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Contents

Faithfully Abiding & Fruitfully Remaining	Page 3
How to Stay Strong in a World of Rejection	Page 8
In the World, But Not of the World	Page 10
Jesus Prays for His Own	Page 131
Truth that Anchors you in a Fallen World	Page 17
The Shroud of Turin	Page 19
Check it Out	Page 22
Prayer Focus: Missionaries	Page 23
To Be Loved by God	Page 24

THE WINE PRESS



Pressing into Truth, Pouring out His Grace

September 2025

Rooted Where It Matters

The world is loud. Everyone's got an opinion, a cause, a trend to chase. And if we're not careful, we end up running on empty—trying to keep up, but never really satisfied. Jesus cuts through all that noise with one simple invitation: “Abide in Me.” Stay connected. Stay rooted.

That's the focus of this month's issue—what it really means to live in the world but not of it. When we abide in Him, something powerful happens. We're still in the world—we still have jobs, families, responsibilities—but we're not owned by it. We don't have to bow to its pressure or measure ourselves by its standards. Instead, His life flows into ours, filling us with strength when we're weak, joy when things don't make sense, and peace that's unshakable!

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Faithfully Abiding & Fruitfully Remaining

By Andrew Irwin

Have you ever been traveling when you have gotten to a junction, and the turn you normally make is shut. Thus, you are diverted along another road; you know what direction you are going, but you are not quite sure of the way. Those journeys often act as a metaphor for life; we all have had significant points in life that we can recognize as Junction moments when we look back at them. They have taken us down roads never traveled, when the journey has become difficult, or we have found ourselves traveling through the dark valley wondering will the light ever break through again. Often, we have no choice when those junctions come – we must walk the road set before us. We are traveling a road unknown, wondering what God is doing and what we are meant to be doing as we walk it.

John 15:1-18 is one well-known passage that speaks comfort and truth to many situations. It is familiar for those who have grown up in church, yet, it was unfamiliar in that I found challenge and comfort in the context in which Jesus spoke to the disciples. Specifically, it was the road they were traveling, as they left the upper room – Jesus knew there was a junction ahead, a junction not just for Him but one that would shake the foundation's of the world and their lives as they knew it as He was taken to be crucified. Jesus called the disciples to abide/remain in Him – to trust Him – in the shadow of the cross. The

comfort? Whatever is ahead, we can lean on Christ; He is the one who goes before us and walks with us.

The Context

At the end of Chapter 14, Jesus has told the disciples of the coming Helper of God, the Counselor, the Holy Spirit (14:26): He who will be the presence and peace of God among them. Yet, even as He spoke about what was ahead, this group of men would have little idea just how abruptly things would change. He warned them that He will not be able to speak to them for much more because “The Prince of this World is coming” (14:28), a warning that things were about to drastically change for them.

The Shadow of the Cross

Jesus knew that his time was coming; little did the Disciples know just what was ahead as they got up with Him and followed out the road one last time. Little did the disciples know it would be the last time they would walk with Jesus as they knew Him. Thus, it was approaching such a junction on their journey that Jesus spoke the words we consider today.

The command to abide in the Vine was far more than just assurance; it was a commission. Jesus' words remind us today that regardless of what road we walk, we are to do two things: trust/abide in Him; and produce fruit in keeping with that

abiding. The Disciples had left the upper room, and soon they would leave behind all they knew as their world would change quicker than they could imagine. Yet, even as they would enter a perpetual state of flux, as they moved forward in the power of the Holy Spirit they would learn that faithful following meant trusting Christ in every season (abiding in Him) and living for Him (producing good fruit).

Learning to Truly Abide

This group of merry men have known nothing but Jesus. They have been in his presence for some three years, eating with Him, spending days listening to Him teach about God, the world, and truth. They have seen him raise the dead, give sight to the blind, open the ears of the deaf, treat the untreatable diseases and value the people the world might reject.

They have been abiding in the presence of Jesus for all the time they have known Him. Thus, at that moment, the image and teaching might seem strange, yet, soon, things would change, and they would learn that true abiding is not a physical act but a reality of faith. To Abide in Jesus is a response of Faith. The disciples could only truly understand what it meant to remain in Christ when He was no longer with them, and as they tried to understand his resurrection and what it meant for them, they would only grasp those things by remaining/trusting in Him.

Jesus is God; it is in Him we find all that we are looking for: the peace of God, the way to God; and, the truth and life of God. To abide in Jesus Christ is to root ourselves the truth of who God is, what Jesus has done and what God will do when we come to the judgment of all things. John 15:1-8 reminds us that when we remain in Him, we find the faithfulness of Christ that produces the fruitfulness He needs to make known his Good news.

The Passage: John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me? "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing



yourselves to be my disciples.

Where to Remain (1-3)

As the disciples listened to Jesus teaching about the vine, they must have thought: “We are Good in terms of abiding because we are walking with Him.” After all, they were literally abiding in his presence, yet, soon, everything would change. It would be a few days before they would grasp just what was going on as He would be arrested, then they would watch as the state authorities would crucify Him, as they would experience three days of hopelessness, waiting without expecting the resurrection to come.

You wonder what words of Christ must have rung in their heads as they tried to process their collapsing world? Why would He tell us to abide in Him, to trust Him when He has gone. Little did they realize that in the waiting, God was working, and they were learning what true abiding looks like. To remain in Jesus is not a physical reality but a spiritual one, meaning it is possible at all times, in all places for all followers of God.

The disciples would learn that even as He went from them, He was still with them throughout the dwelling presence and power of God the Holy Spirit. Their faithfulness to his call and their trust in Him was possible because of the reality of the new Kingdom. Hence, the disciples and all followers of Jesus would learn that to remain in Him and trust Him is to walk with Him on whatever road we find ourselves journeying down.

Today, whether we find ourselves resting on green pastures or under the long shadow of the dark valley, we must follow the example of the disciples and root ourselves in the true vine. We find all we need for the journey, for rooted in



the true vine is the sustenance of faith and life.

The Gardener is no Fool (1-2)

Yet, we must not fool ourselves about what rootedness looks like, for the Gardener is always tending the vines, making sure that those which are rooted are producing fruit in keeping with their source. In the same movement, the Gardner cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit and prunes the fruitful to be even more abundant in their production.

The fruitless, He will cut off, yet in the same motion, He will prune the fruitful to increase their production. A reminder that as our faith is a gift of grace, so too is the content of our Kingdom walk; it is God who does all the work in us and through us, and we rejoice in that freeing truth!

The life of the Vine (3)

In verse three we learn that the words of Jesus are the Life source of the Kingdom. The words of Jesus are the sustenance of the vine. Not that the

literal words of Jesus have some magical/mystical potency about them; no, but that the sum of Christ's teachings (Gk Logos as translated teaching in 14:23 in the NIV), is the sustenance the vine provides for those who truly remain. The word's of Christ being all that He said and all that He did because He Himself is the incarnate word of God. Let us make sure we are feeding on the right source.

The Logic of Fruitfulness

The logic of Fruitfulness flows through the New Testament. In Matthew 7:16, Jesus states: "You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?" Do you see the Fruitful Logic? On this journey of life, the fruit we produce is directly correlated to the source for which we feed.

If we drink from the wells of the world, then we will produce worldly fruit: if we drink from the well of Life (if we are rooted into the true vine), then our fruit will be that which advances the Kingdom of God. As a fig tree cannot produce olives, a false branch cannot produce Gospel fruit. Let us use the logic of Kingdom Fruitfulness to assess our own lives and make sure that our fruit is in keeping with the true Vine we claim to be connected to.

Why We Remain (4-8)

The words of Jesus challenge us to consider where we are rooted as we walk the road set before us. Following Him as a disciple is to both walk with Him; and remain rooted in Him through every season of life. Thus, produce fruit in keeping with the source of sustenance He provides – his teaching in word indeed. Where do we abide? In the person and work of Jesus. In the second half of this passage, we learn something of the why behind the

what of abiding.

Without Jesus We Can Do Nothing(4-6)

First Reason: we remain because we can do nothing of eternal significance without the person of Jesus Christ. He is not just the foundation on which we stand, nor the guide we follow. He is the reason and power behind all we do. As a branch must be connected to a vine to produce fruit, so too a disciple must remain in Jesus to produce fruit in keeping with the Kingdom. We remain in Him because without Him, we can do nothing for God.

While Salvation is a work of Grace, verse 4 seems to suggest a certain responsibility for the believer as they journey with Jesus – a responsibility of perseverance. We receive in faith, and then we faithfully follow: choosing to abide in Jesus over the things of the world because we know there is nothing better; when we know Jesus, then we will always choose Jesus because we know there is no better choice and He will respond in faithfulness to the same cause.

Following Him as a disciple is to both walk with Him; and remain rooted in Him through every season of life.

Verses 5-6 The ultimate point is set out very simply – either we remain connected to the true vine and produce fruit in keeping with that link, or we will be thrown away and burned in the fire. What is the fruit? The fruit that we much produce in response to Christ's faithfulness regardless of context or trial is that which responds to our prayer to Him (verse 7) and that which will bring Glory to God wherever He

has placed us.

Fruitfulness for the Glory of God (7-8)

There is a purpose behind everything, and as we finish this section of the passage, the challenge that Jesus leaves us with is one of purpose. The Sovereign purpose of the Christian life is to bring Glory to God. The Bible teaches that humanity was made in the image of God, meaning we reflect something of God in our essence, and yet our essence lack's completion without knowing God. Through his work on the cross, Christ came and made possible a full relationship with God and the ability to fulfill our supreme purpose. Thus, to come to know Christ is to find the supreme purpose of human existence: knowing God and making Him Known.

We become those who live in response to the Grace of God, because in Jesus Christ we have all that we need, in every season of life, on every road we walk we know we have fully received Christ, thus, we live with Him, dependent on Him and for Him.

Conclusion: A Faithful People Are A Fruitful People

Every journey has a purpose; even when we go out for a pointless drive, it might be just to clear our head: We will eventually arrive where we need to be. The Disciples walked with Jesus, kept walking with Him after He left them (via His ascension), and in that walking knew that He never left them. They had walked from the now towards the not yet. Even though the disciples no longer knew the physical presence of Jesus, they were always aware of his more intimate Spiritual Presence through the indwelling peace of the Holy Spirit. They lived out what it meant to abide. It was not some motionless existence but the very

means by which the Kingdom of God moved. When we abide, God abounds.

Even though the disciples no longer knew the physical presence of Jesus, they were always aware of His more intimate Spiritual Presence through the indwelling peace of the Holy Spirit.

To Abide in Jesus is not a motionless stance, nor is a movement of retreat. For the Christian abiding is a verb: when we abide, we act – we produce fruit. It does not matter the road we find ourselves on, the season we find ourselves in or the storm around us. Kingdom Disciples produce Kingdom fruit and continue the work of the harvest wherever they are because in abiding in Christ, we are those who know we are secure, have received and lived in response to the gift of Grace. Kingdom Fruit is the natural result of abiding. When we are rooted deep in Jesus, when his word and example is the dwelling of our hearts and minds, then we will live like Him, with Him, and to his Glory. We must fight to abide, by doing the things that renew in us the presence of Christ and the call of the Kingdom: Prayer, Scripture, and Worship. So this day, let us remain in Jesus whatever the season, let us fight to remain in Him by prioritizing the things of the Kingdom and then let us produce fruit as God prunes us to make us more abundant for his Glory.

<https://atrirwin.com/2021/05/03/faithfully-abiding-and-fruitfully-remaining-john-151-8/>

Staying Strong In a World of Rejection

By Greg Koukl & Amy Hall

Question: Jesus has overcome the world, but today it's a depressing world. Any suggestions, Greg and Amy, to battle culture-induced melancholy?

Greg: Well, of course, we all have to deal with this because we're all living in this culture, and we're mindful of the impact of error and lies—cultural lies—on individual people and groups of people. The decisions that culture makes and the trends in culture influence lots of people. So, I'm sympathetic, obviously, to this.

I'll tell you what I do. I don't watch or listen to the news, and I don't read news periodicals. There's so much happening in the world that we cannot do anything about, and if we can't do anything about it, then why worry about it? People have argued it's helpful to know what's going on, but on the other hand, when you learn about all the things that happen, and all they do is generate anger and depression, what's the point? Why continue to go over that?

There's a passage in Philippians that is meant to be applied to individuals, but I think it can apply to broader issues too. Paul says, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence or anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things." This certainly has application for culture. Why dwell on something that's

happening in culture that you don't like and have no way of making a difference on?

Sometimes I say, "Well, I can't do anything about that. I'm just going to let it go." Something political, or policy-wise, or whatever. So, one way to deal with melancholy, I think, is to not obsess on all the bad things that are going on that we have no capability of influencing.

Why is the last thing you do in the evening to watch the news before you go to bed? First thing you do—newspaper or news reports—when you get up? No wonder you're melancholy all day long. You start the day bad. You end the day bad. I'd rather start the day without all of that stuff. And it isn't that I don't check some things out, but I don't obsess about any of this. And the news that I do focus on a little bit more are things that are appropriate to my field—things that I can speak on, that I can do something about.

Amy: This goes back to only carrying what you were meant to carry. We have a limit to what we can influence, and that doesn't mean you don't look at anything, but it just means you have a realistic understanding of what you can do. But I think when we're talking about how to combat the melancholy that comes about as you feel all these things are just coming down on this culture and we seem to be losing, again, I just go back

to the end of the book. This is how God chose to encourage the early Christians. He had John write Revelation, and Revelation is the declaration by God that He wins. So, no matter what it looks like now, no matter what suffering we're going through now, that is the future. I honestly think this is the key to keep going on these things.

All you have to do is look at the big picture of the whole Bible. Look at the prophets. Look at Jeremiah. He was the weeping prophet. Look at the horrible situation He was in, but look what that led to, ultimately. That wasn't the end of the story. Look at Moses. Now, when Moses first talks to Pharaoh and says, "You've got to let my people go," what does Pharaoh do? He makes their job harder, right? And everyone says, "This is terrible. Stop trying to help us. This is the worst." But, of course, that is only the middle of the story, and we know that God actually rescued them out of there.

So, we can't have this short-term view of all of reality. We have to be aware that God wins, and we have to keep reminding ourselves of that. Also, look at the fact that God uses terrible things to accomplish good things. Take, for example, the cross. The worst sin ever committed happened on the cross, and it was the best thing that ever happened to us. Think about when Jesus was dying on the cross and how people felt at that time—how the Christians felt. It seemed like the end. It seemed like everything was over. Nothing worse could possibly happen than this. I imagine they were pretty depressed. But that was actually the means that was going to bring the victory.

Greg: "Momentary light affliction," Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4, "is producing for us an eternal weight of glory." I like that passage, in part, because of the power of the verb. It is the affliction that

is producing this thing that's going to be better than it would have been had we not had the affliction—better for us in eternity, where neither moth nor rust destroy or thieves break in and steal, as Jesus put it. So, I do take refuge in that a lot.

All the kingdoms of this world are going to crumble, ultimately, before the kingdom of our Lord is ushered in, and that's going to be, of course, so much better than all the others. But it's painful going through the process, and this is why looking at the end is so important for us.

Amy: It makes such a difference to me—or at least, this is what I focus on, to varying degrees of success in overcoming the melancholy—but it makes such a difference to know that it's not just that God's losing for a little bit right now, but then He's going to come back. That's not the same as saying that, actually, what is happening right now is furthering God's plan in some way, even though the world is trying to fight against God. This is why, in Acts, they quote that psalm, "Why do the nations rage against God?" It's completely futile. They can't ruin God's plan in any way. God is using even the things they're doing to rebel against Him to further His own plan. So, we can just take some rest in that and continue, and know that we suffer now and have glory later. There will be a time when the earth will be as we like it, and we're going to be back on earth—one that's remade and not broken—and enjoying things beyond what we could even imagine.

<https://www.str.org/w/how-to-stay-strong-when-the-world-rejects-christian-values>

In the World but not Of the World

By Daniel Abrahams

Christians repeat the phrase “in the world, but not of the world” often enough that many will be surprised to find out that it’s not actually in the Bible. It’s a concept that transcends denominational splits and theological disagreements. You can hear it in churches across the world. But if it’s not lifted directly from the Bible, then where does it come from? What does it mean? Should we aim at it? And, perhaps most importantly, what does it look like?

Finding Our Place In The World Is Complicated

As I’ve noted, the exact phrase “in the world, but not of the world” isn’t found in scripture. However, it’s based on two ideas that are very explicit in it. These ideas are Christian believers are: (1) culturally and religiously distinct from the society around them; and (2) that rather than withdrawing from the world, believers make their home in it.

1. Christians Are To Be Holy, Set Apart

Firstly, scripture often references the idea that believers are, by nature, different to the world around them. We are to [live as foreigners](#). We work temporarily in the midst of a society that is alien to us. Consider [1 Peter 1:14-16](#), “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is

written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”

This idea can be traced throughout the Bible ([John 13:35](#); [17:16,18](#); [Philippians 3:18-20](#); [1 Peter 2:9, 11](#)). The idea that God’s people are to be different from those around them is found even in the Pentateuch ([Deuteronomy 4:5-8](#)). The distinctive laws of Israel were meant to drive the surrounding nations to amazement.

2. Christians Shouldn’t Be Monastic

Second, the imperative for the church to go into the world and live among the lost is also a thread that can be traced all over the New Testament.

In the Great Commission, which unifies all believers in purpose, Jesus says: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” ([Matthew 28:18-19](#)). My emphasis here, is on the word “go.” There is an expectation that believers will be spreading throughout the nations, making disciples wherever they go. Thus Jesus has sent his people into the world. Because it’s in seeing and interacting with believers that the nations will see his light ([Matthew 5:13-16](#); [John 17:18](#)).

The whole of the book of Acts follows the expansion of the church. First in Jerusalem and Judea, then into Samaria, and finally across the empire. From its

earliest inception the church has followed the mandate to go out. Sometimes purposefully as missionaries ([Acts 13:3](#)), sometimes incidentally as persecuted refugees ([Acts 8:4](#)), but always going.

We Must Be Both Distinct From And Active In Our World

Scripture is clear, we must be a distinct, holy people. Yet it is also clear that we must be present and active in the world. It is reconciling these two themes of Scripture that presents a challenge.

Followers of Jesus walk a very thin tightrope. Historically, keeping from being “of the world” has led many to withdraw from it socially, if not physically. Likewise, in pursuit of being “in the world”, many have reasoned themselves into the sinful lifestyles of the people around them, and even shipwrecked their faith. Maintaining a balance isn’t easy, and sometimes it can feel like we’re trying to have our cake and eat it too. But it is what our Lord calls us to. We must follow where He leads. Believers must be careful to remain distinct from the world around us. At the same time, we cannot shrink back from it.

The World Won’t See Us If We Withdraw

Wherever we find ourselves, our faith needs to be evident in the way we live. It needs to be visible in the way we love one another ([John 13:35](#)); [honour the government](#) ([Romans 13:1](#); [1 Peter 2:17](#)); treat those who [oppose us](#) ([Matthew 5:44-5](#)); and in the [purity of our speech](#). Importantly, this is more than merely “doing good things.” It calls for an entire shift in our value system, to view our communities through the lens of what God has called good and what He has said is sinful.

Jesus tells us that in the same way that

the city’s light betrays its location at night, our actions need to show evidence of God’s gracious work to those around us. This means that we need to be exemplary citizens of whichever land we find ourselves in. Where our cultural or societal values come into conflict with the things that God has said are sinful, or the principles that He has set down, we must choose to be distinct from those around us. This may be costly, earning us exclusion, derision, or even outright hostility ([1 Peter 4:4](#); [3:13-16](#)). Yet this should not be surprising. Jesus said that just as the world hated Him, it would hate us ([John 15:18-9](#)).

As we saw above, the church has been commissioned to go out. This doesn’t just apply to those called to “full time ministry” or “mission.” The command to “go and make disciples” is one that applies to all of us. If we claim to live in Christ, we must live as He did ([1 John 2:6](#)). Jesus didn’t avoid people caught up in sinful lifestyles. On the contrary, He intentionally spent time with them. When He was questioned on it, He replied that it isn’t the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick ([Mark 2:17](#)). As his people, we can do no less.

We shouldn’t cut ourselves off from people of other faiths, or withdraw from our cultures and communities. Instead, we as the Church, need to be present, and to be visible. Our neighbours and co-workers need to be able to look over at us and see the loving, godly lives we are living.

We Pass Our Days On Earth, As Citizens Of Heaven

The 2nd century [Epistle to Diognetus](#) describes this lifestyle well.

He writes, “But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of

their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers...They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives."

If we are to please our Lord we must remain distinct from the ungodliness that surrounds us. If we are to obey Him, we cannot withdraw from the world that so desperately needs to see his grace. Brothers and sisters, it is imperative that our lives show that we are both in the world, and not of this world. I pray wholeheartedly that we will be able to maintain this balance.

<https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/should-we-be-in-the-world-but-not-of-the-world/>

Not of the World

- John 17:14-16

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

- Romans 12:2

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

- 1 John 2:15-17

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

The World Will Hate You

- John 15:18-19

"If the world hate you, ye know that it

hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

- Matthew 10:22

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

- 1 John 3:13

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

Chosen Out of the World

- John 15:20

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

- James 4:4

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Jesus Prays for His Own -John 17

By Jake Hooker

This prayer reminds me that I need to be in deep prayer for the people that are closest to me. That's precisely what's going on in this particular passage. Jesus is pouring his heart out before the Lord on behalf of the men that are his closest friends.

First, Jesus prays for their salvation (vv. 6-10)

It becomes increasingly clear that Jesus has his disciples in mind in this particular section of the high priestly prayer as we continue to look at it, but of course these are the men that knew Jesus the best.

It's our natural inclination to pray for our friends and family that don't know the Lord at all, which is of course right and good, but in these verses Jesus' primary focus is on his disciples' spiritual well being. But after Jesus prayed for his own glory, that's exactly where Jesus turned his attention. To his disciples' spiritual well being. Look again at verses 6-10.

"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am praying for

them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them."

First, notice that Jesus says that they are God's possession. "Yours they were, and you gave them to me..." It's also worth noting that Jesus says that his disciples have "kept your word." Which is of course interesting because these are the men who are about to abandon him in just a few hours when he's arrested. And yet, here's Jesus telling God that these men that have been given to him have "kept your word." Obviously, Jesus isn't saying that they perfectly kept God's Word, but rather, they have trusted the message of God's Word. That is, they have believed the word that He has preached; namely that He is the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior of Sinners.

Which is of course, the main idea in verse 8. "For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me."

Jesus has taught the disciples the truth concerning who He is and where He came from. Jesus wanted his disciples to understand that the plan of salvation wasn't invented fifteen minutes ago. It's not like there's ten seconds left in the game and the Father and the Son have

called a timeout to figure out how to get the last shot off to win the game.

The game was already won and they knew exactly how they were going to do it.

Jesus wants his disciples to not to simply know that they are saved, but to have confidence in it. He's not just telling them that they're saved, He goes into detail explaining how they're saved. There's comfort in knowing the details of a plan.

Jesus is giving His disciples peace in not only knowing that they're going to be saved but there's always been a plan to accomplish it.

Which is why He explicitly says he's not praying for the world, rather, he's praying for the redeemed. What security! What peace! What comfort to know that the Lord has you in his arms despite the trials you may face. Because of course, rough waters were ahead for the disciples, but nevertheless, they were in the Lord's arms.

Second, He prays for their unity (v. 11)

But He doesn't just pray for their salvation, He also prays for their unity. Look at verse 11 with me.

“And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.”

Of course, Jesus is preparing to ascend to the right hand of the Father, but the disciples were going to stay here on earth. “The world” as it is used here is synonymous with wickedness and hostility towards the things of God.

And so, Jesus prays that the Father would keep them. That he'd protect and sustain them and that they'd remain as ‘one’ just as He and the Father are one. In other

words, Jesus is praying for the unity of his disciples.

Jesus is praying for his disciples to maintain unity and fidelity to him in the face of opposition and hostility from the wicked world. In other words, he's praying that the church would maintain her faith, trust, and love for him, no matter how loud the world screams, no matter how severe the pressure may become on followers to abandon Christ, that they would stand firm and remain steadfast in their allegiance to the Lord.

I don't think Jesus was so naive to think that his disciples would never disagree. We have Biblical testimony that they did disagree. Paul opposed Peter. And of course, Paul and Barnabas had a “sharp disagreement” over John Mark.

But Jesus is praying that his disciples would be loyal, faithful, committed followers of him - no matter the cost.

How relevant is that message for the church today? There are tremendous pressures on all of us to abandon Christ. And I don't think those pressures are going to subside. I believe it's only going to get worse.

No doubt the universal church has many disagreements. But as pressure from the world mounts upon you to abandon Christ, suddenly secondary issues, or as we say in the Presbyterian world, those things that “do not strike at the vitals of religion” begin to fade into the background. And we start to ask more basic questions: are you more committed to Christ than anything that this world can throw at you or offer?

And so the universal church, the one church of our Lord Jesus Christ, must stand firm against the pressure of the world in which we live.

Which is precisely the prayer that Jesus offers on behalf of the disciples. He prays that they will stand firm in the face of hostility.

Third, He prays for their protection (vv. 12-16)

So Jesus has prayed for their salvation, their unity, and next He prays for their protection. He says in verse 12,

“While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

Jesus says that He has kept them and guarded them and what He means by that is they’re salvation is secure. If the disciples were to die at that precise moment, they are his. They are eternally secure. We worship and serve a Savior that saves to the utmost. His atoning work on the cross is your only hope.

And this reality produces joy.

You see there is great joy in knowing that you are in Christ. It’s not the sort of joy that makes you happy when the Hokies finally win a football game. It’s the joy that comes when you know you are in the beloved. That the Lord loves you. And it’s not a worldly sort of joy, notice Jesus refers to it as “[his] joy” in verse 13.

But the part of Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer that tends to receive the most discussion is what He says in verses 14-16:

“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

The popular phrase, “in the world, but not of the world” comes from these verses. Ironically, the phrase, “in the world, but not of the world” is not a

Scripture quotation, it’s a paraphrase of these verses.

And it’s easy to see why we use that paraphrase. Jesus prays for his disciples and says that they’re not of this world, but that they should remain in this world.

And obviously, Jesus is making the point that his disciples eternal hope is not connected or intertwined with the world and it’s for that reason, the world hates them, but they’re still supposed to remain in this world.

But Jesus deliberately prays that they would remain in the world. Things would be a lot simpler if every time someone was converted, God would just tractor beam them right off the face of the earth. It would make the whole “in the world but not of the world” conversation a lot easier. But the reason God doesn’t tractor beam his disciples right off the earth is because they have a specific job to do.

They’re going to stay on earth to preach the gospel. That’s what they’re called to do. We share in that responsibility as well. We’re called to share the gospel with those around us.

But whenever we talk about living in the world, but not of it, we’re describing the tension that we all feel. The tension that comes from living in a world that is hostile to Christ, doing our best to be gospel witnesses, without completely adopting or being swept away by the agenda of this world.

I certainly don’t claim to have a precise prescription, because Jesus doesn’t give one. He doesn’t tell us to abandon the world and completely isolate ourselves, but at the same time, He doesn’t tell us to turn ourselves over to the world.

Is it our job to transform the culture or should we adopt a posture of indifference towards the culture? At the

risk of sounding like I'm copping out, I think the answer is yes. We transform, build, and influence the culture where we are able and at the same time we must be willing to disregard or even challenge the culture as well.

But you can really miss the forest through the trees here. We might get so caught up in the culture conversation of Jesus' High Priestly prayer we forget his overall point: Jesus' point in these verses is that He will protect, guard, and keep his disciples even though He is calling them to preach the gospel to a world that hates them.

We're supposed to live in the world but not of the world while recognizing that Christ is always with us!

And lastly, He prays for their sanctification (vv. 17-19)

But wouldn't it seem that since Christians called to live in the world, we open ourselves up to its influence which will pull us away from Christ? In other words, wouldn't you expect the whole "in the world, but not of the world," thing to hamper your spiritual growth?

That's obviously where my mind goes, but consider how much more pressing it would have been for the disciples: they were probably thinking that Jesus' physical absence would stifle their spiritual growth?

Look at what Jesus prays in verse 17, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."

"And then again in verse 19 He says, "And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth."

To be sanctified is to be set apart or made holy.

And twice Jesus prays that they will be sanctified in truth. But again, notice the source of the truth, "your word."

Jesus teaches the disciples that they will

grow spiritually even after He has departed by the word of God. Hopefully it's not a tremendous shock to anyone here that the primary vehicle for your sanctification is God's Word.

Why is that? Well because the truth of who God is and what He requires of us comes through his word. Studying God's Word isn't about swelling your head with knowledge. Studying God's Word is about learning and understanding the truth.

And it's through that work, you and I grow in godliness.

There really is something stirring about the fact that Jesus prayed for his disciples, He prayed for their salvation, He prayed for their unity, He prayed for their protection, and He prayed for their sanctification.

How do you summarize all of this: I think the answer is quite simple: Jesus prayed for his disciples and for all these things because He wanted them to know and understand the truth.

After all, if you really understand the truth, then you must trust in Christ, if you truly understand the truth, then that will unite you to all believers, if you know the truth, then you'll feel the loving protection of the Lord around you, and if you know the truth, then you will grow in godliness.

You have to know the truth of Christ as He has revealed himself through the Word then you can see your sin more clearly, you see the hostility of the world, and the schemes of the evil one.

Jesus wanted his disciples to know the truth, and the reality is, He wants you and me to know it as well.

<https://www.provroanoke.org/blog/jesus-prays-for-his-own-john-176-19>

Truth that Anchors You in a Broken World

By Rick Warren

Every day, we're bombarded by the idea that truth is relative, that everyone has their own version of it. And yet, you can't miss the pain and brokenness all around you—maybe even in your own life.

But God has something to say about all of that! He wants you to know the truth—real, unshakable truth—and to be confident that even in the middle of the brokenness, He's still in control. He still holds this world—and your life—in His hands.

The Bible says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”

(Psalm 46:1). And again, “For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth” (Psalm 33:4).

So how do you live out God's truth in a world that feels upside down? It starts by knowing what truth is. Then, you can live with confidence and hope, even in the broken world.

Can we really know what's true? The reality is—yes, you can! Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). And He prayed to the Father, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

1. Through Creation

You can learn a lot about God simply by looking at nature—at His creation. Romans 1:20 says, “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

The psalmist declares, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psalm 19:1). Jeremiah also reminds us, “He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding” (Jeremiah 51:15).

In other words, you can learn a lot about



God just by going outside. You can see that He loves variety, He's powerful, He's creative, and He's organized.

2. Through Conscience

God has hardwired a conscience into each of us that tells us some things are always right and some things are always wrong. Romans 2:15 says, "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

God had promised long before, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

Your conscience is a gift from God—an inner compass that points you toward His truth.

3. Through Consideration

God gave you the ability to reason, so don't waste it when it comes to figuring out the truth. He wants you to take time to examine evidence and investigate things you're not sure about.

Proverbs 14:15 says, "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going." And Proverbs 4:7 reminds us, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

Seeking truth requires thought, reflection, and prayerful consideration.

4. Through God's Commandments

Second Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

The psalmist declares, "Thy word is a

lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). Again, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

The Bible helps you know what is—and isn't—true about the world around you.

5. Through Christ

In Christ, God came to earth in human form to personify truth. Truth is not a principle or a religion or a ritual; truth is the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The apostle John wrote, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). And he adds, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Paul sums it up beautifully: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Living in God's Truth

Are you questioning what's true? It's time to get some clarity—because the answers are going to shape how you live.

When you ask God to reveal His truth to you, He won't disappoint! The Bible promises, "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33). And, "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth" (Psalm 145:18).

<https://dailyhope.s3.amazonaws.com/Communications/Study/Truth-That-Anchors-You-in-a-Broken-World.pdf>

The Shroud of Turin

A Case for the Resurrection of Jesus

by Jeremiah Johnston

The Shroud of Turin: Few artifacts in the world stir as much fascination and controversy as the Shroud of Turin. Housed today in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, the Shroud is a 14-foot-long linen cloth bearing the faint front-and-back image of a crucified man. Millions believe this cloth is none other than the burial shroud of Jesus Christ. Skeptics dismiss it as a medieval forgery. But after decades of research across more than 100 scientific disciplines, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the Shroud is exactly what it appears to be: a first-century burial cloth that bears witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

What Is the Shroud?

All four Gospels tell us that Jesus was wrapped in a linen shroud provided by Joseph of Arimathea before being placed in a new tomb (Matthew 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:40). The Shroud of Turin matches the size and style of a first-century Jewish burial cloth: 14 feet 4 inches long, 3 feet 7 inches wide, woven from linen in an expensive herringbone pattern. Such a weave would have been affordable only to the wealthy — consistent with Joseph of Arimathea's gift of his own tomb and cloth for Jesus' burial.

What makes this cloth unique is not simply its antiquity, but the fact that it contains the bloodstains and image of a man who died by Roman crucifixion.

Evidence of Crucifixion in the Shroud

Every detail on the Shroud corresponds with the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death and with what historians and archaeologists know of Roman execution practices:

- Scourging wounds: Over 700 scourge marks cover the body. The wounds match the Roman flagrum, a whip with leather thongs tipped with lead or bone.
- Crown of thorns: Fifty puncture wounds



on the scalp reveal not a simple circlet but a cap of thorns pressed into the head — exactly what the Gospels describe.

- **Nail marks:** Clear punctures appear not only in the palms but in the wrists, the location Roman soldiers favored to support a body's weight.

- **Spear wound:** A large gash between the fifth and sixth ribs shows post-mortem blood mixed with watery serum — precisely what John 19:34 records when Jesus' side was pierced and "blood and water" flowed out.

- **Blood type:** The stains are human male blood, type AB — a rare type found in only 6% of the global population and common among Semitic peoples.

The bloodstains are not painted or applied; they are real, chemically verifiable human blood. Both pre-mortem and post-mortem bleeding are evident, meaning the man represented truly died a violent death. To hoax the Shroud, one would have had to kill a real person in precisely the way the Gospels describe Jesus' death.

The Mystery of the Image

Even more baffling than the blood is the image itself. It is not paint, dye, or pigment. Microscopic analysis shows the image rests only on the top two microns of each linen fiber — less than 1% the thickness of a human hair. The coloration does not penetrate the cloth. If scraped away, the blood remains, but the image disappears.

When the Shroud was photographed in 1898, the negatives revealed something astonishing: the image works like a photographic negative, producing a far clearer positive image of a man's face and body. Later studies showed that the Shroud also contains 3D spatial data — depth information encoded in brightness variations, something no painting or photograph can replicate.

Physicists remain mystified. The leading theory is that the image was formed by an inexplicable burst of radiant energy. Some researchers suggest that 34,000 billion watts

of light energy may have been released in 1/40 of a billionth of a second — precisely what might be expected from a resurrection event.

Addressing the Carbon Dating Objection

In 1988, a single carbon-14 test appeared to date the Shroud between AD 1260–1390. Media headlines immediately declared it a medieval forgery. Yet later evidence has shown that the sample tested came not from the original cloth, but from a corner that had been patched with cotton during medieval repairs after a fire.

When the raw data from the 1988 test was finally released in 2017, it confirmed that the tested fibers were chemically inconsistent with the rest of the Shroud. The "medieval" conclusion was based on a contaminated sample.

Other dating methods tell a different story:

- X-ray scattering tests show the Shroud fibers have been deteriorating for about 2,000 years, not 700.
- Chemical analysis of vanillin (a compound found in fresh flax) shows none remains in the Shroud. Linen takes centuries to lose vanillin completely; if the cloth were medieval, measurable traces should still be present.
- Pollen studies reveal spores unique to the land of Israel in springtime, as well as pollen from Edessa, Constantinople, and France — precisely the historical path the Shroud is known to have traveled.

The single objection — one flawed carbon test — collapses under scrutiny.

Historical Continuity of the Shroud

The Shroud's history is traceable far earlier than skeptics admit. Early church historian Eusebius (AD 325) records a cloth with Jesus' image in Edessa, Turkey, where it remained for centuries. Byzantine records refer to the "Image of Edessa" or "Mandylion," widely believed to be the folded Shroud. From Edessa, it moved to

Constantinople, was seen by Crusaders, and eventually transferred to France before coming into the possession of the House of Savoy, who brought it to Turin in 1578.

The continuity of the written record, combined with pollen analysis and iconographic parallels (early icons and coins bearing Jesus' likeness match the facial features on the Shroud), all testify to its ancient origin.

The Shroud and Christian Faith

The Shroud of Turin is more than a scientific mystery. It is a profound witness to the Gospel. The cloth bears silent testimony to the horror of Jesus' crucifixion — the scourging, the thorns, the nails, the spear. It also bears testimony to something even greater: an image inexplicably burned into the fibers, as if at the moment of resurrection itself.

As Paul wrote, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”

(Romans 5:8). The Shroud confirms that Jesus' death was real, physical, and brutal. But it also points beyond death to resurrection — to the hope of eternal life for all who believe.

Conclusion

No other artifact in history unites archaeology, science, and faith as powerfully as the Shroud of Turin. Hundreds of studies, thousands of hours of research, and the best technology available have failed to explain it. The simplest and most compelling conclusion is the one Christians have held for centuries: this is the burial cloth of Jesus Christ.

The Shroud is not just an ancient relic. It is evidence that the central claim of Christianity — that Jesus died for our sins and rose again on the third day — is not myth or metaphor, but history.

Watch the full interview here:
<https://youtu.be/rKMqY49py4w>



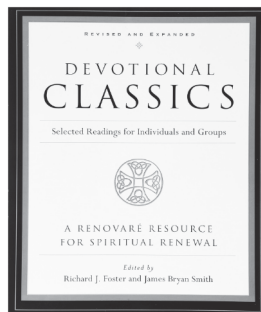
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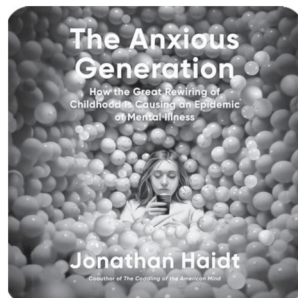
Devotional Classics by Richard Foster

The fifty-two selections in *Devotional Classics* have been organized to introduce the reader to the great Christian devotional writers over the course of one year, through an introduction and meditation by Foster, a related biblical passage, discussion questions, and individual and group exercises. *Devotional Classics* is indispensable for those looking for a deeper and more balanced spiritual life.



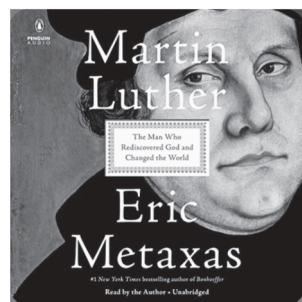
The Anxious Generation By Jonathan Haidt

A must-listen for all parents: the generation-defining investigation into the collapse of youth mental health in the era of smartphones, social media, and big tech—and a plan for a healthier, freer childhood.



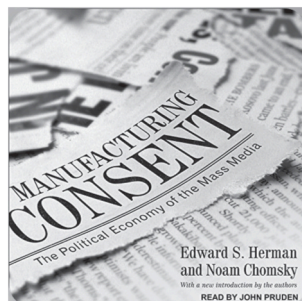
Martin Luther By Eric Metaxas

On All Hallow's Eve in 1517, a young monk named Martin Luther posted a document he hoped would spark an academic debate but that instead ignited a conflagration that would forever destroy the world he knew. Five hundred years after Luther's now famous 95 Theses appeared, Eric Metaxas paints a startling portrait of the wild figure whose adamant faith cracked the edifice of Western Christendom and dragged medieval Europe into the future.



Manufacturing Consent By Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky

In this pathbreaking work, now with a new introduction, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky show that, contrary to the usual image of the news media as cantankerous, obstinate, and ubiquitous in their search for truth and defense of justice, in their actual practice they defend the economic, social, and political agendas of the privileged groups that dominate domestic society, the state, and the global order. .



Prayer Focus

For Missionaries

This month, we want to focus our prayers for the many missionaries serving around the world. Let's pray together for missionaries across the globe—that God would strengthen their faith, provide for their needs, protect them and their families, and fill them with courage and joy in their calling. Let's ask the Lord to open doors for the gospel, to prepare the hearts of those they serve, and to raise up new laborers for the harvest. And let's pray that their lives would be a shining light, pointing many to the eternal hope we have in Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:19–20

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

Romans 10:14–15

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’”

2 Thessalonians 3:1–2

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.”

Isaiah 52:7

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”



To Be Loved by God

By Rick Warren

“We love because he first loved us” ([1 John 4:19](#) NIV).

A man once came into my office and said, “I’m a Christian, but I don’t feel like I’m going anywhere in my spiritual growth. I’m kind of stuck in neutral.” And I said, “What do you think the problem is?”

He said, “I think my problem is I just don’t love God enough.”

I said, “That’s not your problem. Your problem is not that you don’t love God enough. Your problem is that you don’t understand how much God loves you.”

Love is always a response to love. The Bible says, “We love because he first loved us” ([1 John 4:19](#) NIV). When you say, “I don’t love God,” it’s because you don’t understand just how much he really loves you.

To understand your life’s purpose and calling, you have to begin with God’s nature. God is love. Love is the essence of his nature. The only reason there is love in the universe is because of God. Ants and snails do not love, but you were made in God’s image, so you can love.

The reason you are alive is because God wanted to love you. The first purpose of your life is to be loved by God! Yes, it is important to serve, obey, and trust him, but your greatest purpose is to love him.

“Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure” ([Ephesians 1:4-5](#) NLT).

Let this sink in: Your first purpose is not to do anything but to just be loved by God.

