9–18 ESV

Paul’s prayer is that they be filled with knowledge of God’s will, walking worthy, bearing fruit, increasing in knowledge, strengthened with power. This is what godly counsel looks like—pointing people toward discovering God’s will. Are you part of someone’s inner circle helping them this way?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Christ created everything—principalities, powers, thrones, authorities, visible and invisible. Everything is under His domain. So can He handle your problem? How does grasping Christ’s preeminence affect your confidence in seeking His will?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—SECTION 5

Scriptural Understanding:

1. In the Parable of the Sower, what three conditions prevent fruitfulness, and what distinguishes the good soil?

2. According to Psalm 1, what two practices characterize the blessed person—what they avoid and what they delight in?

3. What specifically does Paul pray for in Colossians 1:9–10, and how does this model godly counsel?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Deeper Understanding:

4. Why is it deceptive when the thorny soil shows growth—and how can we mistake activity for fruitfulness?

5. What's the difference between worldly counsel and godly counsel, and why does your inner circle matter so much?

6. How does knowing that Christ created “all things” and “holds all things together” change your confidence in bringing Him your problems?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Personal Application:

7. How would you honestly describe the condition of your “soil”—hard, shallow, thorny, or good?

8. Who is in your inner circle right now—are they pointing you to what God is saying or offering worldly advice?

9. What would change if you began to “meditate day and night” on God’s Word, cogitating and processing with the intent to follow?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

SECTION 6: THE CONDITION, GENEROSITY, AND PERSEVERANCE

Now we come to the simple condition for all the covenant blessings, followed by the heart of generosity that should characterize God's people, and finally the call to persevere even when we don't yet see fruit.

This is the condition that runs throughout Scripture. Notice what it requires of us.

"And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God."

—Deuteronomy 28:1–2 ESV

The condition is deceptively simple: hear God's voice and follow what He says. Two questions flow from this: First, have you heard what God is saying? Second, are you following the steps He's telling you to take?

Some people don't even know what it means to "hear God's voice." For them, the first step is learning how God speaks. Others hear but aren't clear yet. Others are clear but aren't following. Where are you in this process?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Generosity with firstfruits is part of God’s nature that should become our nature. Notice the comprehensive scope.

“We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the Lord; also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks; and to bring the first of our dough, and our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God... We will not neglect the house of our God.”

—Nehemiah 10:35–37, 39b ESV

Everyone in the whole system was to be generous, giving firstfruits for the work of God. “Don’t neglect the house of God.” When giving to ministries or organizations, what is the key question you need to ask?

It’s not about getting a tax deduction—sometimes God calls you to give where there is no deduction. And assignments change; a ministry fruitful three years ago may not be fruitful now. How do you steward your giving to ensure it goes where God is actually at work?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Here's the impact of generous giving—and the posture that accompanies it.

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

—Proverbs 3:9–12 ESV

If you are generous with firstfruits—giving to God first—your barns will be filled with plenty and overflow. What does generous giving demonstrate about your heart?

LESSON 4:

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The difference between Cain and Abel's offerings reveals something profound about the heart behind giving.

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,

—**Genesis 4:1–4 ESV**

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

—**Hebrews 11:4 ESV**

It wasn't that one gave animals and one gave crops—God had told both to give offerings. The difference was that Abel gave by faith, trusting God, while Cain gave out of duty or obligation without faith. When you give, is it by faith—trusting God—or merely duty?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Finally, Jesus tells a parable about perseverance when fruit seems delayed.

And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

—Luke 13:6–9 ESV

When you think "I've been doing this and nothing's happening—should I stop?" God may say, "I see something you don't see. Stay with it a little longer." He won't have you continue forever, but He knows when fruit is about to come. What area of your life might God be saying, "Just a little bit longer"?

Here's a powerful principle: Don't you decide when to stop what God asks you to do. Whether it's inviting someone to learn, serving in a difficult place, or persevering in prayer—let God determine the timing. How might this change your approach to areas where you feel ready to quit?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—SECTION 6

Scriptural Understanding:

1. According to Deuteronomy 28:1–2, what is the two-part condition for receiving God’s blessings?

2. What distinguishes Abel’s offering from Cain’s according to Hebrews 11:4?

3. In the parable of the fig tree, what is the vinedresser asking for—and what does he promise if there’s still no fruit?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Deeper Understanding:

4. Why is “Are they bearing fruit?” such an essential question when deciding where to give financially?

5. How does generous giving demonstrate trust in God—especially when you’re uncertain if you’ll be taken care of?

6. What’s the danger of deciding on your own when to stop doing what God has asked you to do?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

Personal Application:

7. Of the two questions—"Are you hearing God's voice?" and "Are you following what He says?"—which is your greater challenge right now?

8. How would you describe your giving: by faith like Abel, or by duty like Cain?

9. Is there something you've been ready to quit that God may be asking you to stay with "just a little longer"?

LESSON 4:

CONDITIONS FOR BEARING FRUIT

CLOSING REFLECTION

The beauty of what we've learned is this: in order to receive fruit and bear fruit, we must put to death the self and be willing to live with Christ in the resurrection. We follow Him in that new life by refusing to fall backward into the flesh or think the things of the world. Instead, we welcome the Word, continue to follow Him, maintain a generous heart, and choose to live in the fullness of life rather than the heaviness of the world.

The conditions aren't complex, but they require everything: Trust. Death to self. Becoming a slave of Christ to experience freedom. Welcoming the Word with good soil. Surrounding yourself with godly counsel. Hearing God's voice and obeying. Giving generously by faith. And persevering when fruit is delayed.

In our next session, we'll complete this course by learning how to pull all this together and what it truly means to give away the fruit we've received.

As you reflect on this session, what is the most significant truth God is speaking to you—and what step of obedience does it require?

AN INVITATION TO GO DEEPER

This workbook is a starting point, designed to open your eyes to the incredible life of partnership God has for you. But the journey of walking in the Spirit, hearing His voice, and ministering His power is a daily one, and we are committed to providing resources to help you live it out.

If this material has stirred your heart and you are hungry for more, we invite you to explore the other resources our ministry provides. We have developed these tools specifically to equip you and your community to walk in the fullness of what you have learned.

- **Books and Small Group Curricula:** For those who want to build a solid, biblical foundation, our books and curricula provide in-depth teaching on abiding in Christ, hearing God's voice, and living in the freedom of the Kingdom. They are perfect for personal study or for creating a powerful small group environment where you can learn and grow together.
- **Podcasts:** For encouragement on the go, our podcasts feature practical teachings and real-life testimonies of how these principles are transforming lives, families, and businesses every single day.
- **Retreats:** For a truly immersive experience, we invite you to attend one of our retreats. These are dedicated times set apart to unplug from the world, press into the presence of God, and receive personal ministry and revelation that can accelerate your journey in Him.

You were not meant to walk this path alone. To explore these resources and take the next step in your adventure with God, please visit our website. We look forward to partnering with you as you discover the joy and power of living the full covenant life He has for you.

More information is available at www.AbideMinistries.com





History of **Abide Ministries**



In the 1990s, Rich and Linda Case received a call from God to dig into what it means to truly live in the Spirit.

In the 1990s, Rich and Linda Case received a call from God to dig into what it means to truly live in the Spirit. They had been believers for most of their lives and regularly attended church and Bible studies, but began to realize that, despite knowing the Bible intellectually, their personal experiences seemed disconnected from the promises and truths found in scripture. As they then learned these essential truths through their abiding and hearing God's voice – and began to see the grand life play out in their lives God called them to give that knowledge away. In 2001, God initiated the ABIDE ministry at a retreat with friends in Austria, and through their personal experience of this abiding life, their friends noticed the change in their lives and inquired if Rich and Linda could host a similar retreat the following year. This was repeated three years in a row, and then God called them to host weekend retreats in their home in Colorado.

Through the formal development of the truths revealed by God with Abiding and additional electives, they founded All for Jesus – Living Waters Ministries, now Abide Ministries – and have seen it grow exponentially since then, with 24+ retreat leaders all over the world, 29 online courses, eight books on various aspects of living life with Christ, and a daily podcast. Rich and Linda have also worked with various churches to strengthening them with the truths of an abiding life in Christ, and seeing Christ bring reconciliation and new vision to desperate situations.

Their heart is to bring the truths and promises of God to as many people as possible, showing everyone that when you abide in Christ and seek Him daily, your life can be completely and utterly transformed – enabling you to experience the grand life promised by God.



Vision

At our core, we believe in walking along God's path and connecting to the vine (abiding). As we walk in unity with others and understand God's Word as the truth, we are sure to experience His promised grand life and thus, willingly accept God's will as our chosen path.

Mission

1. Live out and invite everyone to experience the grand, spectacular, abundant life by hearing God's voice.
2. Share God's majesty, a close relationship with us as he yearns for our restoration.
3. God is majestic, grand and pure goodness, so that we can experience His nature in real life.
4. Communicate to everyone, irrespective of their condition, that all are meant to experience God's Divine Life (grand, majestic), by receiving His personal plan for us.
5. God delivers this life for us in a SUPERNATURAL way, transcending human comprehension, and thus, becoming normal in our life.
6. Teach that personal truths are revealed to us by God, grounded on His word – the embodiment of Truth.
7. Recognize that abiding in Christ changes our life in tangible, real ways, and is not just learning about or studying this life.
8. Teach that as we abide in Christ, we learn to understand and follow God's will for our lives, as He leads us personally into His grand, Divine plan for us. His personal plan calls us into His bigger story with our best interest at heart (blessed to bless others).

Statement of Non-Profit Status

Abide Ministries is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization that has been fully funded by our founders, leaders and retreat participants since its inception.

Tax-ID number: 27-1731819

Testimonies

"If I'm not abiding, I feel like I'm dying. Abiding is living...It's powerful to know that you have God's perspective on something."



Steve

"This was the first time that I understood what people meant by God's living Word. And I've been a Christian for a lot of years, but this was the first time it really came alive for me and I really could experience that."



Dan

"It doesn't matter where you are at in your walk. If you just got saved yesterday or if you've been a 20+ year believer like I have, learning how to hear God's voice and learning His will is just as important in day one as it is in day 3,426. You wanna hear God's will and this course has helped me hear Him more clearly."



Bob

"Abiding turned out to be the most transformational thing I've ever had since salvation in my Christian walk and in our marriage, and it's just been amazing. God has a path for us and He is there and He's showing it to us."



Heath

"Before, in my quiet time, it was more of a checklist thing for me to do in the morning, and, honestly, some mornings it was the thing that went if I was busy, and some days it didn't even happen. Now, it's become so personal to me and the time flies by in the morning and God speaks so directly to me and I just never felt that way on a daily basis before. That has been life-altering for me."



Rebecca

"I heard about people living in peace, I heard about people living in joy, and realizing all kinds of things around them are happening. And then we realize, wait a minute, we're there, we have peace beyond understanding."



Brad

Giving to the Ministry

Have you experienced abundant blessing from your time with Abide Ministries?

Pay it forward by donating at abideministries.com/donate and help us support others in learning how to seek Christ and abide in Him! We appreciate your desire to help us share the Abundant Life with the rest of the world.



Learn More at abideministries.com

Podcast

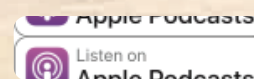
Escape the chaos and uncertainty of the world with our podcast, ***“Come and See, Finding Truth in a World of Chaos,”*** available on YouTube, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.



CHANNEL



PLAYLIST PAGE



Tune in five days a week as our hosts, Rich Case and Kathy Rocconi, dive into the scriptures and discuss what it looks like to live an abiding life with Christ. Join us as we seek God's truth in a world of turmoil and darkness.

Online Courses



Abide Ministries online courses uncover life-changing biblical truths, with practical application and wisdom. Our courses are joyful and life-giving and are perfect for small groups as well as individuals.

Each course has an accompanying workbook. Join us as we learn about biblical topics like Hearing God's Voice, Discerning God's Will, the Covenant, Living in Forgiveness, Living in the Kingdom of God, Living in the Supernatural, Christ, Clutter and the Calendar, Living the Grand Life, and many, many more.



COURSES

Abide Retreats



Learn more at
abideministries.com

Do you have friends or a small group that you would like to experience what you just experienced?

Would you be interested in attending another retreat, which we call electives to go deeper in your walk with God?

See the various options on our website.
The topics for retreats and courses are the same.

RETREATS



COURSES



STORE

