



Week 1: “Abide in the Living Word”

P Mike

February 17-18

(Mark gone for Jalee’s Birthday)

- **Key Passage:** *“If you remain in Me and My Words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you,” (John 15:7 NIV).*
- **Focus:** Jesus compares our hearts to a garden. But are we fallow or fertile spiritual soil? How can I tell which one is me? Today let’s challenge the three common misconceptions on how people change and highlight the true Way to genuine discipleship. So how do we become fruitful followers of Jesus in our “actual” lives? We will need to *Abide in the Living Word!*

Clash of Narratives!

Lakewood Church shooter Genesse Ivonne Moreno attacked last Sunday just before their 2 PM service. AR-15 “Free Palestine” written on it. Her personal motives for attacking the church are complicated, I’m sure.

But as we all know, war broke out in the Middle East on October 7, 2023.

[Slide]



One group of people believe Israel colonized Palestine in 1948, and they are fighting for their freedom against the occupation of Palestine.

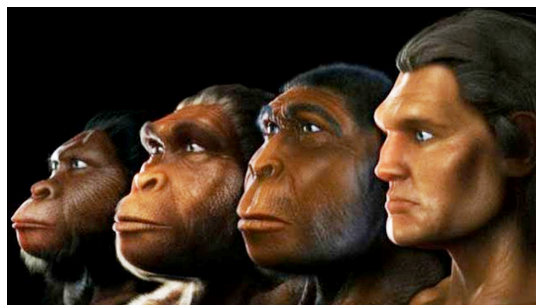
[Slide]



But another group believe Israel has been the ancient homeland of the Jews for over 3,000 years.

The difference is in the stories we believe. Human beings are a story-driven people. We get our view of the world from the stories we believe.

[slide]



If you do not believe the Bible, then you might believe human beings evolved from monkeys and are simply a higher form of animal. That's why it's perfectly fine to live anyway you want because life, after all, is about the survival of the fittest.

[slide]



But if you believe the Bible, then man was created in the image of God and endowed with self-evident rights like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

[slide]

3-photo slide (I'm not for sale, LGBTQ... Chinese dictator)

If you don't the Bible narrative, then human beings enslave one another and peddle children for perversion; we invent genders that don't exist, and form governments that are communist dictatorships.

[slide]

3-photo slide for the Bible (Sound of Freedom, Mark & Jalee, 1776)

But if you believe the Bible narrative, you set people free, you know God created humans male or female, and you form governments that honor the dignity of human beings regardless of race, color, or creed.

[Slide]



And the most amazing thing of all, if you believe the Bible narrative then you know that this God personally came into history and revealed Himself to us in the Person of Jesus Christ.

And you also know that this God continues to abide within and among His people as the Holy Spirit.

Today, we begin a new series called, “The Garden of the Heart: Abiding in the Word with the Word. Today’s opening message is called “Abide in the Living Word.”

[slide]



[Slide]

“If you remain in Me and My Words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you,” (John 15:7 NIV).

Imagine having such an intimate relationship with the Word of God that Jesus says, “Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” Well, this has to be a mistake in the biblical text, some might say. How many of us have read through the whole Bible, and you pray for things, and your prayers are not answered?

Yup, me too.

So what did Jesus mean?

Aside from the Apostles, the other guy who experienced this kind of abiding oneness with the Word of God was Moses. Some of us have been reading a ton of Moses lately in our Bible Project Reading Plan.

Moses Abiding in YHWH

“And the Lord said to them, “Now listen to what I say: “If there were prophets among you, I, the Lord, would reveal myself in visions. I would speak to them in dreams. But not with my servant Moses. Of all my house, he is the one I trust. I speak to him face to face, clearly, and not in riddles! He sees the Lord as he is. So why were you not afraid to criticize my servant Moses?” (Numbers 12:6-8 NLT)

How does Moses split the Red Sea? The Lord told him exactly what to do!

How did Peter walk on water? “Command me to come to you, Lord!”

Can we get there? Yes, but He wants us to ABIDE, which remember means to remain continuously connected to Him—a lifelong journey, a long obedience in God’s direction for a lifetime.

You see, some of us might be looking for a shortcut. John Mark Comer in *Practicing the Way* lists

Three common misconceptions on how people TRANSFORM

Inspiration

Transformation

- **The Zap:** I’m changed now because I heard a great message. When I first came to Christ, I was so inspired. I believed I would never sin again! I was 17 and on fire for Jesus! That emotional high lasted

about 3 weeks, not bad for an emotional high! But it is the nature of emotions to go up and down.

[slide]

- **Willpower:** I'm not going to lust today! Cold showers and a lot of pushups. But the more you try NOT to think about something the more you what? Think about it! This is why if you made a new year's resolution for 2024, you have probably broken it by now! LOL

This next one, you need to really listen carefully, so you do not hear what I am NOT saying...

- **More Bible:** We absolutely need to study the Bible! That's what this message is about! But how many of us have noticed that just filling your head with more Bible INFORMATION does not automatically translate into Biblical Spiritual TRANSFORMATION? Exactly. Take it from someone who has read the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation over a dozen times. Again, you should know the whole Bible narrative, but how many of us know that the greatest Bible scholars of Jesus's day were the who? Pharisees!

[slide]

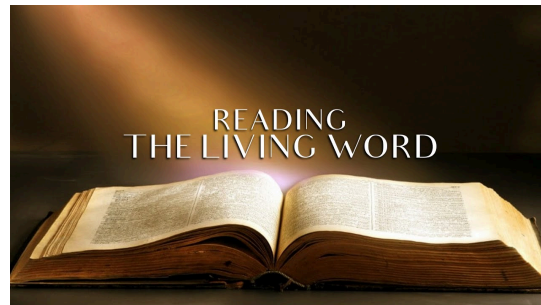
But when the Messiah Himself was walking down Main Street Jerusalem, they could not recognize Him!

[Slide]

So what we need is not just more Biblical teaching (we do need that!), but we need Spiritual REVELATION!

We need to ABIDE IN THE LIVING WORD!

[slide]



So how do we TRANSFORM into someone who is abiding in the Living Word?

[slide]

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26).

This isn't mysticism but it is mystical. By mystical, I mean you are going to encounter or experience the Spirit as you read His Word. I'll come back to this point.

[slide]

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

- Student
- Practitioner
- Teacher

[slide]

Rams Fans (excited about the Word—that's good! But you're sitting in the stands) You need to let the Word train you. You need to become a player in the field, the Harvest field!

[slide]

Players suit up, train and practice, and execute as a team.

[slide]

Coaches help train players.

Coaches and players obviously get pumped up like fans do, but their energy is actually directed into living out the game of football. Fans go home lamenting that their team lost (49ers) or rejoicing that your team won (Taylor Swift).

Coaches and players go back and study film (study the Bible)

Next week, Pastor Mark will take us on a deep dive into the Parable of the Soils, because our hearts are truly like a GARDEN.

But without getting into that lesson, here's one thing I want you to catch about that moment of discipleship that makes a huge difference between remaining a fan in the stands, part of the crowd, and becoming a player...

[slide]

“And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted” (Matthew 13:10-11).

So by now the crowd has dispersed, but the disciples don't leave. They ABIDE with the Living Word, and they want to know more! If you hear something that sounds confusing, do you shrug your shoulders and walk away? Remember, last time I said that Jesus said WHOEVER denies himself, takes up his cross can follow Jesus. The mark of a player in the Kingdom is his desire to pursue the coach and learn more.

How do we this today with the Holy Spirit?

[slide]

“In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and He was God...So the Word became human and lived here on earth” (Jn. 1:1, 14).

[slide]

The written word reveals to us the Living Word who illuminates the written Word!

Here's the mystical part...

[slide]

Emotions, obedience/character, Smoke/Cloud

[slide]

“But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, He will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is” (John 16:13 MSG).

PEarl's Deep Dive Bible class starts this Wednesday

My class on a Deeper Dive into scripture is starting on Wed. If you could plug that class, that would be a great next step for people to take in abiding in God's word. 😊👍

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND MEDITATION

1. Why are narratives (stories) important? Which narrative of humanity do you believe?
2. What does Jesus mean when He says “abide in My Word, ask anything and it will be done for you” (John 15:7).
3. Explain 3 common misconceptions of transformation.
4. What does it mean to abide in the Living Word?
5. What is the Transformation Arc of the Study Discipline?
6. What is the relationship between emotional experiences and actual obedience and character development?
7. What did the Holy Spirit mystically reveal to you today?