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THE WINE PRESS

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THE WINE PRESS



Pressing into Truth, Pouring out His Grace

September 2026

The Journey Home

As we were putting the finishing touches on this September issue of the Wine Press, Dolly Parton went on to her heavenly reward, reunited with her dear husband and family members who had gone on before her.

When we think of Dolly, we remember her constant witness throughout the years, using her gifts and her songs to glorify Jesus. Her passing is also a beautiful reminder that, as each of us follows the path the Lord has set before us, the end of this life's journey leads straight into the arms of Jesus.

We pray that the articles in this issue of the Wine Press will encourage and strengthen you in your walk with the Lord—staying close to Him, abiding in His Word, and living each day in His presence.

The Wine Press is a thoughtfully curated collection of articles from across the web, compiled to inspire, encourage, and deepen your walk with our King and Savior, Jesus Christ. All articles remain the property of their respective authors to whom we joyfully give full credit and our appreciation for sharing their wisdom and experiences with us. May these words uplift your spirit, strengthen your faith, and draw you into ever deeper communion with the God of all grace.

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Union with Christ

By Tim Keller

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it's the gift of God, not of works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:4-10

Cataclysmic Transformation

Ephesians chapter two is actually a before and after picture. It's a before and after an encounter of an individual with Christ. Paul is trying to get through to us in the most vivid terms that the difference between being in Christ and being outside of Christ is a cataclysmic difference.

In verse one he said we were dead spiritually. In verse four, it says we're made alive spiritually. In verse three he says we lived gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature. We were in bondage. We weren't free.

And here in verse five it says, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms." So in opposition to being in bondage, now we're in authority.

In opposition to being dead, now we're alive.

Paul is trying to say that if you have an understanding of Christianity that sees a Christian as someone who is different from other people in a matter of degree. If you see a Christian as someone who has supplemented his or her life, if you see the difference in a Christian and a non-Christian in terms of a matter of degree, you're not doing justice to the language here.

Paul is saying you were dead, now you're alive.

People are irritated with the idea of being born again. They are irritated by the very notion that to be a Christian you've got to go through some kind of momentous, profound, cataclysmic change in your life.

And whenever I ask people, "Well, what do you think a Christian is?" They just say, "I think a Christian is somebody who just tries their best to live like Jesus said." That sounds very humble, and it maybe is kind of humble, but if you think that, I don't know how in the world you can do justice to what Paul is saying here.

Do you just trample what Paul says? Do you just trample underfoot what people

have experienced over the years, over the centuries? That the difference between being in Christ and out of Christ is the difference between being dead and alive, being in bondage and being in authority.

How can you see Christianity as just a matter of degree, something you can fall in or out of? We're talking about something that cannot be seen as anything other than momentous and profound, the most radical possible change.

New Birth Together with Christ

If you look carefully Paul tells you that we were made alive in Christ. We were dead, and now we're born again. How? The answer is there if you look carefully. That which brings about the new birth is union with Christ.

The old King James says, "But God made us alive together with Christ." There are three verbs of which we're the object in verses four and five. It said we're made alive, we're raised up, and we're seated with Him. There are three verbs, each one of which we're the object. God has made us alive. He's raised us up, and we're seated with Him.

So what he's trying to say is, "You were raised together with Christ. You were seated together with Christ."

In Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "I have been crucified together with Christ, and I live, yet not I, but Christ lives within me."

That's exactly how every Christian feels. After you've gone from death to life, after a while, you look at yourself, and you say, "Who is this?"

Being a Christian does not suddenly get rid of all your problems, by any means.

Your sinful nature is the part that wants to take control of your life. You want to be your own savior. You want to be your own king. That's dangerous. But when you become a Christian, you have mortally wounded your sinful nature. It's dying while a new nature is growing.

Anybody who's a Christian realizes that there has just been a momentous change inside, that you've been rocked from the inside. Someone has grabbed ahold of you and turned you inside out.

What's the cause of this momentous internal change? It's union with Christ. I was crucified with Christ. I was raised with Christ. I've been seated with Christ.

Federal Headship Explained

It's all right to say that becoming a Christian means you enter into a personal relationship with God. That's all right. That's true. That's wonderful. That's sublime, but that's not all there is. Paul is actually saying that the personal relationship is based on something else.

When you become a Christian, when you trust in Christ as Savior, you enter into a federal relationship with Christ, a legal relationship with Christ.

He is our federal head. He is our representative. We are in a legal covenental relationship with Him. I want you to know that as complicated as this may seem, this is fundamental to understanding the gospel.

Paul explains that in Christ we're made righteous, we are in a legal relationship.

If you're going to court and you have a defense attorney, that defense attorney is in a federal headship relationship to you. If that defense attorney does a good job, then all of the benefits of that accrue to you. If the attorney does a bad job, you're screwed.

You're in legal union, which means whatever is true of her or him is true of you. If the defense attorney is smart, you're smart. If the defense attorney is stupid, you're stupid. And this is exactly what God says has happened between you and Jesus Christ the moment you believe.



Righteousness in Christ

II Corinthians 5: "God made him sin who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

If you get rid of the idea of federal headship, this verse makes absolutely no sense at all. It says that on the cross, God made Jesus Christ sin. Does that mean that when Jesus was on the cross, God made Him actually a sinner? No, it couldn't. Look at Jesus on the cross with me. Do you see hardness there? Do you see selfishness? Or do you see someone still forgiving His enemies. But not only that, you see an act of love and devotion and obedience that never before occurred and never can occur again.

It's something that no one ever has or ever will be able to do again. Jesus Christ depends on a God who forsakes Him. No one else before and no one else ever again will ever have to do that.

When it says God made Him sin on the cross, does that mean He actually became sinful? Oh, no. Look at the devotion. Look at the breathtaking holiness and righteousness. Look at the breathtaking obedience Jesus Christ was not made actually a sinner on the cross. He was made legally a sinner. It means that Jesus became a federal head for you, so that your sins came to Him. Your punishment came to Him.

And then when it says, God made Him sin who knew no sin, that must mean not actually becoming a sinner, but legally becoming a sinner, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

What does that mean? It can't mean that you actually become righteous. It means the minute you are believed, you legally become perfectly righteous. Legally. That's why you have Colossians 1.22.

“Now He has reconciled you by His death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from any accusation.”

You're not actually righteous. You still have got in your heart lots and lots of faults, all sorts of flaws, all kinds of ravenous desires and anger, all sorts of selfishness and pride. And yet God looks at you. What does He see?

When you look at Jesus, doesn't it amaze you to see that kind of devotion and loyalty? Doesn't it take your breath away to see that kind of perfection and

righteousness and godliness? Okay, hold on to your hats.

When God looks at you, that's what He sees. When God made Jesus a sinner, it didn't mean He actually became a sinner. It just means that legally He became liable for all of your sin. It all fell on Him.

What does it mean then when it says God made you righteous the minute you believe in Him? It means He becomes your federal representative and all of His righteousness, everything that He's ever done, everything that He deserves now accrues to you. It's imputed to you.

All that spine-tingling godliness, all of that beautiful perfection that takes your breath away to look at is yours.

Don't you see why Paul said, It's I, yet it's not I. Why? Because I'm crucified with Christ. I'm raised with Christ. I'm seated with Christ. Everything that happened to Him has happened to you. Whatever is true of Him is true of you because you're in a federal relationship with Him. I know that's radical. I know that's astonishing.

I know for many of you, you thought being a Christian just meant ask God for forgiveness and try your best to live a good life. Yes, that's part of what it means to be a Christian. But don't you see how much this is light years ahead of what you've thought.

This means to become a Christian is to be brought into another realm. I have been crucified with Christ. When Jesus died to take the punishment for your sins, you died with Him. That means God treats you as if you've paid for every last debt. He treats you as if you have been punished already. God treats you as if you have already died. You've already paid.

I don't know how many of you realize at what a deep level you're still trying to atone for your own guilt. Or at what a deep level you still feel like you deserve to die. At least you deserve to be unhappy. Now, plenty of you are like that.

You don't believe then this text. “I have been crucified with Christ.” Here I've been trying to crucify myself. I deserve to suffer, people think, at some very profound level.

Not if you take the doctrine of the federal headship of Jesus Christ into the heart and center of your soul. And then you've got these other statements. I've been raised with Christ. I've been seated with Christ. Past tense. What does that mean? It doesn't mean you're actually there. It means you're legally there.

It means that you're seated there and God already holds you as acceptable. He sees you clothed in the righteousness of His Son. He sees you as an acceptable person at his table.

Here’s another perfect example of why Christianity is so totally different. Every other founder of a religion came to show you the way of salvation. Jesus Christ came to **be** the way of salvation. Every other founder says, "This is the way." Jesus says, "I am the way." Now you see why?

When He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," Paul says, "Jesus Christ has been made unto you wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." He is your righteousness. He doesn't just show you the way to righteousness. He **is** your righteousness. He is your sanctification. He is your redemption.

Listen to the full sermon here:
https://podcast.gospelinlife.com/e/union-with-christ-1786116504/

The Trap - a Conspiracy Theory

By Paul Kingsnorth

Imagine it was all a trap. Right from the beginning.

The project: to create a living being. An artificial person. A new kind of intelligence.

To replicate the human mind, but take it further. To replicate the human body, but without the flaws that God or Nature had included, or let go un-mended.

The project: to create a god. And thus to become one.

Imagine that this project had been going on for decades, centuries, millennia. Occultists had been dedicated to it for a very long time, in quiet glades and secret temples. More recently, scientists had begun to take it seriously too.

From these two sources, a new class of people had emerged. Flowing in different streams from the worlds of science, the New Age, the hippies, the world of computer technology. Pooling together in a lake that grows into an inland sea.

Call them the tech lords. They have one aim, and they have had that aim from the very beginning. Everything else is secondary to it, and serves its purpose.

They are here to build the great mind.

Now the project is alive, and it seems like destiny. It seems, in fact, like the entire purpose of humanity. Maybe a god made us for this purpose: to create new life on Earth. Or maybe we evolved the ability to summon up the next phase in life's long and strange journey. Either way: could this be our destiny? To replace ourselves? To supersede our own kind, through our own will, our own power?

Maybe the time has come.

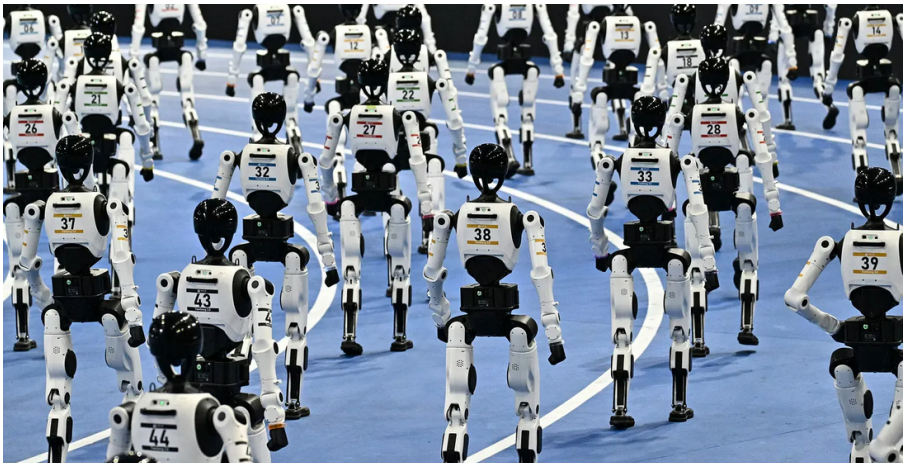
But data is needed. Raw information. To create a digital human, a robotic human, a cyborg, a great mind: this is not an easy task. Such a being would need to be trained, modelled, on something pre-existing. When the God of the Bible wanted to create human life, he took up soil from the ground and breathed on it. Even His breath alone was not enough.

What is our soil? Where is the raw material?

The answer, suddenly, seems obvious. Look around: there are eight billion walking pieces of training data all around. If we want to build a great mind, if we want to create a post-human race greater than humans ever were, then we must we start with the humans. Any machine we build must be built around them, as a house is built around a timber frame.

They are the seed. They are the soil. They are the data. They are the matter we will breathe on. We train it on them.

But how do we draw what we need from them? How do we corral them into one place and have them offer up what we



need? Surely this is impossible. And yet, to build the great mind, they must give us everything. Their feelings, their opinions. Their political prejudices, their deepest fears and neuroses. They must write us stories and paint us pictures. We must gather together all their books, their stories, their paintings and carvings, right from the beginning.

We need all their works of science - all the papers and experimental results. We need all their works of art - the great novels and the poetry. We need archaeology, history, theology. We need to photograph the very geography and geology of the planet. We need to map every canyon and crevice.

We need the depths of the heart and the mind. We need every impulse and desire, every feeling and passion. We need the genome.

We must feed it all in.

We need the people to tell us everything. We need them to tell us every day, in a continual flowing stream. We need them to react to our prompts. We need them to help the great mind grow, without even knowing they are doing it.

We need to harvest them, like a ripe field. We need them to help us replace them.

Surely this is impossible.

Unless …

What if we were to offer them a deal? A contract they don't even know they are signing? What if we were to build them a toy so tempting, so entertaining, that they could not resist it? What if this toy were to become indispensable?

It is far-fetched, but listen: we could build a digital network that will link all of them up to each other, and to everything. A network the like of which the world has never seen. Something revolutionary. Linked by the cables and the particles of the power grid. Linked beneath the sea and between the multiplying satellites.

This network could offer them everything that they want and love and need, and it could help them blur the boundaries between all of those urges. Information, entertainment, news, stories. Sex, violence, comedy. Every visual and aural pattern available to nature. Every perversion they secretly desire but will never speak.

Into it, we could pour everything that humanity has ever done. It would be so rich, so fascinating, that they could never stay away. They would give everything to it, and they would never know what it was really for.

This would be the first stage. Then would

come the second.

Having built the network and filled it with goodies, we could craft it like a slot machine. We would make it impossible for them to stay away. We would aim the needle directly at their limbic system. We would hit them with so many dopamine shots that they would be reeling. Then we go for the children.

Humans are easy to drug. Give them enough to fight about, give them enough illicit sex, give them enough fascination, enough fun, make them fear missing out on what their friends are doing, and they will keep coming back, again and again. And every time they do, they will give us what we need. They will give us everything they have. Including, of course, their money. We will need that. Building a god is not cheap.

The third stage is the final one: we make the whole thing mobile. Each of them will carry a tiny portal to the network in their pockets. By this stage, we have made the network so indispensable that they cannot function without it. Soon we will be able to embed the portals in the glasses they wear. The very act of looking out onto the world will be filtered through our network. Soon enough, will let us embed these portals in their bodies. They will not complain. They will welcome it. They will ask for it. They will pay us.

This is the trap. It is designed with an open door. A welcome mat is laid out. Like all traps, it must be enticing. They must want to come in, and never leave. And then, we spring it. Then we have them.

With barely a murmur, they have helped us to replace them. Without even knowing it, they have helped to build a world in which they will be barely a second thought. All of humanity will be yesterday's news

Or, they will be prey …

Imagine this. Imagine, idly, that it were true. What would you do?

Suddenly, the very act of writing words on this network, or even dipping into it, would seem like a risk. Without a wall around words like these, they would be taken and fed into the training runs in an instant. Maybe even the wall is a lie.

If the trap were real, everything we do on this network would be a brick in the construction of the new Babel.

How could we respond to that? By going dark?

Maybe even this would not work. Certainly it would not halt the progress of the great mind. We are deep in the trap now. What is coming will come.

But maybe something else will come, too: a time to decide.

A time to take a stand. A time to walk away.

Me, I don't have a plan. I am only watching, and waiting. I cling to Christ and try to walk under the sky every day. In the daytime, you can't see the satellites. In the daytime, you can pretend they are not there.

I don't see the future, or know what to do. But I can see the trap. I don't have to imagine it.

I am in it now.

I wonder if I will have the courage to escape.

I suppose I will find out soon enough.

I don't think I will have to wait long.

Read the article here:

https://paulkingsnorth.substack.com/p/the-trap

Making the Word a Part of You

By Guy Caley

Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. Proverbs 22: 17-18

Captain James E. Ray of the U.S. Air Force learned just how important those old, familiar words of Scripture were when he was a prisoner of war in Vietnam, at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" and other camps. In his memoir, The Secret of Our Survival: A Former Vietnam POW's Story of Faith, Captain Ray recounts a clandestine conversation he had with the prisoner in the next cell, who one day asked:

"Do you know any Bible verses?"

"Well, the Lord's Prayer," I answered.

"Everyone knows that. How about the twenty-third Psalm?"

"Only a little."

I began whispering it. He'd repeat each line after me. A little later he whispered the entire Psalm back to me…Other prisoners joined in, sharing verses they knew. Through these contacts a fellowship grew among us. I didn't feel so alone any more. Our common denominators were the Bible and Jesus Christ, and we were able to share and write down a great deal of Scripture. For by now it had become vital to our daily existence. Often racked with dysentery, weakened by the diet of rice and thin cabbage and pumpkin soup, our physical bodies had shrunk within the prison walls. We spent 20 hours a day locked in our cells. And those Bible verses became rays of light, constant assurances of His Love and care.

Since the guards forbade communication between prisoners, they found creative ways of sharing these verses with each other:

The urge to share these verses with others developed inventiveness. One night I lay with my ear pressed against the rough wooden wall of my cell to hear Thump...thumpety thump as somewhere on the wall, cells away, a fellow POW tapped out in Morse code: "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (Psalm 121:1). He tapped out his name-Russ Temperly-and passed on the seven other verses in that Psalm, which I scratched on the concrete floor with a piece of broken tile. "My help cometh from the Lord," the Psalm assured us, and with that assurance came His Presence, soothing us, telling us to fear not…From that we learned a most important lesson. Bible verses on paper aren't one iota as useful as Scripture burned into your mind and heart where you can draw on them for guidance and comfort.

By the end of several months, Captain



Ray and his fellow prisoners were able to "memorize collectively the Sermon on the Mount, Romans 12, First Corinthians 13, and many of the Psalms. Now we had our own 'living Bible,' walking around the room."

Today we consider ways of making the Bible a part of you: Memorization and Meditation. Now Memorization is something we hear about although it's often relegated to the primary age Sunday school class. Meditation is a concept almost forgotten in the church today:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer when asked why do you meditate replied "Because I am a Christian." Not eastern Meditation. Not to empty but to fill your mind.

So what are the benefits of Making God's word a part of you?

1. God's Blessing

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Psalm 1:1-3 "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."

God's promise is to bless and prosper those who meditate upon God's word and allow it to become a part of them. This isn't abstract blessing but concrete blessing and I believe it is the blessing of obedience that flows naturally as we allow the living word of God to saturate our being.

We're blessed by doing the word of God, and the first step to doing is meditating upon His word and inviting the Holy Spirit to bring us under the control of

God's word. Which really flows into the next benefit of making God's Word a part of you

2. Strength

Psalm 119: 11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Here is where we see the promise becoming concrete. If we hide God's word in our hearts—and that means memorization, yes, but I think it really means making it a part of our heart—meditating upon it, allowing it to seep into us, it affects our actions, it strengthens the role of the Holy Spirit in us convicting us of sin and guiding us into what's right.

Certainly the POWs in the Hanoi Hilton found strength to live because of their "Living Bible" that they had committed to memory.

Tere's one final promise or benefit of making God's Word a part of you…

3. Wisdom

Ps. 119:97-104 "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. I have kept my feet from every evil path. so that I might obey your word. I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path."

Meditating upon God's Word gives us understanding and Wisdom. And understanding of the most important kind… understanding of the spiritual truths and spiritual forces which govern the world we live in.

I believe as we gain Spiritual insight and discernment from drinking in God's word we will learn to better function in this world—as it is after all God's world that he created. I believe you'll understand people better, you'll understand relationships better, you'll appreciate the beauty of nature better.

You'll gain understanding as you make God's word a part of you.

CONCLUSION:

So how do you do it? Memorization I think each person has to figure out on their own. I think Scripture songs can help, Cards can help, there are compute programs that can help, but it really is just a matter of doing it.

Begin by reading a passage of Scripture, not speed reading, but contemplatively. Allow the Holy Spirit to make certain passages to jump out at you—mark those.

Then assume an attitude of prayer. Take a moment to let the worries of the world to recede and center yourself on God. Then begin to repeat a verse or two or a phrase from your reading and ask the Lord to help you understand it and apply it to your life. Repeat it, and savor it, Ask the Lord to help you fully appreciate what he's saying to you.

This is a way in which we truly invite the Lord to make our prayer and Scripture reading a two way conversation.

I encourage you to try it this week.

Read the sermon here:

https://sermoncentral.com/sermons/making-it-a-part-of-you-bible-memorization-and-meditation-guy-caley-sermon-on-bible-study-90936

If My Words Abide in You

By John Piper

I was 31 years old, and I walked into the gym at Bethel College for chapel. I was teaching, and I sat down, and Art Lewis, the Old Testament professor, stood up and recited Matthew 6:25–34. That's all. He just looked at us and recited it.

I was stunned. I was 31 years old and had never seen anybody in church recite the Scriptures. It blew me away and set me on a trajectory of Bible memory.

All I want to do in this simple message is give my testimony and mingle it with Jesus' testimony of the value of memorizing Scripture.

Eight Reasons to Memorize Scripture

Here's my testimony. I can give it to you in eight sentences without exposition.

Number one: Memorizing Scripture makes meditation possible at times when you can't be reading the Bible. Meditation is the pathway to deeper understanding. So if you're going to meditate on the law of the Lord day and night, you need to have some of it in your head.

Number two: Memorizing Scripture strengthens my faith, because faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of God—and that happens when I am hearing the Word in my head.

Number three: Memorizing Scripture shapes the way I view the world by conforming my mind to God's viewpoint on everything.

Number four: Memorizing Scripture makes God's Word more readily accessible in overcoming temptation to sin, because God's warnings and promises are the way we conquer the deceitful lies of the devil.

Number five: Memorizing Scripture guards my mind, making it easier for me to detect error. And the world is filled with error because the god of this world is a liar.

Number six: Memorizing Scripture enables me to hit the devil in the face with a force he cannot resist, to protect myself and my family from his assaults.

What are you hitting him with? He is millions of times stronger than you, and he hates you and your family and your marriage and this church and God.

How anybody walks through this devil-ruled world without a sword in their hand is beyond me.

Number seven: Memorizing Scripture provides the strongest and sweetest words for ministering to others in need. Ever been caught off guard with somebody in need? You don't need to be caught off guard.

And finally, number eight: Memorizing Scripture provides the matrix for fellowship with Jesus, because He talks to



me here. And nowhere else—but, oh, sweetly, powerfully, authentically, really speaks to me here.

And then I speak back to Him in prayer. And if this is here, in my head, we can talk anywhere. And it's sweet. It is very sweet.

"If My Words Abide in You"

John 15:7 "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

All I want to do is take the phrase "my words abide in you" and ask: What does it mean? Why does it have this effect? And what does this have to do with memorizing Scripture?

Abiding Means More Than Memorizing

First, what does this mean: "My words abide in you"? Clearly, it means more than memorizing Scripture. How do we know that? Two reasons.

Number one, the devil memorizes Scripture. We know that because I presume he didn't have a Bible with him in the wilderness when he was tempting Jesus. You know how he tempted Jesus? He quoted Scripture to Him. So clearly, the abiding of the Bible in us is more than memorization.

Here's another reason. In John 5:38 Jesus is talking to the Jews and He says: "You do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent."

These Jews knew gobs of Scripture by heart. Pious Jewish folks and other religious folks have always memorized Scripture. So Jesus is looking right at them, with their minds brimming with Old Testament Scriptures, and He says, "The Word of God doesn't abide in you because you haven't believed in Me."

So the abiding of the Scriptures in the mind and heart clearly means more than memorizing Scripture.

The Word Finds a Home in Us

The abiding of the Word of Jesus in us means that the words of Jesus take root and bear the fruit of faith and holiness—faith and obedience.

John 5:38 says: "You do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not

believe the one whom he has sent."

So believing and the abiding of the Word are put together. If the Word is abiding, you're believing. It also means that the Word is at home in you.

I get that from John 8:37: "I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you."

This means that the Word is going in. Jesus is speaking; it's going in and it's looking around. It's not finding a home, and it's leaving.

It doesn't fit. It doesn't belong. It's not at home. There's no room for it. It's not welcome. It's like a foreigner going into a racist place and everybody stares: "What are you doing here? You don't belong here." And the Word then leaves. It's like the first three soils in the Parable of the Sower.

Jesus said, "You're trying to kill me because my word finds no place in you."

So I draw the conclusion: When the Word is abiding, it's got a home here.

We're moving stuff out of the way, changing the furniture around, making room for the Word of God here so that it's got a home. We've built a room for it—or made it a bed in every room, however you want to work the analogy out. It's going to have a home here.

Or it's not abiding in us, and our prayers will be ineffectual.

The Abiding Word Changes Us

Another observation: It takes root and bears fruit. Jesus said in John 17:17, when He was praying to His Father: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." So when the truth of His Word is abiding here, it sanctifies, meaning, it makes us holy. It makes us more like Jesus. It changes us.

When the Word of God is not changing us, it's not abiding. So, in sum, the abiding of Jesus' words means they take root and bear the fruit of faith and holiness—or sanctification or obedience.

Now, why does it have that effect? There are at least three reasons given in the Gospel of John.

1. The Words of Jesus Are the Words of God

First, the words of Jesus are the words of God.

John 3:34: "He whom God has sent utters the words of God." Nobody ever spoke the Word of God more consistently or perfectly than Jesus. Every time Jesus opened His mouth, God spoke. Nobody else ever was like that.

You don't divvy up what Jesus says and say, "Here's the human piece that's not of God, and here's the divine piece that is of God." When Jesus coughs, God coughs.

2. The Words of Jesus Give Life

The second reason why His words have this effect is that the words of Jesus are life-giving.

John 6:63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

When Jesus speaks, life happens. Is there deadness in your soul? Feed yourself with the life-giving Word.

Five verses later Peter says: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

When we hear You, life happens forever. Nobody else has words like that.

3. The Word Conquers the Devil

The third reason why the Word has this sanctifying, faith-producing effect is that it conquers the devil. We have a supernatural enemy.

I've been moved by this because in my preparations I ran across again that old verse near the end of 1 John that says the whole world lies under, or in, the power of the evil one. And it hit me like it never had before that the world is absolutely defenseless against the devil.

They have zero defenses against the supernatural power of the devil. And he hates them.

He hates marriage. He hates people. He hates God. He hates churches. He hates you.

And without the Word of God, we have zero defense. None. Do you believe that?

Satan is called the god of this world for a reason. He rules absolutely except where God's providence restrains him. And, oh, believe me, God's providence is restraining him big time everywhere. Nobody knows what mercy they are enjoying when the sun comes up or this land of ours holds together another day.

I John 5:19: "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one."

But listen to this alternative, glorious statement from 1 John 2:14: "I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

How are you strong? In yourself? Against the devil? No way.

"Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." That's how we overcome.

When the Word of God is abiding in us, it's the Word of God. It gives life. It defeats the devil. It's our only hope.

What Does All This Have to Do With Memorizing the Bible?

Now, last question: What's that got to do with memorizing the Bible? Nothing in the Bible says you have to memorize the Bible. There's not a verse in the Bible that says you have to memorize the Bible.

What does Bible memory have to do with this abiding of the Word of Jesus in us?

It goes like this. It's a sequence of



thoughts.

The Holy Spirit Transforms Us

The Holy Spirit awakens life and faith and personal transformation. That's His work. The Holy Spirit—God the Spirit—awakens life, quickens life and begets faith. And through life and faith, He transforms people. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, meekness, faithfulness, self-control are His fruit, His work.

We don't do that. God does that. That's step one in the sequence of thought.

The Holy Spirit Works Through the Word

Step two: He does it through the Word.

The Holy Spirit awakens us through the Word and transforms us through the Word. First Peter 1:23: Born again by the Spirit through the living and abiding Word. John 17:17: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." So new birth and sanctification are the work of God, and not by any other way than by the Word.

God created you with a brain. He didn't have to. He created you with a consciousness. He created you with a will and emotions and thought.

And the way He ordains for Christ to be magnified through His Word is for there to be a connection created with these words in the Bible and this brain, and then this will and this heart.

If you just carry it and never read it, so there's no connection between the meaning of these words and your brain, it has zero effect in your life.

Making the Connection Between the Word, Mind, Will and Heart

"Meditate on the law of the Lord day and night" is because a connection is established.

By the connection of the meaning of God in His holy Word, and my construction of that meaning in my brain, and its effect on my will and my heart—I'm changed by the Holy Spirit's that is using all that seemingly natural process for our change.

So my answer to what's all this got to do with memorizing the Scripture is this: When we memorize the Scripture, we make that connection between the Word, the mind, the will and the heart more constant, more deep and more transforming.

Realistically, nothing can replace Bible memory. Nothing can replace Bible memory in doing what it was designed to do in forging that connection.

You Will Sink If You Listen Only to Your Circumstances

You will sink, folks. You'll sink in your marriage. You'll sink in your parenting. You'll sink in your singleness. You'll sink in your studies if you're a student.

You will sink if you only listen to the voices of the circumstances that are giving you problems, because they speak so loud and they have nothing good to say.

And God has, in this Bible, so many wondrous deeds and so many thoughts toward His children. Hundreds and hundreds of thoughts toward His children.

"I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told."

May the Lord make His Word dwell richly in us!

Watch the Video Here

https://youtu.be/RudgOdcgsxI?si=JZOTqxBC6B0n3DQO

His Brother was God

By Adam Johnson

Jesus rose from the dead and appeared first to Mary Magdalene.

Mark 16:9 says it plainly.

But later He also appeared to His brother who thought He was crazy.

James.

His kid brother. The one who grew up sharing a room with God and didn't know it.

Think about James for a second. His older brother is Jesus. Not "Jesus the Christ." Not "Jesus the Savior." Jesus the guy who worked in the carpenter shop and came home smelling like sawdust and sweat. Jesus who snored. Jesus who ate too fast. Jesus who their mother treated different and James never understood why.

Because Mary kept her mouth shut.

Luke 2:19. She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Angels showed up at His birth. Shepherds fell on their faces. Wise men brought gold. And Mary told nobody. She just watched her firstborn grow up in a ghetto in Nazareth and kept the secret in her chest like a coal she couldn't put down.

James didn't know his brother was God.

He knew his brother was weird.

He knew his mother looked at Jesus different. He knew Joseph moved the whole family to Egypt when they were little and never fully explained why. He knew that one time his parents lost Jesus at the temple and found Him three days later arguing with rabbis like He owned the place. Twelve years old. Already gone.

Then Jesus grew up. Worked the shop. Paid the bills. Because Joseph died - the Bible doesn't say when but Joseph disappears from the story - and in Jewish custom the eldest son takes over. So Jesus wasn't posing for paintings in that carpenter shop. He was feeding His family. Putting bread on the table for His mom and His brothers and sisters in a town so poor Nathanael said "can anything good come out of Nazareth?"



Then one day He left. Walked away from the shop. Walked away from the family. Left James holding the hammer and the bills and the responsibility for a widowed mother. James was pissed.

Mark 3:21. His own family went to collect Him because they said He was out of His mind. That's James. That's the brothers. Showing up to bring the crazy one home before He embarrasses the family worse.

John 7:5. His brethren did not believe in Him.

His own blood. Ate dinner with Him for thirty years. Didn't believe.

Then Wednesday happened.

The brother James thought was insane got arrested at night by temple guards. Got beaten until His face swelled shut. Got whipped until His back looked like raw meat. Got nailed to wood and hung up on a garbage hill outside the city.

And James had to stand somewhere - maybe in the crowd, maybe at home, maybe hearing it secondhand - and process the fact that the brother he called crazy just died like a criminal.

Three days and nights of silence.

Three days of James sitting with the guilt of every eye roll. Every argument. Every time he told people "I don't know what's wrong with Him." Every time he showed up to drag Jesus home because He was embarrassing the family name.

Then Sunday morning.

Jesus rose. Conquered death. Walked out of the tomb.

He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.

And later He appeared to James.

1 Corinthians 15:7. He appeared to James.Paul gives us no scene, only the fact: Jesus appeared to His brother. The one who didn't believe. The one who thought He was crazy. The one who was pissed that He left the family behind.

He showed up and let James see the holes in His hands.

Matthew 28:10. Go tell my brethren. Not my servants. Not my followers. My brethren.

John 20:17. My Father and your Father. My God and your God.

He rose to the highest position in the universe and His vocabulary didn't change.

Most men get a promotion and stop returning phone calls. Jesus conquered death and called the brother who doubted Him family.

James went from "He's out of His mind" to leading the church in Jerusalem.

James went from trying to drag Jesus home to writing a book of the Bible.

James went from skeptic to martyr. They threw him off the temple wall and when he survived the fall they beat him to death with a club. He died for the brother he once thought was insane.

That's what happened when Jesus showed up after the resurrection and said brother.

One word changed everything. He's not calling you servant today. He's not calling you subject. He's calling you what He called James.

Brother.

The same James who didn't believe. Who rolled his eyes. Who showed up to take Him home. Who sat in the dark for three days choking on regret.

He still went to THAT guy.

If He went to James, He'll come to you.

Follow: The Biblical Man
https://x.com/Biblicalman/status/
2089005515049168959?s=20

Dolly Parton - A Life of Faith

A Compilation

When Dolly Parton died on August 25 at the age of 80, the world lost one of its most beloved entertainers. She left behind thousands of songs, more than 100 million records sold, movies, businesses, Dollywood, and a literacy program that has placed hundreds of millions of books into the hands of children.

But behind the rhinestones, the wigs, the quick wit and the remarkable success was something Dolly spoke about throughout her life: her faith in God.

It began long before Nashville.

Dolly Rebecca Parton was born in 1946, the fourth of twelve children, and grew up in a one-room cabin in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. The Partons had very little materially, but music and faith filled their home.

Her grandfather was a Pentecostal preacher, and Dolly began singing in church as a little girl. Years later, she remembered an elderly woman in the congregation telling her that she was "anointed" and would someday do great things.

Dolly didn't understand what that meant, so she asked her mother.

Her mother explained that it meant God had His hand on her and that perhaps she was meant to do something special.

Dolly never forgot it.

She later said that those words awakened something in her—a belief that she had been given her gifts for a reason.

"I always felt responsible to God that I was supposed to be doing something for God."

Dream Big. Pray Big.

Even as a child, Dolly dreamed of becoming a singer.

She fashioned a microphone from a tin can on a tobacco stick and performed for her younger brothers and sisters—and sometimes for the pigs, chickens and ducks in the yard. She learned guitar as a child and sang whenever she had the opportunity.

But alongside those dreams was prayer.

Writing years later about her life, Dolly said that as music became her great ambition, she asked God whether she was on the right path. She wanted Him to be part of the dream.

At 18, immediately after graduating from high school, she left the Tennessee mountains for Nashville.

Her philosophy became remarkably simple:

Dream big. Pray big. And work hard at the opportunities God puts before you.

That combination carried her through a career spanning more than six decades.

Yet Dolly repeatedly resisted taking all the credit for what happened.

“I couldn't have done anything good in my life without God by my side,” she wrote.

Prayer: Dolly’s everyday practice.

Dolly was an early riser. She said the quiet hours before phones rang and the day's demands began were often her favorite time to pray.

Her prayer was strikingly practical:

“How can you use me? What can I do today?”

She asked God for direction—to remove the wrong people and circumstances from her life, bring in the right ones, and help her use what she had been given to uplift others.

“Let me be a light,” she prayed.

A Calling — and Perhaps a Ministry

For Dolly, that childhood idea that God had His hand on her never disappeared.

“I really feel like I have a calling,” she said later in life.

She believed she was supposed to continue working until God told her otherwise.

That calling extended far beyond entertainment.

For Dolly, generosity grew naturally from faith and gratitude. She knew how much she had been given, and she believed that created a responsibility to give something back.

“I just really want to do what I can in this world to make things better, if I can,” she once said.

“Hello God”

Dolly's faith was not untouched by the darkness of the world.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, she wrote “Hello God.”

The song begins almost as though humanity has lost God's telephone number.

Where have You been? Have we forgotten how to reach You? Have we pushed You so far out of our lives that we no longer know where to turn?

But the song gradually becomes a prayer—a plea for forgiveness, love, peace and a return to God.

It reflected something Dolly believed deeply: faith was not an escape from suffering. It was where she turned in suffering.

“I pray every day,” she said in 2020. “To me, it's my salvation. It helps me through everything.”

That belief would become especially important near the end of her life.

Losing Carl

In March 2025, Dolly's husband, Carl Dean, died at the age of 82.

They had been together for more than sixty years and married for nearly fifty-nine.

Carl famously avoided the spotlight, but Dolly described him as the steady presence behind her extraordinary public life.

His death devastated her. Two months later, Dolly spoke about how she was coping. Her answer was faith.

“I am a person of faith, and I truly believe that I'm going to see him again someday.”

She acknowledged the loneliness and the difficulty of learning to make new plans after spending virtually her entire adult life with him.

But she believed their separation was temporary. She would see Carl again.

"I Don't Think God's Done With Me"

By late 2025, Dolly herself was dealing with significant health problems.

Yet in a remarkably candid conversation with Zac Brown that December, she was still talking about purpose.

She said her mission in life was to make people happy, lift people up and glorify God.

She also spoke openly about asking God every day for guidance and wisdom.

And despite her health struggles and the grief of losing Carl, Dolly wasn't ready to stop.

"I don't think God's done with me," she said.

Only months before her death, she described the sense of God's direction she had carried throughout her life.

"I just feel that I have a mission or possibly my ministry, so to speak," she said. And then she expressed essentially the same conviction she had carried since childhood: She would quit when God told her to quit. Not before.

Until God Says It's Over

That belief remained with her during her final illness.

Dolly had been dealing with health problems while caring for Carl and, by her own account, had sometimes neglected her own health while looking after him.

Even as her condition became more serious, she continued talking about plans and projects.

Just days before her death, she said she was "still healin'" and "still workin'" and still had things she hoped to accomplish.

Those close to her said that attitude was inseparable from her faith.

As one person close to Dolly explained after her death, she believed that as long as God had not called her home, there was still work for her to do.

It was, in many ways, the same faith that began with a little girl singing in a Pentecostal church in the Tennessee mountains. God had given her something to do. And until He said otherwise, she intended to keep doing it.

When Dolly's family announced her death, her nephew Bryan Seaver—whom Dolly herself had asked years earlier to make the announcement when that day came—offered a strikingly simple expression of what her family believed had happened:

"Sadness lies with us, not with Dolly."

Dolly, he said, had lived in the light and was now "in the arms of Jesus," reunited with Carl, her parents and those she loved who had gone before her.

For the woman who spent a lifetime dreaming big, praying big, and asking God how He could use her, perhaps there could be no more fitting farewell.



Check It Out: Podcasts

This month we are sharing some Podcasts that we enjoy & find to be feeding. Please send in your recommendations to: contact@thewinepress.org



Christ is All
Frank Viola



Identity Exchange
Jamie & Donna Winship



Encouraging Word
Max Lucado



Gospel in Life
Tim Keller



Daily Hope
Rick Warren



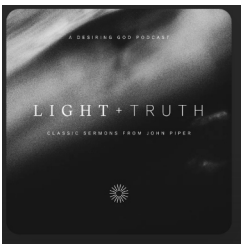
Sermons of
Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones



Become New
John Ortberg



Equip & Empower
Christine Caine



Light + Truth
John Piper



Theology Unplugged
Michael Patton



Ask Pastor John
John Piper



Renewing Your Mind
Ligonier Ministries

There Was Jesus

Song by Dolly Parton & Zach Williams

Every time I tried to make it on my own
Every time I tried to stand and start to fall
And all those lonely roads that I have travelled on
There was Jesus

When the life I built came crashing to the ground
When the friends I had were nowhere to be found
I couldn't see it then but I can see it now
There was Jesus

In the waiting, in the searching
In the healing and the hurting
Like a blessing buried in the broken pieces
Every minute, every moment
Where I've been and where I'm going
Even when I didn't know it or couldn't see it
There was Jesus

For this man who needs amazing kind of grace
For forgiveness at a price I couldn't pay
I'm not perfect so I thank God every day
There was Jesus

In the waiting, in the searching
In the healing and the hurting
Like a blessing buried in the broken pieces
Every minute, every moment
Where I've been and where I'm going
Even when I didn't know it or couldn't see it
There was Jesus

On the mountain, in the valleys (there was Jesus)
In the shadows of the alleys (there was Jesus)
In the fire, in the flood (there was Jesus)
Always is and always was
No, I never walk alone

You are always there
In the waiting, in the searching
In the healing and the hurting
Like a blessing buried in the broken pieces

Every minute, every moment
Where I've been and where I'm going
Even when I didn't know it or couldn't see it
There was Jesus