**Abide in Christ**

John 14-17

Today we are going to **review this beautiful section of Scripture** from John 14-17. It’s called the Olivet Discourse because Jesus shared this message with his disciples on the Mount of Olives on the night he was betrayed. Here is how it starts:

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” John 14:1

***The disciples had a lot that was troubling them***; plenty of things to worry about. Jesus kept saying he was going to leave them. He was going to suffer and die. Yes, he said something about rising again on the third day, but who knew what that meant? “In a little while you will see me no longer, then a little while and you will see me.” Riddles. Mystery.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” John 14:3-4

***Where was Jesus going?*** He was going to the cross. What was the work of preparation he had to do? He had to die on the cross to prepare US for our eternal home with Him. That is the goal: relationship. Being together. Union. To be with Jesus. How do we get to that place?

“Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” John 14:5-6

**Jesus IS the way**, the truth, and the life. He is the only way into a relationship with God the Father. ***Religion is not the way.*** Effort won’t get you there. Being a good person is not enough. Only by trusting in Jesus – committing your life to Him in personal faith – can save you. Nothing else. No one else. Only Jesus. This is the sixth of the seven “I am” statements in John.

**The 7 “I am” statements in John:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. The bread of life (6:35)
2. The light of the world (8:12)
3. The door (10:7)
4. The good shepherd (10:11,14)
 | 1. The resurrection and the life (11:25)
2. The way, truth and life (14:6)
3. The true vine (15:1)
 |

**The whole gospel of John** is built around these declarations from the Lord Jesus. He is the bread we must eat to have eternal life. He is the light we need to see the truth. He is the doorway to salvation. He is the shepherd who protects us. He is the resurrection, the only One who defeated death. He is the only way to the Father, the full revelation of God’s truth and the embodiment of spiritual life. And so, He is the true vine who connects us with the life and power and peace and joy and love of the Godhead.

And so we trust in Him. Today we will walk through John 14-17 ***using our Spiritual Life Commitments as our guideposts for the journey***. The first one is trust.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Trust** Jesus completely

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.” John 14:1

***A relationship with God begins with trust*** and is founded on trust; as is true for all relationships. The disciples had been with Jesus for three years. They had learned to trust Him and to trust God through Him. Now he calls them to remember that and continue to trust, even though he was leaving. And trust grows as we know the nature and character of God.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Trust** Jesus completely
	* Through enduring, Biblically grounded faith

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?” John 14:9-10

From creation, throughout the Old Testament and ultimately in the Lord Jesus Christ God has made Himself known. **Jesus came as the full and final revelation** of the nature and goodness, the love and justice of God. To see Jesus is to see God.

***How can you grow in faith?*** How can you trust Jesus more completely? Get to know Him more through His Word. **Study the Bible**. Learn about God from Genesis to Revelation. Focus on the person and teachings of Jesus. The more you know Jesus, the more you know the heart of God – His nature, His will, His desires, His goodness, His faithfulness, His love.

***This is our first commitment*** – it is the first commitment of the follower of Jesus – we trust in Him. We know that in this world we will have troubles, but we will not let our hearts be troubled because we trust in the Lord with all of our hearts. We don’t lean on our own understanding, but in all our ways we acknowledge the Lord Jesus, and He directs our paths. He provides for us as the Good Shepherd.

So we study Scripture. We exercise the muscle of faith. And a key expression of that is that ***we are committed to prayer***.

1. We will **Trust** Jesus completely

“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 14:12-14

Here in John 14 we come to the first of six verses where Jesus commands his followers to pray. This one includes ***the mind-blowing promise*** that we will do greater things than Jesus Himself because we have Jesus interceding for us at the right hand of the Father; and we have the Holy Spirit guiding us and empowering us. We pray IN JESUS’ Name. We pray for His glory, based on His authority, according to His will.

And He hears us. He answers. And as we grow in faith and pray more boldly we see more answers to prayer and our faith grows even more. It’s a beautiful cycle.

That is our first commitment and all the others grow from this. Faith. We trust COMPLETELY in the Lord Jesus. Second.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Worship** Jesus passionately

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John 14:15

The more you know Jesus, the more you will trust Him; ***and the more you know Him the more you will LOVE HIM.*** To know Jesus is to be continually amazed and inspired. He is the most glorious, the most wonderful, the most gracious, the most loving, the most challenging, the most bold, the most inspiring, the most convicting leader in history. There is no one like Jesus.

And Jesus has told us his love language: obedience. Of course, ***this is the love language of all parents.*** We know better than our children so we instruct them to obey us because that is how they will be safe and how they will be happy. When we see our little ones straying, and it’s not hard to see what their little eyes are watching, we step in to correct them, to discipline them before things go too far.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Worship** Jesus passionately
	* Through joyful **Disciplines** that prioritize quality time with Him

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.” John 14:16

As we learn to walk in obedience to the Lord Jesus, ***we get to know the voice of the Holy Spirit***, our Helper, our Comforter, our Guide, our Friend. And we cultivate that relationship through the practice of spiritual disciplines or holy habits. These are not dutiful obligations but joyful disciplines.

Does a concert violinist consider it a burdensome duty to practice every day? Does a professional athlete begrudge his or her time in the gym or on the practice field? Does a PhD student resent hours upon hours in the library, in reading and writing? Does a business person get annoyed by extended hours at the task?

Some of you are like, well maybe a little. But overall, we all know that ***if you want to be good at something you have to put in the time.*** And the more you practice the more piano becomes natural for you and playing is a joy. The more you work at your sport the more freedom and fun you have playing it. The more you excel in your academic field the more you can understand and express what you are learning. The more you develop your skills and connections in business the more you can help other people and expand your company.

The same thing is true with your relationship with God. At first reading the Bible and praying may feel like shooting free-throws or playing scales. It may feel like going over flashcards or grinding out hours at the office. But over time you get more comfortable; you get more familiar with the Bible; you get to know the voice of God in your heart; ***you find little practices that make the time fly by*** and help you feel closer to your Creator.

Think of time with the Lord just like time with your husband or wife or closest friend or favorite child. I know you don’t have a favorite, but it gives you the idea. Pick a child or grandchild. The point is that any relationship needs TIME in order to thrive. To some extent it doesn’t matter what you DO during that time – you might just sit and talk over coffee or ice cream. You might watch a football game or shoot baskets outside. You might just take a walk.

But it takes TIME. **You have to prioritize the relationship,** or you will begin to feel distant. You won’t know each other as well. You won’t enjoy each other as much. This is also true with the Lord. Spiritual disciplines help us get God into our schedule. Daily Bible reading, regular times of prayer, journaling, Bible memorization, simply attending worship most every Sunday, singing along with Christian radio, walking in a park and praying as you walk, meeting with other Believers to discuss Scripture and pray for each other… There are so many ways to develop these habits of grace. But all of them take TIME and attention and practice.

And the key word is JOY. Our theme verse for the whole series has been John 15:5.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Worship** Jesus passionately
	* Through joyful **Disciplines** that prioritize quality time with Him

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

As we abide in the Lord Jesus, trusting in Him, worshiping Him, loving Him, resting in Him, ***the Holy Spirit produces fruit in us*** and through us. Apart from Jesus we can do nothing. But in Him we become fruitful agents of His kingdom. And the result is in v. 10.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Worship** Jesus passionately
	* Through joyful **Disciplines** that prioritize quality time with Him

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11

***Jesus’ goal is our peace and joy in Him.*** And He knows that can only come from a relationship with Him. Apart from Jesus we will not find true peace or love or joy or anything else of real value. But as we prioritize time with the Lord Jesus, as we grow in our devotion to Him, His joy will be in us and our joy will be full.

What does this look like for you?

That’s **what the worksheet is designed** to help you figure out. That’s why it’s helpful to meet with another believer, to bounce ideas off of each other and discern the best practices for each of you right now.

* Do you need more time alone or maybe more time with people?
* Do you need more time outside or more quiet time inside?
* Do you enjoy lists and routines or flexibility and spontaneity?
* Does it help you to keep a journal or maybe you are blessed by singing Christian music in the car.

Just as there are so many ways to enjoy a relationship with any person, so there are lots of ways to enjoy a relationship with Jesus. But like all relationships, ***it takes time and intentionality*** in order to deepen your trust in the Lord and unlock your JOY in Him.

First, we commit to trusting in Jesus completely. Second, we promise to worship Jesus passionately, finding our deepest joy in Him. Third:

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Walk with** Jesus faithfully
	* Through Spirit-empowered, relationship-enhanced **Formation**

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you… You are my friends if you do what I command you.” John 15:12,14

Jesus made it clear that **His love language is OBEDIENCE**. If you love Jesus, the way to show it is by keeping His commands. And He made it nice and simple for us; very memorable. The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And the second command is related: to love your neighbor as yourself.

That’s it. If we will love God and love others, we will be following the teaching of our rabbi. The first two commitments are about loving God. The other two are about loving our neighbor. Walking out a life of love.

In order to grow to be more and more like Jesus, more loving, ***we all need a FORMATION PROCESS***. Again, this is true in any area and with any discipline: music, education, sports, business… If you want to get better at something you have to work at it. You need a training program.

And the truism applies: ***your current system is PERFECTLY DESIGNED for the results you are getting.*** So if your life is overflowing with **the fruit of the Spirit** and you see in and through you love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, then please write your book and share with the rest of us what you’re doing so we can all learn from you!

But for most of us, there is a lot of room for growth. This is why Jesus chose us:

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Walk with** Jesus faithfully
	* Through Spirit-empowered, relationship-enhanced **Formation**

“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.” John 15:16

Fruit is first internal – that ***we BECOME more loving***, merciful, righteous, holy and good. We become more like Jesus. That internal fruit then naturally produces external fruit in our relationships with others. We love and serve and give.

Many of you have noticed that the spiritual life commitments are a little redundant and overlapping. Yes. They are. We worship Jesus through spiritual disciplines. And we walk with Jesus through a process of spiritual formation. But what this third commitment adds is the VITAL ingredient of RELATIONSHIPS.

***People grow best in COMMUNITY.*** A follower of Jesus cannot walk alone. We always walk together. At Oakwood we have Community Groups that tend to be larger and include both men and women. And we also have Discipleship Groups that are smaller and same gender. Some over-achievers even do both. Some add in an Oakwood Mill class or additional Bible study.

The format will vary based on your schedule and life stage, but the point for all of us is to find some other believers to walk with on this journey. Don’t walk alone. Solomon observed that 3,000 years ago: one person alone may fall down and have no one to help them up. One person alone may be attacked and robbed along the road. But a friend can help protect you and help pick you up when you trip. ***“A cord of three strands is not easily broken.”***

If we understand this with our clotheslines and climbing ropes, shouldn’t we also understand this in our relationships? Everyone should at least have one accountability partner or mentor. Many of us have found that a Discipleship Group is better with three than just with two. There’s something about the cross-pollination with an extra person. Two is good. Three can be better.

Who is your person? Another truism applies here: if you WANT A FRIEND guess what? You have to ***BE A FRIEND***. And the first rule of friendship is just SHOWING UP. So, visit a small group. Check out a discipleship group. Text a friend to get coffee and go over your spiritual life worksheets together. Set a time to meet up at least twice a month. If you ***aim for weekly,*** you’ll end up meeting 2-3 times per month. If you aim for monthly, sometimes 2-3 months will go by that you don’t meet. And all of these commitments must be guided by and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Walk with** Jesus faithfully
	* Through Spirit-empowered, relationship-enhanced **Formation**

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” John 16:13

This section of Scripture is filled with ***promises about the Holy Spirit***. This is why Jesus knew it was better that He go back to the Father, so the Holy Spirit would come and be with all of His followers everywhere at the same time. The Comforter, the Helper, will be with us, will encourage and strengthen us and will guide us into all the truth.

Often the way the Spirit does that is through the potent combination of **the Bible and a Christian friend**. It’s like Diet Coke with a Mento. Powerful. Bible plus friend. Boom.

Who’s your person? The Holy Spirit is showing them to you right now. Contact them this afternoon! One more commitment.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Work with** Jesus diligently
	* Through gift-developing, world-changing kingdom **Service**

“But when the Helper comes… he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness.” John 15:26-27

Here is another ministry of the Holy Spirit: to empower us and enable us to testify about Jesus. We don’t have to worry about the words we will say, because the Spirit of God will give us the words right when we need them.

Now, I know that I talk for a living. I know not everyone does that. Some of you work for a living. I wonder what that’s like… The point is to be yourself and share Jesus as only YOU CAN.

* If you’re a behind the scenes worker type person, then ***lead with service***. Help people. Eventually they will stop you and ask why you do so much.
* If you’re a quiet listener, here’s a revelation: ***sit and listen to people***. A lot of times you don’t even have to say 3 words, just ask, “How you doin’?” Ok that is technically three words, but only three.
* If you enjoy hospitality, have people over and give them food.
* If you like to golf, go golfing with a friend.
* If you like to crochet, make a little square thing and give it to someone.

Be yourself. The Holy Spirit will show you how you can best share Jesus. Pray for boldness and for opportunities. God loves to answer those prayers.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Work with** Jesus diligently
	* Through gift-developing, world-changing kingdom **Service**

“And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment…” John 16:8

The Holy Spirit will do the job of convicting a friend or neighbor. You don’t have to do that part. Our job is to love people. To be patient with them. To get to know them. The Holy Spirit does the hard work. He’s very good at it. You’re here because He got to you.

Our job is really just to pay attention and **see where God is already working**. Do you have a friend who is struggling with choices they have made? Do you know someone who is asking questions about God and right and wrong? Is someone in your life wondering about death and eternity?

Over and over in this section of Scripture Jesus reminds us and exhorts us to PRAY.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Work with** Jesus diligently
	* Through gift-developing, world-changing kingdom **Service**

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.” John 16:23

The first and foremost way we work with Jesus is through prayer. Six times Jesus states and restates this promise that He will hear, and He will act as we pray.

If we really want to change lives and change the world, we need to be people of prayer, because ***God’s work in the world matters so much more than our work***. But so often we flip that right upside down and assume that our work matters more.

If there’s one thing that should come of this spiritual life worksheet and our meetings with each other, I hope it’s ***a renewed commitment to individual prayer and small group prayer***.

Which brings us to Jesus’ own prayer in John 17.

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Work with** Jesus diligently
	* Through gift-developing, world-changing kingdom **Service**

“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me.” John 17:4-5

Jesus prayed for his own glory because by having his name lifted up he could draw more people to salvation in Himself. Jesus glorified God the Father by submitting to the Father’s will and accomplishing the work the Father gave to Him – the work of saving lost sinners like you and me.

***Now we glorify Jesus by doing the work He gave US to do!*** We pray for people, we love people, we serve people, we share the good news of Jesus with people and seek to train and multiply DISCIPLES. And thank goodness we don’t do this work alone!

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Work with** Jesus diligently
	* Through gift-developing, world-changing kingdom **Service**

“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.” John 17:21

This is how the world will come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God – if we will really love one another and work together as the One body of Christ. A unity patterned after the Trinity and enabled by the Trinity. We ARE one in Christ, now we have to live out that unity in our little church and in our region and in the world.

So here are our commitments:

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Trust** Jesus completely
2. We will **Worship** Jesus passionately
3. We will **Walk** with Jesus faithfully
4. We will **Work** with Jesus diligently

***Our spiritual life begins with trust.*** We enter a relationship with God through personal faith in Jesus and He raises us from death to life. That is where spiritual life begins and what fuels our growth in Christ – our love for Him and trust in Him. The more you know Jesus the more you will trust Him. So “don’t let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also” in Jesus. Trust Him COMPLETELY.

***Trust grows into love and worship.*** Our calling is to love the Lord our God with all we are – all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. We summed that up with the word PASSIONATELY. Often our love grows weak. Our passions are too small. Or we direct our deepest love to the things of this world. So we renew our commitment to give God all of our praise, glory and honor - to put Him FIRST in our hearts and lives.

Trust grows into worship which becomes ***a lifestyle in which we walk with Jesus***. We develop a familiar friendship with the Lord, spending time with Him every day, reading His Word, studying His word, memorizing His word, discussing, praying through the Bible, keeping sabbath, resting in the Lord, fasting periodically to focus our hearts and minds and bodies on the Lord. We will not be perfect, but our goal is to be FAITHFUL.

And as we walk with Jesus, ***we will increasingly WORK with Him***. Our lives will be more and more devoted to His kingdom and not to ourselves or the things of this world. We will be diligent in our service to the King. We will love and serve our neighbors. We will take care of one another. We will show hospitality in Jesus’ name. We will share the good news in both word and deed.

Now, let’s take **a couple of minutes to reflect** on these commitments and search our hearts. Then let’s stand and restate them together.

**QUIET INSTRUMENTAL**

**Our Spiritual Life Commitments:**

1. We will **Trust** Jesus completely through enduring, Biblically grounded faith
2. We will **Worship** Jesus passionately through joyful disciplines that prioritize quality time with Him
3. We will **Walk** with Jesus faithfully through Spirit-empowered, relationship-enhanced formation
4. We will **Work** with Jesus diligently through gift-developing, world-changing kingdom service