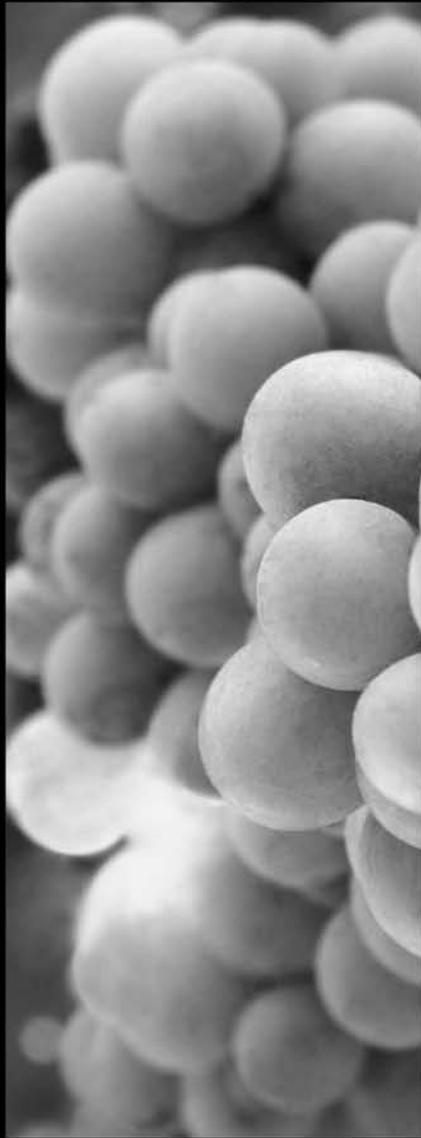
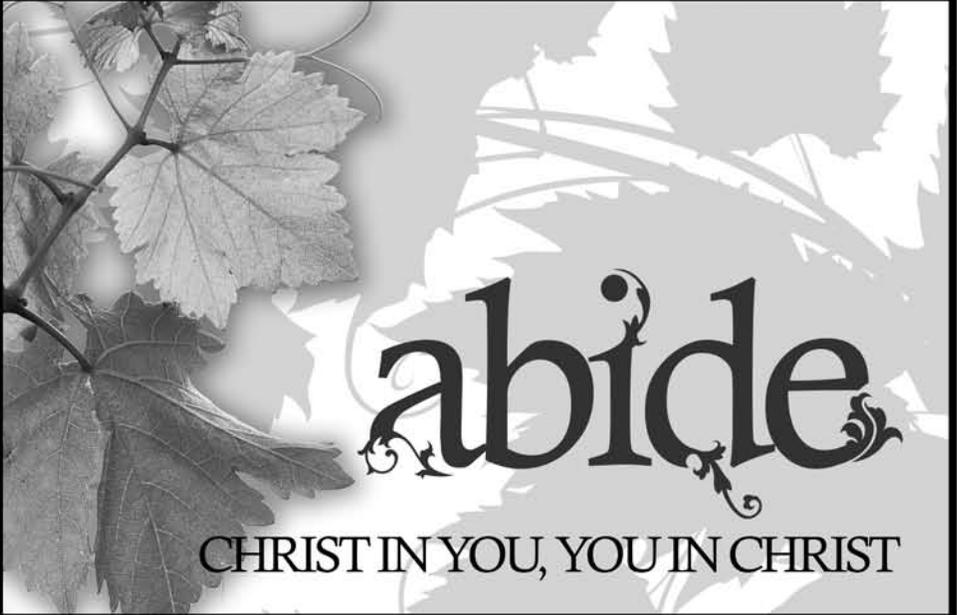




SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY



LESSON 4

Abide Through His Word

Key Passage: John 15:1-10; cross-references

Introduction

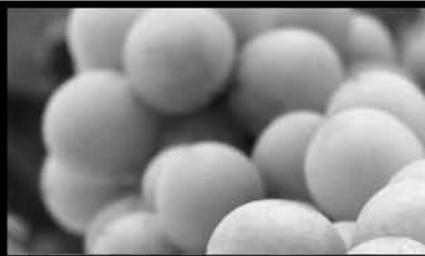
Over the past few weeks, we have been focusing on Christ's words to His disciples in John 15:4-5, "Remain (abide) in Me, and I will remain (abide) in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain (abide) in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain (abide) in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains (abides) in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing." As we have studied the Parable of the Vine in John 15:1-17, we have learned that God has placed all believers "in Christ." This position is eternally secure.

If we abide in Christ, the Holy Spirit flows from the Vine through us, the branches, bringing to us the life and the power of the Vine. As we have learned, abiding means daily surrendering our lives to God, allowing Him to work in us and through us. The result of abiding is that the branches will bear fruit. It is God's will that every believer have a fruitful life on earth. This is our purpose for existing and the reason for which God saves us—so that we will bear fruit for His glory.

Bearing Fruit

Last week, we studied Christ's words in John 15:16, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name." We examined Scripture in order to find out what Jesus meant by "fruit that will last." We discovered through the Word that a Christlike character and making disciples is the lasting fruit of our lives that brings God glory.

As we abide in the Vine, the Holy Spirit works in our lives to develop Christ's character in us. As His character is produced in us, we bear fruit that the world can see; and the fruit we bear looks like Christ. When others see this fruit in



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our lives, the Holy Spirit uses us to show those outside of Christ their need for a Savior. This gives us the opportunity to share the Gospel and make disciples, fulfilling Christ's command to all believers in Matthew 28:18-20. The purpose of abiding is so that we will bear fruit and glorify God.

Needing Christ

The more we study John 15:1-17, the more we understand how much we need Christ in order to fulfill God's purpose for our lives. There is no way we will ever develop a Christlike character and reproduce that character in others by making disciples without the power and presence of Christ at work in our lives. He must do it through us. And we must make the daily choice to allow Him to do it through us. We must learn to "get out of our own way" (die to self) and just abide in Him. As we remain relationally connected to Him, He will abide in us and God's mission will be accomplished through our lives. Remember to continue direct the group's focus on intimacy and connection with Christ. This will naturally lead to a fruitful life.

Review

Before you begin today's study, lead your group in a quick review of last week's lesson using the questions below.

1. Why is it so important to Christ that His disciples bear fruit?
2. What does God (the gardener) do to ensure that His branches bear fruit?
3. What kind of fruit should our lives bear?
4. How did Christ abide and bear fruit?

Not a To-Do List

This week, we will begin to look at some practical ways to help us abide in Christ. It is important to study in light of what we have seen in God's Word about abiding. Remember, there is no "list of things to do" that ensures we are abiding. The spiritual disciplines of the Christian life (Bible study, prayer, community, etc.) are a way through which we abide. The goal is not "performing" these spiritual disciplines—the goal is an intimate relationship with Christ. Think about it in practical terms. The strength of any intimate relationship (friendship, family relationships, dating, marriage) is in how well you know one another. The more deeply you know each other, the healthier and more fulfilling the relationship becomes. You begin to know each other's needs and desires. You know how to encourage and serve one another better. You communicate better. You understand and relate better. This is true of all relationships.

There are many "things" you do to get to know one another better. You may talk on the phone, write letters, e-mail, go places together, etc. These "things" are ways that you grow in your relationship. The focus isn't so much on what you're doing, but on whom you're doing it with, right? If you begin to focus on the things you are doing instead of the person you are doing them with, you miss the whole point. You may be "doing" all of the right things, but you won't necessarily be growing together in your relationship. Abiding in Christ is the same way. The spiritual disciplines that we "do" are how we get to know Him better. It is how we spend time with Him since He isn't physically here with us. They are how we abide. We abide "through" these things, but not "in" these things.

Abiding Through the Word

The most important means by which we abide is the Word of God. In John 15:3, Jesus told His disciples that it was His Words of Truth that had made them clean. In Verse 7, Jesus tells His disciples how important it is to know His Word to have an effective prayer life. Today we will see why the Bible is so vital

if we are going to abide in the Vine and bear fruit that glorifies God. In order to abide in Christ, we must communicate with Him. Like any relationship, this includes both talking to Him, and listening to Him. The Word of God is His voice in our lives. His Spirit helps us to understand what He is saying through His Word. As we spend time abiding through His Word, we get to know Christ better and we begin to understand His heart, His plans, and His purposes. As we know Him more, we will trust Him more. As we trust Him more, we will surrender to Him more. As we surrender to Him more, we will bear more fruit.

Opening Prayer

Begin your time in study of God's Word by praying for your group. Pray that God will open the heart of every person and reveal Himself to you all in a new way as you study and discuss His Word together. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you into the truth and show you all how to apply what you learn to your lives in a practical way. And pray that God will be glorified through your discussion today.

Key Study

We will begin our study today by looking at why it is so important that we abide through the Word of God. We will allow Scripture to show us the answer. Through the following cross-references we will discover the importance of the Word in our lives. We will see how abiding in Christ through His Word will deepen our intimacy with Him and our dependence upon Him. In order to help you communicate these truths with your group during your discussion, the lesson commentary is organized to enable you to make a list of "Reasons to Abide Through the Word" on the board as you study together.

Leader's Note: Because there are so many verses in this portion of the lesson, making a simple list on the board will help your group to understand and remember why we must abide through God's Word. You may choose to divide into smaller groups and assign the verses to different groups. Each cross-reference is followed by a brief commentary and discussion questions.

As you begin your study together, have everyone open their Bible to John 15:1-10. Have someone read these verses aloud. Using the lesson introduction, explain to the group that we are going to begin to look at practical ways to abide in Christ. Remind the group that these spiritual disciplines are ways that we abide in Christ. "Doing" these things should not be our focus. Christ should be our focus. After you have finished laying the foundation for today's study, begin your study of the cross-references.

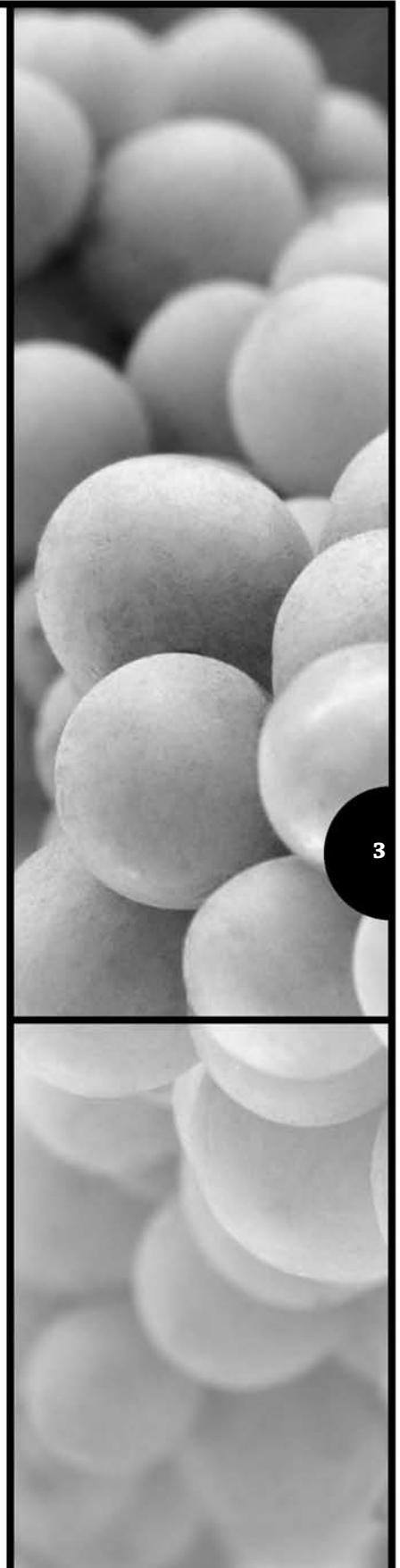
REASONS TO ABIDE THROUGH THE WORD

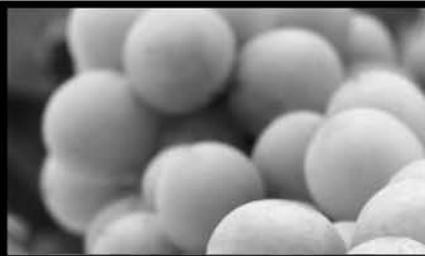
Because It Is God-breathed Because It Is Useful

2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

In this passage are two important truths related to abiding in Christ. First, we see that all Scripture is God-breathed (inspired by God). This means that the Bible is not man's ideas, or man's words (2 Peter 1:20-21). It doesn't "contain" the Word of God—it is the literal Word of God. Every single word is God-breathed. This is such an important truth in today's culture. Many people,





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even some professing Christians and even some pastors, do not believe that “all Scripture is God-breathed.” The second truth we see in this verse is that Scripture is useful in our daily lives. This verse lists four ways that Scripture is useful in abiding. It is useful for teaching (giving us God’s commands). It is useful for rebuking (showing us our sin). It is useful for correcting (showing us how we need to change). And it is useful for training in righteousness (maturing us).

A great way to help us understand these four uses of Scripture is to think of ourselves as being on a journey. We don’t know where we’re going, but God does. His Word is one of the ways He guides us through the journey. The teaching of the Word shows us the road to take, rebuking alerts us when we get on the wrong road, correcting shows us how to get back on the right road, and training in righteousness keeps us on the right road. The purpose of abiding through the Word is also given in this verse—so that we will be “thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Abiding through the Word equips us to bear fruit for God’s glory.

1. According to verse 16, Whose words and thoughts is the Bible?
2. How much of it is His words and thoughts?
3. Read 2 Peter 1:20-21. How does this passage confirm this truth?
4. How important is this truth in our culture today?
5. What four ways is Scripture useful in our lives according to verse 16? Discuss what each one means.
6. What is the result of Scripture’s work in our lives according verse 17?
7. How does this relate back to John 15:4-5 and abiding in Christ?

Because It Is Our Guide

Psalm 119:105

“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

In this short verse, we see that God’s Word is our source of direction and light in a dark world. Notice the words God uses in this verse. The Word is a lamp to our feet. Think about the imagery. How much light does a lamp shine in darkness? Just enough light for the next few steps. This illustrates how we must constantly be abiding through His Word, shining it in front of us so we can see where to step next. We face so many choices and temptations each day, and God’s Word lights our path, guiding our every step.

1. How does this verse describe God’s Word?
2. What is the purpose of a lamp?
3. Describe the darkness of the world in which we live.
4. Why do we need a “lamp for our feet” in our lives?
5. How does the Word of God “light our path?” Give practical examples from your daily life.
6. What will happen to our “steps” and our “path” if we don’t use the light of the Word to guide us?

Because It Keeps Us Pure

Psalm 119:9-11

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word. I seek You with all my heart; do not let me stray from Your commands. I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.”

This passage fits beautifully with what we have been studying over the past few weeks about abiding. Notice that verse 9 doesn’t ask how a young man can “become” pure, but how he can stay pure. This confirms what we studied in

John 15:3 when Jesus said, “You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you.” How do we live a life that reflects this purity Christ has given us? By living according to His Word. Verse 10 illustrates abiding through the Word as the psalmist seeks God with all of his heart, asking God not to let him stray from His Word.

The psalmist is seeking God through His Word, and trusting that the result will be the fruit of a pure life that reflects God’s character. Notice in verse 11 that knowing God’s Word is for the purpose of not sinning against Him. His Word keeps us pure.

1. What is the question this passage answers based on verse 9?
2. According to verse 9, how do we keep our ways pure?
3. How do we “live according to His Word” according to verse 10?
4. According to verse 11, where must God’s Word be in order for us not to sin?
5. What do you think the word “hide” means in verse 11? Does it mean to keep it to ourselves like a secret?
6. How do we practically “hide” God’s Word in our hearts?

Because It Makes Us Holy (Sanctifies) Because It Is Truth

John 17:17

“Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth.”

What a power-packed verse! It is from Christ’s prayer for His disciples and everyone who would believe in Him through their message. In the Greek, the word “sanctify” is a verb that means, “To separate from profane things and dedicate to God; a people dedicated to God; to purify internally by renewing of the soul; to cleanse externally.” Jesus is praying that God would separate His followers from the world and make them holy. How does God do this? Through His Word, which is truth. As we abide in Christ through His Word, God develops Christ’s character in us, which sets us apart from the world. Then others will begin to see Christ through our lives.

1. What is Christ’s prayer for us in this verse?
2. What does “sanctify” mean?
3. How are we sanctified according to this verse?
4. How does Jesus describe God’s Word in this verse?
5. What are some ways God’s Word sanctifies us on a day-to-day basis?

Because It is Eternal

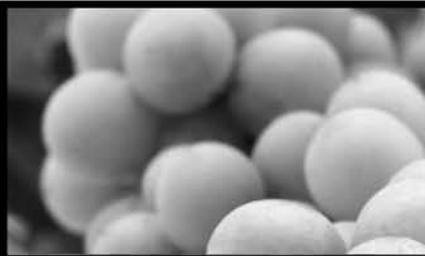
1 Peter 1:23-25

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed; but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God. For, ‘All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever.’ And this is the Word that was preached to you.”

This passage shows us that God’s Word is eternal. It will never perish. The “living and enduring” Word of God is how we have been born again (John 1:14). In this passage a comparison is made between the perishable and the imperishable. Man and his glory are perishable, which withers up and falls; but God and His Word stand forever. It is the Word that was preached to us.

1. According to verse 23, how have we been born again?
2. How are man and his glory described in verse 24?
3. How is God’s Word described in verse 25?





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4. Discuss how man and his glory wither and fall based on what you see in the world around you. Give specific examples.
5. Discuss how God and His Word stand in our culture today, even though it was written centuries ago. Give specific examples.
6. Based on this passage, how would you respond to those who say that God's Word is not "relevant" in today's culture?
7. Based on this passage, why is it important that you abide through the Word?

Because It Is Alive and Active

Hebrews 4:12

"The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

This verse teaches us that God's Word is not idle. It is alive and active in every believer's life. Here it is described as a double-edged sword, penetrating and dividing, exposing our deepest thoughts and attitudes. Looking at some of the Greek meanings of the key words in this verse will help us understand how deeply the Word of God works in our lives if we abide through it. The word "active" is the Greek word *energes*, which is where we get the English word "energy." The meaning of the word "sword" is, "A large knife used for killing animals and cutting up flesh." So we see that the Word of God is energetically slicing through our lives, exposing us to God and ourselves.

The word "judges" here actually means "discerning." God's Word doesn't just judge our heart from a right and wrong viewpoint; it also discerns and exposes the hidden thoughts and attitudes of our heart. The meaning of the word "attitudes" in this verse includes, "The mind, understanding, will, manner of feeling and thinking." Finally, "heart" means, "The center of physical and spiritual life; the inmost part of anything."

Share these definitions with your group prior to discussing the questions.

1. How is the Word of God described in this verse?
2. What is it able to do?

Answer the following questions using the Greek definitions.

1. What does it mean that God's Word is living and active in our lives?
2. How much of our lives is it active in?
3. Based on this verse, how well are you known by God?
4. What might the Word of God reveal to us that we don't know about ourselves apart from it?
5. Why is this important as we abide in Christ?

Because It is How We Know What is True

1 John 4:1

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

This verse is so important in our world today. There is so much false teaching about Christ and it is easy to believe these lies if we are not continually abiding in Christ through His Word. This verse warns us not to believe everything we hear, but to test all things to see whether they are from God.

1. What is the warning given in this verse?
2. How are we to judge what is true?

3. The word “test” in this verse means, “To scrutinize to see if something is genuine.” Based on that definition, how should we listen to what we hear about God?
4. Are there still “many false prophets” in the world today?
5. How does this verse show us that the Word of God is crucial in order to abide in Christ?
6. If we don’t “test the spirits” against the truth of God’s Word, what might be the result in our lives? What might we end up abiding in?

Because It Is Our Offensive Weapon

Ephesians 6:13-17

“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

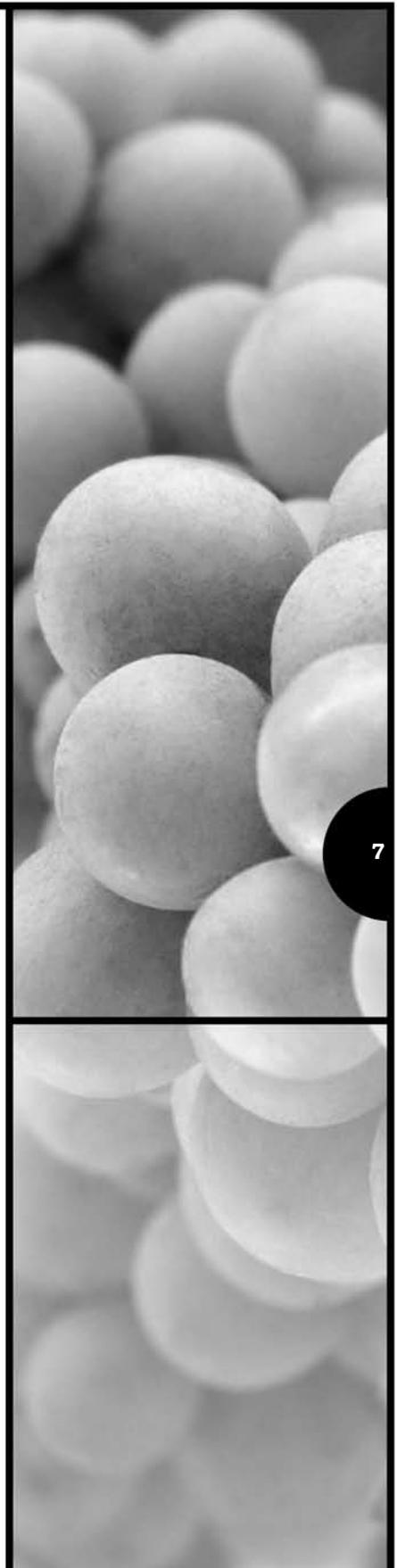
These verses teach us how to fight the enemy. Notice that we aren’t to run in fear from our enemy, but to stand firm and fight. The passage lists the armor that every believer should daily “wear.” Notice that most of the pieces of armor are defensive, in order to protect us from the “flaming arrows” Satan hurls at us. But the sword is an offensive weapon. Satan can throw darts at us, but he cannot stand against God’s Word. The Word of God is an offensive weapon. As we abide in Christ through His Word, we are prepared and equipped for battle.

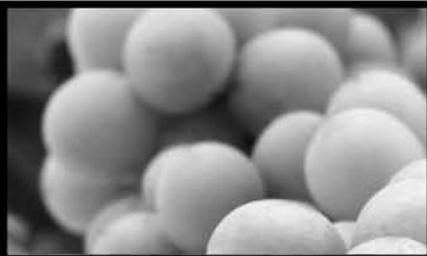
1. What are we told to do in verse 13?
2. Why are we commanded to put on God’s armor?
3. Does verse 13 say “if” the day of evil comes or “when” the day of evil comes?
4. Look at verse 13 carefully. When are we to put on the armor, before the “day of evil” arrives or when it arrives?
5. What are we to do when this day comes, according to verse 13-14?
6. What are the pieces of God’s armor?
7. How is the sword different from the other pieces?
8. What does verse 17 tell us the sword represents?
9. What are some practical ways that we can put on God’s armor?
10. What are some ways that you can “wield” the Word of God in your everyday life to fight the enemy?
11. What does this passage teach you about the importance of God’s Word in being prepared for the trials, temptations, and battles that following Christ brings?

Conclusion

The cross-references we have studied today clearly show us the importance of God’s Word in abiding in Christ. As we conclude today’s lesson, we are going to see once again that the purpose of abiding through the Word is so that we will bear the fruit of more disciples of Christ. Last week we saw that Jesus abided in God during His life on earth. As He “remained” in the Father, His life bore fruit that glorified the Father.

His disciples, and all of us who have believed in Christ through their message, are the lasting fruit of Christ’s life on earth. As we end today, we are going to see that one of the ways Jesus abided was through God’s Word. As He abided through the Word, He also gave others God’s Word. The same should be true of us today. Let’s look at this truth in God’s Word:





John 17:6-8

"I (Jesus) have revealed You (God) to those whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your Word. Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You. For I gave them the words You gave Me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me."

John 16:13

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come."

1 Corinthians 2:12-14

"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

These verses show us how Jesus abided in God through His Word. This is one of the ways that Christ "stayed connected" to God while on earth. John 17:6-8 says that Jesus gave His disciples the words that God gave Him. The result was that they accepted these words and believed. God also sent His Spirit to guide them into the truth after Christ returned to heaven. In John 16:13 Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would not speak on His own, but would speak what He heard from God, which is what Jesus had been doing while on earth. The Spirit was how God would continue to give the disciples His Word. Then in 1 Corinthians 2:12-14, we see how Christ's ministry was continued through His followers.

As they received the Word of God through the Holy Spirit, they spoke and taught the words they received. Notice that verse 14 says that people without God's Spirit (unbelievers) cannot understand God's words. We who believe in Christ and have received His Spirit are the only ones on this earth who can understand "what God has freely given us" because the Holy Spirit guides us and teaches us the truth. It is our responsibility and privilege to abide in Christ through His Word so that we can, like the early Christians, "speak not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words." How else will a lost world know what God has freely done for them, if we who can understand don't tell them?

As you conclude your study time together, have your group turn to these three verses in their Bible and read each one aloud. Challenge and encourage your group that just as Christ abided through the Word, we must do so also. We have a responsibility to share His Word with others who do not have His Spirit. As we choose to abide daily through the Word, our lives will bear the fruit of a Christlike character and more disciples for Christ.

Application

Encourage your group to start spending some extra time each week studying and reading God's Word. Remind them that we don't read God's Word just for information, but for application. The following handout can help them read and study God's Word more accurately and effectively.

Studying God's Word

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (21st Century KJV)

- **The best place to study God's Word** is with other Christ-followers in a Small Group, so you can learn from each other and help each other grasp the truths you are learning (Ephesians 4:1-16).

- **The key to effective Bible study is asking the right questions**, like a detective seeking to uncover truth. Below are three big questions and further questions designed to help discover truth. Be sure and ask the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to help you understand the following:

Observation: What does the text say?

- Read text once for observation of the big picture.
- Who is the Scripture about or addressing?
- What are the circumstances?
- Where do the events of the text take place?
- When did it happen?
- Why was it said or why did it happen?
- What things are emphasized? Repeated? Related? Alike and unlike?
- How does the text relate to other verses before and after it?

Interpretation: What does it mean?

- What did it mean to the original hearers?
- What is the context culturally?
- What type of language is it? (a parable, a simile, a metaphor, a command, an exaggeration, an allegory, image, symbol, prophecy, etc.)
- What does it mean in relation to other Scriptures?
- What do the original languages help us understand? (A Greek or Hebrew dictionary, available for free at www.blueletterbible.com, can help answer this one).

Application: How does it apply?

- How did it apply to the original hearers?
- What is the timeless principle that applies to everyone?
- How can I practice that principle?
- How does it apply to me as a Christ-follower?
- A formula that can help you "see" personal application is the SPECS acronym...

S(ins) Are there any **sins** here that I need to confess?

P(romises) Are there any **promises** here that I need to claim?

E(xamples) Are there any **examples** here that I need to follow?

C(ommands) Are there any **commands** here that I need to obey?

S(tumbling blocks) Are there any **stumbling blocks** here that I need to avoid?

- **Resource suggestions for personal Bible study:**

1. Study systematically through one book at a time.
2. Use a study Bible (like the *Life Application Study Bible*).
3. Use a Bible dictionary to understand words customs and culture.
4. Use a Bible atlas to understand geography and history.
5. Use a commentary (like Warren Wiersbe's *Be Series*).
6. Use a concordance to look up words and other references.
7. Use a Bible handbook (like *Haley's Bible Handbook*).
8. Use a Bible encyclopedia (like *The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*).
9. Use a topical Bible (like *Nave's Topical Bible*).
10. Look up cross references to key words and phrases.
11. Use a modern translation.
12. Share with others what you are learning.

- **A Bible reading plan for one year:**

January - February Genesis - Deuteronomy
5 chapters a day

March - April Matthew - Acts
3 chapters a day

May - June Romans - Revelation
4 chapters a day

July - August Joshua - Esther
5 chapters a day

September - October Psalms - Song of Solomon
5 chapters a day

November - December Isaiah - Malachi
5 chapters a day

For more suggestions on getting into God's Word, visit us online at www.brookhills.org/knowtheword.