

**Knowing and Enjoying the Lord Jesus
Spring 2023 College Conference**

**Message One
*Jesus is the True Vine***

We must see that Christ is the vine, the Father is the vinedresser, and we are the branches (John 15:1, 5). When we become a believer, we are incorporated into this wonderful organism. Our life is learning to rest in the Lord's command to "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4). Only when we abide in Him can we bear fruit for God (John 15:4-5). As believers we must learn to abide in Him, allow His word to abide in us, and abide in His love (John 15:5, 7, 9). The fruit we bear will be answered prayer, love, and other believers who know Christ and also abide in Him (John 15:7, 12, 16).

To the weary and lowly, Jesus called: "Come to Me" and "Follow Me"

²⁸ *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28)

¹⁴ *As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.* (Mark 2:14)

To His followers, Jesus entreated: "Abide in Me"

⁴ *Abide in Me, and I in you.* (John 15:4a)

The Christian life is more than a system or outward form. It is a life of abiding in Christ.

¹ *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.* (John 15:1-8)

The nature of this relationship with Christ—a flow of life

The completeness of this union with Christ—the branches need the vine, but the vine also needs the branches.

The goal of this relationship with Christ—fruit for others

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Message Two *Jesus is the bread of life*

Jesus declares “I am the bread of life” (John 6:48). When we eat this bread, we have eternal life, because His flesh is true food (John 6:54-55). When we are filled with Jesus as bread, our life changes—we live because of Him (John 6:57). The people who were fed by the Lord followed Him because their stomachs were filled (John 6:27). Jesus says that we should aim for food that doesn’t perish, implying that His true food will enable us to truly follow Him (6:27). This is fulfilled by the Spirit (John 6:63).

The background miracle—Jesus feeds the five thousand

⁵Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?” ⁶This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. ⁷Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.” ⁸One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, ⁹“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?” ¹⁰Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.” ¹³So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. (John 6:5–13)

Jesus is that bread

⁴⁸“I am the bread of life. (John 6:48)

The effect of eating Jesus flesh and drinking His blood is having eternal life and living “because of Him.”

⁵⁴“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵“For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. (John 6:54–55)

⁵⁶“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. ⁵⁷“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. (John 6:56–57)

²⁶Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." (John 6:26–27)

"Eating" is fulfilled in the Spirit and by the word

⁶³"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

Not many follow Jesus

⁶⁶As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. ⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. ⁶⁹"We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." (John 6:66–69)

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**Message Three
*Jesus is a Life-giving Spirit***

Our way of enjoying the Lord as life is by the Spirit. The Last Adam became a life-giving spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45). It is the Spirit who gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6). We must pray in spirit (Ephesians 6:18), serve in spirit (Romans 1:9). Our spirit is one of power, love, and a sober mind (2 Timothy 1:7). We can be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). A very easy way to be filled in Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord, for no one can say, "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3)

God made us with spirit, soul, and body

²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Our spirit and soul are different

¹² For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

¹⁴ But a natural [lit: soulish] man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Our spirit is the center of a healthy Christian life

²³ But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:23-24)

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16)

⁹ For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son... (Romans 1:9)

¹⁸ *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit [or, in spirit] (Ephesians 5:18)*

¹⁸ *With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit... (Ephesians 6:18)*

Spiritual experiences are not a feeling, a thought, or a desire, though all may be involved. The Spirit is a person, the last Adam, who has joined Himself with our spirit to give us life.

⁴² *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. (1 Corinthians 15:42-46)*

¹⁷ *But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (1 Corinthians 6:17)*

We can initiate experiencing and knowing the Spirit by calling on His name.

³ *Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)*

¹² *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him (Romans 10:12)*

Knowing and beholding this Person in/with our spirit is the key to real freedom and real change.

¹⁷ *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)*

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**Message Four
Jesus is the Good Shepherd**

The Lord is our shepherd (Psalm 23:1). He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). We really need a Shepherd to guide our soul, which is being led astray by our own inward darkness and the sinful world around us. Our Shepherd knows each of us by name and calls us (John 10:4). He lays down His life for us (John 10:11). We follow Him because we know His voice (John 10:4). He leads us to the flock, the church, so there will be one flock and one Shepherd (John 10:16). In the church we can find pasture under the gentle shepherding of our Good Shepherd.

The Lord is our Shepherd

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. ³He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.(Psalm 23:1–3)

²⁵For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25)

He knows our name and lays down His life for us

³To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (John 10:3)

¹¹I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

We know Him, because we know His voice

⁴When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” (John 10:4–5)

He brings us to the flock, the church, where we find pasture

¹⁶"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. (John 10:16)

⁹"I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. (John 10:9)

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**Message Five
Jesus is the Lamb of God**

Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Related to the penalty for sin, God laid all our iniquity upon Christ, who died for us as a perfect payment for all of our sins (Isaiah 53:6). We are now healed by His scourging (Isaiah 53:5) and our scarlet sin is made white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). We must learn to continually enjoy Christ's work by enjoying the fellowship that we have based on His cleansing blood. Thus, we must learn to confess our sins so that we can maintain a fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9). Related to the source of sin (our independence from God), Jesus opened the way for us to live in oneness with Him, a "dependent life" upon God Himself.

The first time people see Jesus in the Gospel of John, He is presented as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”

²⁵ They asked him, and said to him, “Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” ²⁶ John answered them saying, “I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. ²⁷ It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” ²⁸ These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:25-29)

Sin drives a barrier between God and us and eventually results in death.

*But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,
And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)*

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12)

Sin is lawlessness

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. (1 John 3:4)

There is a source of sin—our independence from God

¹³ *"But you said in your heart,*

'I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God,

And I will sit on the mount of assembly

In the recesses of the north.

¹⁴ *'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;*

I will make myself like the Most High.' (Isaiah 14:13-14)

²² *Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices*

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

²³ *"For rebellion is as the sin of divination,*

And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.... (1 Samuel 15:22-23a)

Jesus, the Lamb of God, bore all of our sin and iniquity, and by His blood we are forgiven.

⁵ *But He was pierced through for our transgressions,*

He was crushed for our iniquities;

The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,

And by His scourging we are healed.

⁶ *All of us like sheep have gone astray,*

Each of us has turned to his own way;

But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all

To fall on Him.

⁷ *He was oppressed and He was afflicted,*

Yet He did not open His mouth;

Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,

And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,

So He did not open His mouth. (Isaiah 53:5-7)

"for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28)

We can subjectively experience the washing of the blood of Jesus by learning to confess our sins, so that we can enjoy clean fellowship with God.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

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Message Six Jesus is the ladder connecting heaven and earth

Christ is a ladder connecting heaven and earth (John 1:51). This means that He can supply us to live a heavenly life on earth. When Jacob was running away in desperation from a difficult family situation, God appeared to Him in a dream and spoke heavenly things to that earthly man (Genesis 28:10-22). He injected heaven into Jacob's life. Jacob saw the house of God, heard the speaking of God, and tasted the fear of God. It took many years for Jacob to realize what exactly that vision meant, but he eventually lived it toward the end of his life. This is what Jesus, as the heavenly ladder, does for us. He elevates us, causes us to live a life for Him, and causes us to be different from all the worldly things.

Jesus is that ladder

⁵¹And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending *and descending on the Son of Man.*" (John 1:51)

Jacob dreamt of a ladder connecting heaven to earth

¹⁰Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. ¹²He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. ¹⁴"Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." ¹⁸So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. ¹⁹He called the name of that place

Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. ²⁰Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, ²¹and I return to my father’s house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. ²²“This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.” (Genesis 28:10–22)

The Psalmist boldly declares how his life on earth is different. He has a heavenly life on earth.

¹⁰For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Psalm 84:10)