

Life in the Vineyard

Receive · Rejoice · Release

Life in the Vineyard

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by Marcel Sanchez

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Preface

The Christian life is about a person, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the source of life and the author of the Christian faith (John 1:1-4). The focus of our faith is on a life-giving relationship that grows by faith. Everything around us, and I do mean everything, will attack this life-giving relationship.

What I would like to share with you over the next 30 days is how God has used a simple metaphor to help us understand the simplicity of the Christian life. Whether you've trusted Jesus Christ as Savior just a few minutes ago or you have known Him for more than 30 years, everything you need to live the Christian life still flows from the presence of Christ within you.

I would like to thank a few key people who have made this booklet a reality. My dear friend, Pastor Bud McCord, has invested countless hours in helping to simplify this message. His thoughts are shared throughout this booklet under "Abiding Thoughts" and will serve to help you learn how to live an abiding life. Pastor Bud has trained several Abiding Life Coaches, of which I serve as one. His words of wisdom, expressed throughout these pages are priceless.

Russell Johnson, my friend and Senior Pastor, has invested countless hours translating these materials into Spanish and providing wisdom during the process. Brenda Ulloa, my very talented sister in Christ, has formatted and designed this work, while lending her expertise to this project.

Last but certainly not least, my beautiful wife, Yami. She has supported me from day one on this project. She also serves as the primary recipient of God's fruit through my life.

Marcel Sanchez

PASTOR
IBB CHURCH

Congratulations!

It's time to celebrate. You're now a child of the King. Your decision to accept and follow Jesus Christ means that right now, you are a new creation, a new person. You are not the same anymore.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Simply put, you have been permanently transformed. Your spiritual transformation takes place immediately but the life-application of this change is a moment by moment process. The Christian life is about a person, Jesus Christ, not a program. Jesus produced life-change. Since Jesus lives within you, you already have the entire Christian life available 24X7.

You don't have a shortage of spiritual resources. You don't have a shortage of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness or self-control. You already possess everything necessary to live the abundant life God intended for you to live. You were designed to live through the vine, Jesus.

This booklet is designed to help you grow in this new relationship during the first 30 days of your life as a believer. If you're already a believer but have taken a spiritual detour from God's purpose for your life, this booklet will help you get back on track. It is designed to help you focus on the priority of the Christian life—Jesus. So don't stress. The purpose of this booklet is to help simplify your life rather than complicate it. In the Christian life, less is more.

Welcome to the Christian life!

To get started, these studies are designed to help you answer three simple, yet profound, questions about the Christian life.

What is the Christian life?

Where is the Christian life?

Why the Christian life?

Big Implications!

These are simple questions with huge implications for our joy and our ability to love like Jesus loved. The answers to these questions will either keep your Christian life simple or complex. Simple is good!

Complex is a burden we want to help you avoid. Getting started right in your new Christian life means starting with Jesus and staying with Jesus. He is the Christian life!

Each of these studies is designed to simplify your life, not confuse it or burden it. Remember, in real Christian life "Simple is good and love is the goal". Consider the effort you will put into these studies as an investment in joy and love.

That's right. When your joy is full, you will be the most like Jesus and you will love people like Jesus loved people. When you are filled with His joy, you will naturally love like Jesus loved. Joy is good for us and good for others.

These words I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:11-12)

Can you see the connection between Jesus' joy, your joy, and your ability to love others? The connection is present and available for you right now. Together we will see how this can be our *moment by moment* reality.

Imagine yourself filled with His joy moment by moment. Imagine living a life characterized by complete satisfaction and overflowing abundance.

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

Imagine yourself being able to love without any interruptions. Through these studies, let us help you enjoy Jesus and enjoy loving like Jesus loved others. Your joy and your love is our goal for God's glory!

John 15:1-11

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;
and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.
You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,
unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.
I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him,
bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered;
and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire,
and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified,
that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.
If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as
I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you,
and that your joy may be full.”

A Quick Review

Let's review the steps involved for becoming a Christian. This is a great reminder and a tool for you to use as you share your faith with others. Here are four key words to guide you: Love, separation, provision and connection.

LOVE: God loves YOU! Recognize that He loves you just the way you are, unconditionally. His desire is for you to know Him. God wants you to find complete spiritual satisfaction by starting a vibrant relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.

GOD LOVES YOU

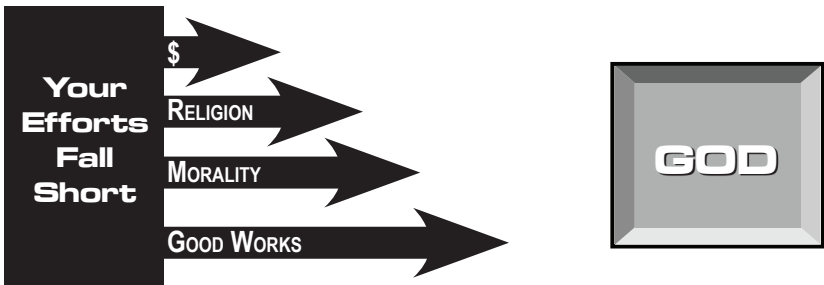
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Separation: Know and admit that your SIN has separated you from God. Knowingly or unknowingly you've broken one of God's 10 commandments, His standard for perfection. Right now, you stand guilty before God for your sin.



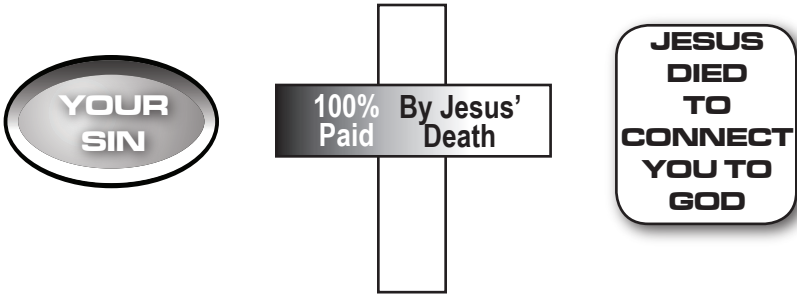
For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

Your personal goodness or ability to help others can't solve the separation problem. There is NOTHING you can do to pay for the penalty of your sins. Morality, religion, generosity, or good works do not satisfy God's perfect standard.



There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

Provision: Jesus died on the cross to pay for the penalty of your sins. He is God's ONLY solution to your sin problem. Jesus died on the cross to connect you to God. He was buried and on the third day, He rose from the grave.



For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust,
that He might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18)
Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

Connection: Believing, confessing, and receiving. You connect with God through FAITH, by believing in Jesus' finished work on the cross and confessing your sins directly to Him through prayer. You receive Him by personal invitation.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God,
to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12)

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

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart
that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

Starting the Christian Life: You begin the Christian life through a prayer of faith. Here is a sample prayer to repeat out loud to the Lord...

Lord God, I thank You for Your great love for me. Today I understand how much You love me. I know that I have sinned against You and broken your commandments. I'm truly sorry. I ask you, Lord Jesus, to forgive me for all my sins. Cleanse my heart and make all things new. Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross to pay for my sins. I believe that you were buried and on the third day, you rose again from the grave. Today I invite you into my heart and receive you as Lord and Savior. Amen.

A New Identity

It is very important for you to understand how God sees you at this very moment in Christ. Secondly, it is important for you to see yourself as God sees you. Every day this week, read the following statements out loud, **I am:**

- *A Saint (Romans 1:7)*
- *A Child of God (Romans 8:16)*
- *Reigning with Christ (Rom. 5:17)*
- *In Christ (Gal. 2:20)*
- *Loved by God (John 3:16)*
- *Complete in Jesus (Col. 2:10)*
- *Set Apart in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2)*
- *A New Creation (2 Cor. 5:17)*
- *A Joint Heir (Romans 8:17)*
- *A Conqueror (Romans 8:37)*
- *Free in Christ (John 8:36)*
- *Reconciled (Romans 5:11)*
- *Acceptable to God (Rom. 14:18)*
- *Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13)*
- *Redeemed (Galatians 3:13)*
- *Chosen (John 15:16)*
- *One in Christ (John 17:20-21)*
- *Justified (Romans 3:24; 5:1)*
- *Crucified with Jesus (Romans 6:6-8)*
- *Resurrected (Romans 6:9-11)*
- *Free from condemnation (Romans 8:1)*
- *Secure (Romans 8:31-39)*
- *Forgiven (Colossians 1:13-14)*
- *Established by God (2 Corinthians 1:21)*
- *The Justice of God (2 Corinthians 5:21)*
- *Dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11)*
- *A Partaker of the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4)*
- *Sealed with Christ (Ephesians 1:13)*
- *Alive to God (Romans 6:11)*
- *Christ's Instrument (Romans 15:18)*
- *Washed and Sanctified (1 Cor. 6:11)*
- *Saved forever (Romans 5:9-10)*
- *God's Temple (Romans 8:11)*
- *A Branch of the Vine (John 15:1-8)*

Besides this I have:

- *Complete Satisfaction in Christ*
- *The Holy Spirit*
- *Life in God*
- *The Mind of Christ*
- *The Promises of God*
- *Direct access to the Father*
- *Eternal Security in Christ Jesus*
- *An Eternal Purpose*
- *A perfect life for me—Jesus*
- *A perfect life in me—Jesus*

God's Promise and Assurance:

We are no longer prisoners of our past. In Christ Jesus, we have a future and a living hope! God's Word provides us with everything needed to live a vibrant Christian life. Our future has been secured by God's unchanging love.

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

Memory Verses to Know

Write the following memory verses on a flashcard. Take 10 minutes each day and review these verses out loud. These verses will encourage you and give you the tools needed to share God's work in your life with someone else.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

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

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

Terms to Understand:

Receive: Actively listening and drawing what is needed to live the Christian life from the source of life, Jesus. He is the vine and you're His precious branch.

Rejoice: Reflecting on the goodness of God, the vinedresser, and considering how His instructions can flow through every area of your life.

Release: Taking what you have received from the vine and intentionally delivering this fruit to those who need it most. You were designed to deliver.

Day #1 - A New Source for Satisfaction

I am the true vine. (John 15:1)

God is the source of all wisdom and spiritual satisfaction (John 15:1). Starting with Abraham, God planted the nation of Israel as a vine with the intent to make Him known, visible to the entire world. His desire was to connect all people to Himself through the nation of Israel. Israel failed repeatedly as a nation by disobeying God's Word and therefore producing bad fruit. (Jeremiah 2:21)

God extends spiritual satisfaction and eternal life exclusively, through His Son, Jesus.

God's heart has not changed. He still wants to connect all people to Himself. Today, however, God extends spiritual satisfaction and eternal life exclusively, through His Son, Jesus. Jesus, the true vine, connects us to God.

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

Jesus is eternal life. He is the living vine. Before you took your first breath, Jesus was intimately involved in the creation and fulfillment of God's plan for your life (John 1:1-4). You have been connected to the Life to deliver life.

You've been connected to the vine to deliver a continuous flow of love to others.

You have been connected to the Life to deliver life.

As the true vine, Jesus connects you to the Father, the vinedresser, and provides what's needed to make God known and clearly visible to those who don't yet know Him. Jesus is the true vine and you are His branch. As a branch, receiving a consistent flow of life-changing spiritual nourishment from the vine is your top priority.

There is nothing more important for a branch to do.

Receiving a consistent flow of life-changing spiritual nourishment from the vine is your top priority.

Receive: Right now, take 10 minutes to thank God in prayer for being your new source of spiritual satisfaction. Ask Him to show you how to stay focused on Jesus. Make it a point to pray every day and begin memorizing John 15:5.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #2 - The Care of the Vinedresser

I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser. (John 15:1)

The metaphor of John 15:1-11 will help you understand how the Christian life is supposed to work. God's plan is not complicated; it's simple, very simple. As the vinedresser, He is completely and intimately aware of every detail of your life.

God loves you unconditionally and His plan for your life is a good one.

As the vinedresser, He is completely and intimately aware of every detail of your life.

God is the One who protects, manages, and cares for the vineyard. For this reason, He wants to produce the visible demonstration of His love through your life, as you receive spiritual nourishment from the vine. The vinedresser will make sure all nourishment flows from the vine to the branches.

God is the One who protects, manages, and cares for the vineyard.

God knows exactly what's needed for the vineyard to thrive and produce healthy fruit. He has a perfect plan ready to flow through your life. He understands what conditions generate the most fruit. Moreover, God knows how to cultivate the right environment for your life to flourish and produce high-quality fruit.

He already simplified the process for your spiritual growth. Don't stress! Remember, your new source for satisfaction is not found in a program, an experience, an achievement, or in a material possession. Your new source for satisfaction is found in a person, Jesus Christ.

God knows how to cultivate the right environment for your life to flourish and produce good fruit.

Receive: Spend the bulk of your time alone with God thanking God for His great power, protection, and care for your life. Thank Him for the work He has started and the fruit He will produce through you. Start reading one chapter a day from the Gospel of John. Continue memorizing John 15:5.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #3 - From the Inside Out

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37-38)

Your search is over! As a believer, your complete spiritual satisfaction is already living within you—forever. Jesus Christ, the true vine, is the only One who can quench spiritual thirst. Now you can rest...your spirit has finally found what it's been searching for. Jesus Christ, the eternal God, now lives within you.

Your complete spiritual satisfaction
is already living within you—forever:

God's Spirit is ready to flow through your life like a rushing, mighty river. As you increase the receiving, God can increase the flowing. Your life is designed to deliver life from the inside out. In Christ, your life is a conduit of life! For this reason, you must allow His life to freely flow through you to bring life to others.

Your life is designed to deliver life from the inside out.

Recognize that you are no longer the one living. Your “old self” was crucified with Christ. The “old you” is gone and the “new you” in Christ Jesus is here to stay. He now lives within you and works through you to deliver life to others.

I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;
and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

As you learn to receive a constant flow of spiritual nourishment from the vine, your life will be characterized by faith—one that trusts the vinedresser in every situation. You can't receive from the vine, nor can you please the vinedresser, without faith. Your faith is a visible demonstration of your love for God.

Receive: Continue memorizing John 15:5 and add Galatians 2:20 to your list.
What attitudes or behaviors has God changed in your life? _____

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #4 - A False Connection

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away. (John 15:2)

Not every branch is rightly connected. Just because someone says they're a branch doesn't automatically make them one. Some are rightly connected to the vine and others are not. On the outside, some branches may look, feel, and even smell like other healthy branches. Unless you're a vinedresser or a modern-day gardener, you wouldn't notice the difference, at least not at first.

Not every branch is rightly connected.

In like manner, some people who call themselves Christians are rightly connected to the vine and others are not. Those who aren't may say the right things, regularly attend church services, and even volunteer their time. You wouldn't notice the difference either, at least not immediately. The book of 1st John makes it clear; we can identify a true believer by the fruit of their life. Your purpose as a branch is to bear fruit—to make God visible to others by allowing the qualities of God to continuously flow through your life.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:5-7)

Someone who claims to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus, but does not produce fruit is really not a true believer. Every branch that is truly connected to the vine will produce fruit. Every true Christian produces fruit, even if the amount is relatively small. When you're rightly connected to the vine, your life will change and you will make God's presence visible to a dying world by producing fruit.

Receive: Begin memorizing John 3:16 and Romans 3:23. Read 1st John 1:5-7 several times and spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord to help you walk in the light. Start praying each day for 10-20 minutes. Continue reading through the Gospel of John and share what you're learning with others.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #5 - Stay Focused

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away. (John 15:2)

In the Christian life there are multitudes of distractions. These distractions demand your attention. However, as a branch, your primary responsibility is to stay focused on the vine. Every day, activities, people and events work hard to shift your focus from the internal to the external, from the eternal to the temporary, and from the One who truly satisfies to those who can never satisfy.

As a branch, your primary responsibility is to stay focused on the vine.

Don't get discouraged by the activity of other branches. You can't control what other branches do or don't do. Don't let their behavior or their condition take your focus away from the vine. Keep your full attention on Jesus. The Christian life is sourced through the vine not through other branches. The more you focus on the vine, the more visible God's attributes will be made known to others.

The more you focus on the vine, the more visible God's attributes will be made known to others.

As you intentionally allow the qualities of God to flow through you, He will produce life through your life. The good news is that you don't have to produce anything. Really...you don't. God is the producer. You do, however, have to stay focused on the vine for His life to unreservedly flow through you. As a branch, your most critical role is simply to rest and receive from the vine!

As you intentionally allow the qualities of God to flow through you, He will produce life through your life.

Jesus is the vine, your daily source for spiritual nourishment. Don't look for this nourishment in other branches. They can't supply it. Don't look for this nourishment in other activities. You won't find it. Don't look for this nourishment in other things. They can't produce it. Stay focused on the vine.

Receive: Continue memorizing John 15:5 and Galatians 2:20. Thank God for being your source for spiritual satisfaction. Ask Him to help you remove distractions and stay focused on Jesus. Talk with the Father for 10-20 minutes.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Abiding Thoughts



Jesus is God's perfection for us and in us.

God demands a perfect life. That perfect life is Jesus.
That perfect life is in me right now.

The difference between Jesus and me is simple.
He was 100% satisfied in God 24 hours a day
and seven days a week, and I am not.

Affirming each day who I am in Christ
motivates me to live accordingly.

Living for God is to enter into the flow of God's intentions
which never change.

I must receive, rejoice and release.
The "source of source" wants to flow through me.

The most important thing I can do to start each day
is to be a great receiver.

Abiding is enjoying a barrier-free relationship with the Vine - Jesus -
and releasing what the Vine wants to give to others through me.

Day #6 - Connected for a Purpose

And every branch that bears fruit... (John 15:2)

The life of a branch is very simple. Your purpose as a branch is to bear fruit—to make God visible to others by allowing the qualities of God to continuously flow through your life. Connections are important, very important. Having the right connection to the vine is absolutely necessary in the production of spiritual fruit.

The presence of the vinedresser is powerful. A continuous flow of spiritual fruit magnifies God's presence in this world and brings life-transformation to those who are connected to the wrong things. God's visible presence is the catalyst for eliminating the pain of this world. As His branch, your role is to allow His presence to flow through your life without any obstacles or restrictions.

As a branch, your purpose is to bear fruit
by making God visible to others.

Your spiritual maturity is a progression not a one-time event. Spiritual growth is realized in your uninterrupted connection to the vine and through your delivery of this fruit to others who need it. In the Christian life, your maturity depends more on your consistency to receive from the vine, rejoice on His instructions, and release spiritual fruit than it does on any one-time event.

Your spiritual maturity is a progression not a one-time event.

The visible demonstration of God's love, the visible fruit, is not for you to produce but to receive, rejoice, and release. As a branch, this is your role. But you may ask, "What does fruit look like?" You may even ask, "How do I know if I am producing the right kind of fruit?" Great question! Here is just a sample of the fruit we're supposed to continuously deliver to others on a daily basis:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22- 23)

Receive: Spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord to help you understand your purpose as a branch: receive, reflect, and deliver. Thank Him for giving your life a new purpose. Continue studying and memorizing John 3:16 and Romans 3:23. Continue reading one chapter a day from the Gospel of John.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #7 - He knows

And every branch that bears fruit He prunes. (John 15:2)

The wisdom of the vinedresser allows Him to take care of the garden in a way that is beyond our capacity to understand. Although God is all-powerful and all-knowing, He is intimately involved with every area of your life. Not only is God completely aware of our surroundings, He's also intimately involved with each and every step you take.

God is fully aware of every detail of your life.

Although God is all-powerful and all-knowing. He is fully aware of every detail of your life.

O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. (Psalm 139:1-4)

This level of involvement should lead us to an incredible confidence in our Lord. He knows us intimately, He watches over us, and He's intentionally involved with every detail of our lives. No matter how difficult life gets, remember, He knows. He knows your circumstances. He knows how things will affect you and your family. And He knows exactly what's needed to draw you closer to Him.

He knows us intimately, He watches over us, and He's intentionally involved with every detail of our lives.

The vinedresser has everything under control. No matter what happens to the other branches, no matter how hard it rains or how others try to destroy the vine, He's in complete control. He knows what He's doing so just rest in Him.

He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. (Psalm 147:4-5)

Receive: Recognize the Lord for His infinite wisdom and awesome power. Praise Him for who He is and what He has done. Continue studying and memorizing John 3:16 and Romans 3:23. Continue reading one chapter a day from the Gospel of John.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day # 8 - Growth through Discomfort

And every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:2)

Problems can lead you to a greater level of intimacy with the vine. As with any delivery system, problems can be expected. In our world for example, trucks run out of gas, people deliver packages to the wrong address, or find themselves delayed in traffic. In God's delivery system, problems arise not because you're doing something wrong but because you're doing something right.

Problems can lead you to a greater
level of intimacy with the vine.

You might say, "Well that doesn't make any sense." If we understand the metaphor of John 15, it makes perfect sense. When the branch begins to grow and produce fruit, it experiences new challenges. The branches start getting heavier and may shoot out into too many directions at once. This additional weight has the potential to strain the branch and bring more stress.

When the branch begins to grow and produce fruit,
it experiences new challenges.

These factors can ultimately affect your connection back to the vine.

For this reason, the vinedresser removes the excess from your life to point you to the vine. Although your growth may produce beautiful scenery, it may considerably affect your ability to produce more fruit. This extra weight is very uncomfortable and it is certainly not good for you. The vinedresser wants to produce an abundance of fruit through your life. This will require great discomfort on your part, but in the end, it will not compare to what He plans to do through your life.

The vinedresser removes the excess
from your life to point you to the vine.

Receive: Spend some time with the Father, asking Him to prepare you for the coming discomforts of your spiritual growth. Ask Him to help you draw closer to the vine during this process. Continue reading through the Gospel of John and review all of your memory verses out loud.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day # 9 - Growth through Pain

He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:2)

At just the right time, the vinedresser steps into the vineyard of your life and clips away the excess shrubbery. This clipping away is more than uncomfortable; it can be painful, very painful. God will remove the excess from your life to draw you closer to the vine. The excess may be a material possession, a job, an event or something else. It might even consist of a very close friendship.

At just the right time, the vinedresser steps into the vineyard of your life and clips away the excess shrubbery.

God has a purpose for everything He removes. He only removes what is necessary to produce more fruit. He allows you to experience pain to further expand His presence here on earth. Don't try to figure it all out. He may decide to reveal His purpose for your pain or He may not. There's good news—you can trust the vinedresser. He knows what He's doing and He will take care of you.

God has a purpose for everything He removes.

Sometimes the only explanation we can find for what God removes from our lives is the comfort we're able to bring to others who experience a similar loss. If we allow Him, God can use our pain to bring comfort and encouragement to others.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

The less you have to weigh you down, the more fruit your life can deliver for the vinedresser. Don't allow yourself to get discouraged when the excess is removed. Although it can be extremely painful, the experience can lead you to a greater level of fruitfulness. Be grateful to the Lord for His infinite wisdom and rest in the fact that He has a purpose for everything He removes.

Receive: Ask God to prepare your heart for the excess that needs to be removed from your life. Make it a point to trust Him during this process and draw closer to the vine. Begin memorizing 1 Peter 3:18 and review the other verses.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day # 10 - Connected Securely

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.
(John 15:3)

At the moment of your salvation, your sins were forgiven and cleansed. You were sealed to the eternal vine by the power of the Holy Spirit. Your connection to the vine is totally secure. No one can remove you from this eternal connection. The One who seals the connection is the One who guarantees it.

Your connection to the vine is totally secure.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Your connection to the vine was initiated by the vinedresser:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (John 10:27-30)

What does all this security really mean? It means that you can rest fully in the work of the vinedresser. You can trust His provision, protection, and eternal guarantee for your life. It means that you can focus more on the vine and completely eliminate any worry or fear from your thinking.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Receive: Ask God in your time of prayer to help you learn how to trust Him more. Keep reading through the Gospel of John and memorizing 1 Peter 3:18.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____



Remembering is critical to my spiritual well-being.

Listening is first of all a spiritual discipline, because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Listening is receiving.

A blessed person is one who is like a little child who can only live by receiving from a source of continuous love.

To be perfect is to live with a heart completely open to God
and a heart completely open to man.

Living now with an open heart is true spirituality.

Now is what God is allowing to reveal the true state of my heart.
My open heart right now is my witness
and my opportunity to glorify God.

Glorifying God is to reveal His open heart. His heart never closes.

Seeking my happiness is to seek God.
Seeking my happiness must be my first priority in life.

The pursuit of happiness is not evil.
To want to feel good is to want to feel God.

Day #11 - A Continuous Surrender

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

Your connection to the vine is a growing, life-giving relationship.

Your most important role as a branch is to continually remain in the vine and allow the vine to freely live in you. Remember, you can trust the vinedresser as He carries out His plan through the vine. Your continuous surrender to the desires of the vinedresser makes it possible for the vine to freely live through you.

Your most important role as a branch is to continually remain in the vine and allow the vine to freely live in you.

The process of spiritual surrender will be aggressively attacked by the enemy, Satan. His desire is for you to find satisfaction somewhere else. Here's the bottom-line—Satan wants to destroy you (Genesis 3:1-5). He will use doubt to negatively shift your thinking from surrender to dissatisfaction. He loves to deceive God's people by removing their focus from the vine.

Satan wants you to find satisfaction somewhere else.

For this reason, the process of spiritual surrender is a daily, moment by moment activity, not simply a one-time event. The apostle Paul later develops this idea with regards to our relationship with the Holy Spirit. He gives a very powerful command as he encourages believers to live wisely. Paul wants them to stop searching for external satisfaction, to stop being consumed by worldly living and temporary pleasures. He wants them to be constantly filled with God's Spirit.

Be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

God wants you to be constantly filled with His Spirit. He wants you to get rid of your old way of living and allow His Son to guide your every thought, word, and action. When you allow God to replace the satisfaction you once found in the world with the life-giving satisfaction found in His Son, He can bring your life great freedom and contentment, as you discover your new purpose for living.

Receive: Ask the Lord to help you learn how to surrender to Him. Keep reading through John's Gospel and review all of your previous memory verses.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #12 - Total Dependence

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (John 15:4)

Total dependence on the vine precedes spiritual productivity. A continuous surrender to the will of the vinedresser will naturally lead you to depend on Him fully for spiritual productivity and growth. A life characterized by continuous surrender and total dependence on the vine is the work of the vinedresser.

Only then can His work through your life thrive exponentially.

Total dependence on the vine precedes spiritual productivity.

As a branch, you must recognize your spiritual limitations. You can't produce the visible fruit of God's Spirit without being regularly connected to the vine. The focus of the Christian life is connectivity **to** the vine rather than activity **for** the vine. Your connectivity is what determines your activity.

The focus of the Christian life is connectivity
to the vine rather than activity for the vine.

There is a direct relationship between dependence and fruit. As your dependence on the vine increases, the visible fruit of God's Spirit working through your life will increase as well. Don't focus on the fruit. Focus your full attention on the vine. Ask God to increase your capacity to depend fully Him.

Your connectivity is what determines your activity.

Total dependence involves resting securely in the vine and trusting in the complete care of the vinedresser. You are not required to manufacture a product, an experience or an event. The vine, Jesus Christ, now lives within you. Everything needed to produce God's visible presence on earth is produced by the vine. God's fruit through your life is produced from the inside out.

There is a direct relationship between dependence and fruit.

Receive: Continue studying and memorizing all memory verses. Begin memorizing John 14:6. Prayerfully dedicate your complete dependence on Jesus. Ask Him to help you trust His word as He directs your life each day.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #13 - Complete Provision

I am the vine, you are the branches. (John 15:5)

Everything you need to live the Christian life is sourced and provided through the vine. There is no longer a need to lose sleep, worry or fear. God knows exactly what you need and when you need it. You can trust completely in His provision for your daily needs and let His word radically transform your old way of thinking.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:6-8)

Everything you need to live the Christian life is sourced and provided through the vine.

Waiting for the provision of the vinedresser is another component of total dependence. You may need to undo old methods of personal life-management and implement new ones. When problems arise, strengthen your connection. Make asking and receiving from God your first priority not your last resort.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Replace worry, fear and manipulation with trust, faith, and truthfulness. The vinedresser may occasionally shake your branch, but hold on for the ride. Remember who you're connected to—Jesus. Don't try to solve your problems without Him. Immediately invite Him to take full control of every situation and direct your steps right from the start. Trust Him and you'll be glad you did!

Receive: Continue studying John 14:6 and reading through the Gospel of John. Spend considerable time today thanking God for His complete provision. Make a list of those things He's provided for during this last month.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #14 - Total Replacement

I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Your spiritual transformation took place immediately at the moment of your salvation. Your old nature has been put to death and fully replaced with God's holy nature. Although you're the one breathing, you're no longer the one living. Jesus is the One living through your life. The more you let His life flow through you, the more productive you will be as a branch in connecting others to the vine.

Although you're the one breathing, you're no longer the one living. Jesus is the One living through your life.

Your purpose for living has been radically changed. You no longer live in the past or need to find satisfaction externally. Your purpose and satisfaction for living is already present within you. You now live by faith and not by sight.

The more you let His life flow through you, the more productive you will be in connecting others to the vine.

The old you was replaced forever. It died and was buried. You are free to discover your new purpose for living. You discover God's unfolding purpose for your life by faith, as you abide in the vine and respond in obedience to His word.

Your purpose for living has been radically changed.

Although your spiritual transformation was instantaneous, the life-application of your conversion is a steady process. As you read through the Gospel of John, spend time in prayer, memorize scripture, and study each devotional, ask yourself this question, "How does my life need to change in light of this truth?" The answer to this question is the life-application for you to put into practice.

Although your spiritual transformation was instantaneous, the life-application of your conversion is a steady process.

Receive: Continue studying all memory verses and reading through the Gospel of John. Spend considerable time asking, "How does my life need to change in light of this truth?" Make a list of those things the Lord reveals to you.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #15 - Less for More

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

The most natural and productive activity for a branch is to abide in the vine. Without the vine, the branch cannot live, grow, or produce fruit. By itself, the branch can do *NOTHING*. You can't fulfill your purpose apart from remaining in the vine. You must allow the vinedresser to remove all unnecessary attitudes, activities, and distractions to focus greater attention on the vine.

The most natural and productive activity for a branch is to abide in the vine.

You can't fulfill your purpose as a believer unless you receive from the vine and allow His life to live through you. As a branch, the energy and focus of your life must be radically simplified: receive, rejoice, and release. The more you simplify your daily relationship with Christ, the greater the potential to produce much fruit.

You can't fulfill your purpose as a believer unless you receive from the vine and allow His life to live through you.

Your life as a believer can make a huge difference when you do what you were created to do. You were redeemed to remain. As a branch, your "doing" is not about filling your schedule with more activities, events, and commitments. On the contrary, your "doing" involves reducing. In the Christian life, when you reduce you produce.

When you don't reduce you can't produce.

The more you simplify your daily relationship with Christ, the greater the potential to produce much fruit.

Here is the simplicity of the Christian life: Your daily satisfaction and spiritual productivity is found in Jesus Christ. You were saved to experience complete satisfaction and daily spiritual nourishment in the vine. This is "the main thing."

In the Christian life, when you reduce you produce.

Receive: Continue studying all memory verses and reading through the Gospel of John. Ask, "What do I need to reduce in my life to focus more on the vine?" Make a list and take steps to start reducing these activities.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____



Abiding is the only way to be of any use to God.

Fruit that remains is the satisfaction that comes to me from God
and now remains in someone else as well.

The health of a church is determined by the level of
satisfaction being found in God.

No church can move faster than the speed of its satisfaction in God.

Essence must precede effort in church life.

Essence is determined by what we receive, not what we do.

Confession of sin is needed so I can locate the place where I
became an outcome controller instead of a loving decider.

Confession of sin is needed so I can find the place
where my heart closes to God and to others.

I sin less only because I abide more.

Day #16 - The True Vine

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. (John 15:6)

There are many vines in the world of spiritual vineyards but only one True Vine under the care of the master vinedresser. Jesus was actively involved in creation (John 1). He is the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega. Jesus is Eternal. He is God's *ONLY* solution to your sin problem.

Jesus is the Living Vine, the One who is Life and delivers life to those who trust in Him.

Jesus is the Living Vine, the One who is Life and delivers life to those who trust in Him. Jesus Christ crucified on the cross is God's only provision to completely satisfy the payment and penalty for your sins. Jesus is the True Vine...there is no other. All those who reject Him will face eternal separation from God.

This {Jesus} is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone." Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:11-12)

Jesus died on the cross to connect you to God. He was buried and on the third day, He rose from the grave. Jesus' life produced life. You can't produce life if you're not *the* Life. Jesus is the Life and therefore, He can produce Life in you.

Jesus' life produces life.

Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, and others have all died and remained in the grave. Their teachings may have continued but they did not produce eternal fruit nor connect others with the Father. They were simply not the True Vine.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

Receive: Continue studying all memory verses and reading through the Gospel of John. Make a list of those who have not followed Jesus as Savior. Make it a point on your schedule this week to share these truths with them.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day # 17 - A Productive Conversation

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:7)

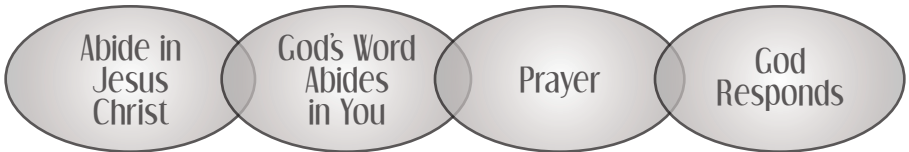
Prayer is the spiritual oxygen for the Christian life. There's a direct relationship between prayer and abiding. Prayer can bring you closer to God by helping you grow deeper in your daily fellowship and dependence to the vine. As you sharpen your focus on the things that matter most to God, He will guide you to pray in a way that magnifies His name by matching your desires with His desires.

Your prayers are spiritually productive when they are aligned with God's word.

As a branch, you want to be productive in the way you invest your time. Your prayers are spiritually productive when they are aligned with God's Word. As you memorize God's Word and reflect on it throughout your day, something changes—you. God's Word begins to change the way you think, process, and respond to your environment. His Word keeps you on the right track.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

A regular study of God's Word and an open conversation about how it applies to every area of your life will lead you to a productive spiritual conversation. When God's Word fills and directs your life, the vinedresser will respond to your prayers. Prayer and a personal application of God's Word should work together.



RECEIVE: Start memorizing 1 John 1:9. Keep reading through the Gospel of John. Ask the Lord to search your heart for anything out of alignment with His Word. Confess it right away and thank the Lord for His mercy and compassion.

REJOICE: God is teaching me to _____

RELEASE: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #18 - The Goal

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit. (John 15:8)

The goal of the branch is to produce an abundance of fruit to praise the name of the vinedresser. God wants to produce a generous amount of fruit through your life to magnify His name for all eternity. The goal of bearing much fruit is simply to give God greater glory through His work in your life. Keep this in mind, the greater the fruit the greater the glory. The goal is to bring God greater glory.

The goal of bearing much fruit is simply to give God greater glory through His work in your life.



An abiding life is one who receives a regular flow of spiritual nourishment from the vine and intentionally delivers this life to others to bear much fruit. When you allow God to freely produce much fruit through your life, His name is glorified and made known to others. God wants your life to generously magnify His name.

God grafted you into His vineyard for your life to produce much fruit and glorify His name. Your life was designed to glorify God! In His infinite wisdom, God created you as His unique tool to make His light visible to others. Your gifts of speaking and serving others were specifically given to you by God to bring glory to His name. Use what God has given you to deliver His love to others.

God wants your life to generously magnify His name.

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Receive: Keep reading through the Gospel of John. Reflect on how you can use your speaking and ministry gifts to magnify God's name to others this week.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #19 - Clear Evidence

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit:
so you will be My disciples. (John 15:8)

Your spiritual transformation is made evident by the fruit you deliver to others.

A person who claims to be a Christian but does not deliver fruit, not even a small portion, is not a Christian. Fruit is the evidence of a transformed life. Your life as a believer should be characterized by fruit. Fruit is evidence of the right connectivity.

Your fruit confirms your connectivity to the vine.

Fruit is the evidence of a transformed life.

Your connectivity should lead you to develop those distinct qualities that are characteristic of the vine. These qualities are not developed in one large shipment... it takes time. You're an unfolding work of God. The vinedresser is more concerned with your consistency than with your speed. The destination for your transformation is the likeness of Jesus, being conformed into His very image. You were transformed to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. (Romans 8:28-29)

You were transformed to be conformed
into the image of Jesus Christ.

As a wise vinedresser, God begins to remove those areas of your life that are in direct opposition to His divine plan. He also begins to sharpen you through a variety of experiences, leading you to reflect the attributes of the vine to get through each one. At times the conditions will be difficult to endure and at other times sunny and cool. Rest assured, each of these is designed for your transformation.

God never wastes an experience. Each one can produce fruit.

The vinedresser is more concerned with
your consistency than with your speed.

Receive: Continue studying all memory verses and reading through the Gospel of John. How is the life of Jesus being reflected through your attitudes and actions? What is He asking you to change or remove from your life?

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #20 - The Same Love

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. (John 15:9)

With God, delivering love is personal...very personal. Before He inspired His people to write about the characteristics of love, He decided to first demonstrate this love and model what love is supposed to look like. As the vinedresser, He's the initiator of love. God took the first step by sending His only Son to die on the cross to connect you with the only source of life-giving satisfaction (John 3:16).

With God, delivering love is personal...very personal.

Make no mistake about it; the love of the Father towards the Son is powerful, perfect, and eternal. Likewise, the love that Jesus has for you is powerful, perfect, and eternal. His intimate relationship with the Father has always existed.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4)

Their conversations with one another went uninterrupted. There was complete knowledge, perfect unity, and infinite wisdom throughout every discussion. Jesus wants you to live in this very same love. A love that is unlimited in power, knowledge, wisdom, and unity. He wants you to receive this love from Him every moment of every day and deliver this powerful, life-changing love to others.

The love that Jesus has for you is great, perfect, and eternal.

The world needs to see this same love. They need to see how Jesus would respond in a given situation. People need to see the beauty of God's perfect presence unfolded through the lives of His people. A love that goes far beyond culture and political correctness. A life that gives instead of takes, one that sacrifices instead of demands, and one that serves rather than burdens others.

People need to see the beauty of God's perfect presence unfolded through the lives of His people.

Receive: Continue studying your memory verses and read through the Gospel of John. Read Matthew 5 and write down how Jesus teaches us to love others. Notice how counter-cultural this love is, even today.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Abiding Thoughts



Complexity is of the devil. Simplicity is of God.

When I cooperate with God's intentions I feel like a man who just ate a wonderful meal for free.

Spiritual habits are life disciplines that put me in the best position to receive all Jesus is constantly willing to give to me.

The Sermon on the Mount is a description of the kind of life that will emerge when I am perfectly satisfied in God 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

To believe is to receive. To increase my faith means to increase my capacity to receive what God has done, is doing or will do.

The Kingdom of God is a place where every heart remains continuously open to God and everyone else.

To pray in Jesus' name is to pray in harmony with His intentions.

Every church can be perfectly healthy.

I am always obsessing on something or someone.
When I obsess on Jesus the best me emerges naturally.

Day #21 - An Obedient Love

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:10)

Your love for God is perfected through your obedience to His Word. Love and obedience are two sides of the same coin. Love is demonstrated through obedience. Jesus modeled a perfect love through His obedience to the Father's commandments.

He obeyed God's word 100% of the time. He did not compromise, neglect or delay. Jesus followed God wholeheartedly. When you don't obey you can't abide. Obedience is the gateway to living an abiding life.

Your love for God is perfected through
your obedience to His word.

Perfecting your love for God is simple not complex. The famous slogan from Nike, "*Just do it*," reminded people to put on the right sneakers and take immediate action.

As you learn something new from God's Word, make it a habit to take immediate action. Never put off for tomorrow what God shows you to do today. Following God's Word is an exhilarating adventure. Just do it!

Obedience is the gateway to living an abiding life.

Whether the subject is prayer, giving, forgiveness, baptism, or something else, "just do it" and trust the vinedresser to work out the rest. As you practice God's word, your intimacy with the vine will grow deeper.

As you learn something new from God's word,
make it a habit to take immediate action and "just do it."

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22 - 25)

Receive: Ask the Lord to help you obey His Word. Continue studying your memory verses, reading through the Gospel of John and Matthew 5. Write down the steps of obedience you need to take as a result of discovering these truths.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #22 - A Perfect Love

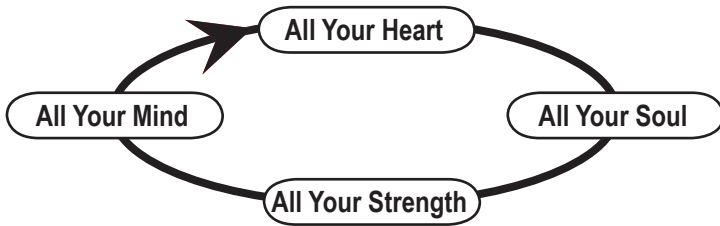
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind. (Luke 10:27)

In the Christian life, love is comprehensive. It is not limited, fractional or temporary. God loves you with a perfect love. As you continue living an abiding life, your love for God and your love for others will grow. When He connected you to His Son at the moment of salvation, you became His child forever.

God wants you to love Him by pursuing Him with your total being.

For this reason, God wants you to make loving Him your #1 priority. Recognize that He is the One who has absolute control over everything. Since His provision for you through the vine can satisfy every need you have, there's no need to look elsewhere.

God wants you to love Him by pursuing Him with your total being.



As you deepen your connection to the vine, you'll grow in your love, passion, and appreciation for the vinedresser. Your capacity to love increases as you maintain a constant flow to and from the vine. In other words, uninterrupted fellowship feeds your spiritual growth. This is why it is so important to confess your sins right away. Unconfessed sin will always interrupt your fellowship and prevent you from loving God with 100% of your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

As you continue living an abiding life, your love for God and your love for others will grow.

Receive: Begin memorizing Romans 10:9 and keep reading through the Gospel of John. What things have interrupted your fellowship with God in the past? Ask Him to guide you to avoid interruptions and stay in good fellowship.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #23 - A Satisfying Love

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you,
and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11)

You were created to enjoy God's purposes for your life. That may sound a bit strange but it's true. God created you for a greater purpose. And there's nothing dull or common about it. A strong characteristic of your life should be a heart filled with joy. You must believe, however; that His intentions for your life are good, very good. You can therefore wholeheartedly trust Him.

A strong characteristic of your life
should be a heart filled with joy.

God wants you to run the Christian race with a full tank. He wants you to persevere and finish strong. The uninterrupted presence of Christ flowing through your life is the power needed to live and finish strong. Jesus within you is your exclusive source for abundant satisfaction. The wrong source will slow you down. Make sure you're finding the strength to live from the right source.

Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him,
because the soul of all the people was grieved.
But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. (1 Samuel 30:6)

All your spiritual resources are readily available for you to apply in your life right now. You don't have to go out anymore and look for a temporary fix for satisfaction. All the satisfaction you'll ever need is already present within you. Regardless of your circumstances, you can have joy right now!

If you have a real need, ask Him and watch Him provide. God wants you to experience the joy found in living through the vine. Sometimes He will allow you to struggle but trust Him; it is ultimately for your good. He loves you and has a purpose for every circumstance. Enjoy His presence at work within you.

Until now you have asked nothing in My name.
Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24)

Receive: Keep memorizing Romans 10:9 and reading through the Gospel of John. Ask the Lord to help you find your strength for living through His Son.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #24 - A Constant Battle

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Galatians 5:16-17)

Stand and let God fight! The Christian life is a daily battle. You'll be attacked from many directions but your greatest battle will originate from within. The desires of your flesh are in constant opposition to God's Word. They never rest and they never want to lose. They won't surrender and they won't be completely satisfied. As a child of God, you already have the power to conquer your flesh.

The desires of your flesh are in constant opposition to God's Word.

Live to win. As you walk in the Spirit by living an abiding life, you will win the battle over your flesh. The power of God's Spirit will always defeat the power of the flesh. You're not in a losing battle. You're in a war that has already been won. The power to win now lives within. No matter what destructive habits or addictions defeated you in the past, the power to overcome now lives within you.

As you walk in the Spirit by living an abiding life, you will win the battle over your flesh.

Don't feel guilty. Don't beat yourself up when you sin and lose an individual battle. Confess your sins to the Lord, get back up, and stand. Let God fight your battles for you. When you try to fight your spiritual battles in your own strength, you lose. But when you stand and allow God's mighty power to fight through you, you're sure to win. You can be confident when God's doing the fighting.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11)

No matter what destructive habits or addictions defeated you in the past, the power to overcome now lives within you.

Receive: What are the three main battles you've struggled with in the past? Call on the Lord to help you stand and watch Him fight on your behalf.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #25 - Delivering Love and Joy

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy. (Galatians 5:22)

What you deliver is very important. As a Christian, demonstrating God's love to others is your most important delivery. Delivering God's love is an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. It is fulfilling to deliver what God designed you to deliver.

If your delivery of God's love to others has stopped, it will negatively affect your relationship with the Lord. Your deliveries were meant to be an ongoing activity rather than a one-time event. You were designed to deliver God's love to others.

As a Christian, demonstrating God's love to others is your most important delivery.

Delivering God's love to others is often marked with variety. Variety is a good thing.

Without variety our lives would be fairly dull. Did you know that a variety of fruit glorifies God? Don't try to deliver God's love in exactly the same way others do. God created you the way you are for a reason. The methods of your delivery are often shaped by your personality but the characteristics of love remain the same. When delivered, you will identify the following characteristics:

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

It's not about you. Why? Simply put, love is about others. There's nothing selfish about it. Delivering a joyful love to others is about knowing God and making Him known. You don't produce this kind of love because it can't be manufactured. God's love is received. As a branch, you simply receive God's love and deliver it to others with a cheerful spirit. It's about being a branch under complete submission to the vine and the plans of the vinedresser.

You were uniquely designed to deliver God's love to others.

Receive: Ask the Lord to help you deliver a generous supply of love and joy to others. In John's gospel reflect back at how Jesus delivered love and joy.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Abiding Thoughts



No church lacks anything. Having Jesus, they have all they need to succeed. They must improve their receiving not their doing.

There are no bad places for a church to exist.
There are only places where great receivers must be present.

The church needs to go in the direction of pain
if we are going where Jesus is going.

Success is taking love's next step.
It is moving forward with an open heart toward God and man.

Perfection is living with a heart open like God's.

Everything and everyone must be seen through Jesus' eyes
and treated according to His intentions.

The goal is God's glory. When His character is made perfectly visible
and available, all will be well.

A healthy church is one in which every branch is experiencing
true satisfaction in the vine and releasing that satisfaction
without hesitation or judging.

I sin when I seek satisfaction apart from the vine.

Day #26 - Peace and Longsuffering

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering. (Galatians 5:22)

The world wants peace but can't find it. God's infinite peace lives within you. The perfect presence of Christ is ready to help you successfully navigate through the storms of life. You don't have to search for peace. You already have it. As you find others defeated by the storms of life, make it a point to generously deliver God's perfect well-being, His peace, found in the person of Jesus Christ.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

Anxiety should no longer control your thinking. As God's child, you can be confident of His provision in every area of your life. Develop the habit of seeking His provision for all of your needs. He is able, more than able, to take care of you. Likewise, He is more than able to take care of those around you. With each opportunity, boldly share how God has graciously provided for your needs.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6 - 7)

Don't be surprised. You may find yourself in the perfect storm. The vinedresser may decide to place you right in the middle of a physical, relational, or financial crisis. Why would He do this? He may decide to use you to model the abiding life and serve as an encouragement to branches nearby. But don't worry; the Lord can deliver an abundance of fruit as He leads you through the storms of life.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

You don't have to search for peace. You already have it.

Receive: Openly share with the Lord the things troubling your heart today. Ask Him to help you rest in His peace and remain confident in His daily provision.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #27 - Kindness, Goodness, and Faithfulness

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. (Galatians 5:22)

You were designed to deliver kindness by helping others find rest. As a Christian, your life should be marked by kindness. Delivering kindness means removing the burdens others are carrying. You're simultaneously lightening the weights of life and giving others an opportunity to rest. It also means to show mercy and favor to others, even when you don't think they deserve it.

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28 - 29)

Check your motives. Your delivery is to be wrapped in purity. Every demonstration of God's love should be delivered with complete integrity. Integrity means to be one, whole, or complete. There are no mixed messages, ulterior motives, or deceit. Every opportunity you have to deliver God's love is to be characterized by a pure heart. Even when you don't see immediate results, do it with moral excellence and let God take care of the results.

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10)

Every demonstration of God's love should be delivered with complete integrity.

Can your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers count on you? Have you been known to say one thing and then do another? If so, that old behavior was buried when Jesus moved into your life. Delivering faithfulness has a totally different look and feel. In Christ, you can live responsibly. You now have the capacity to deliver truth consistently instead of blaming others for your actions.

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

Receive: Prayerfully read through John, chapters 8-11. Write down how Jesus delivered kindness, goodness, and faithfulness to those around Him.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #28 - Gentleness and Self-Control

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

(Galatians 5:22 - 26)

Delivering gentleness is anything but normal. We don't see it every day. Often we experience the exact opposite from those around us. Delivering gentleness involves humbling yourself before God and remaining submissive and teachable to His ways.

Living an abiding life determines both the quality and the quantity of your delivery.

Remember, the vine is the One who produces the fruit.

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:21 - 22)

Living an abiding life determines both the quality and the quantity of your delivery.

Delivering gentleness means leading as opposed to forcing, guiding instead of demanding, and being considerate instead of uncaring. Delivering gentleness involves receiving instructions cheerfully and maintaining the right attitude. It means demonstrating a caring spirit and taking the time to serve and help others.

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Living an abiding life and not being able to control yourself can't be in the same equation. When you're walking in the Spirit you will display and deliver self-control. You won't respond as others do. You won't participate in activities or conversations that destroy others or feed the desires of your flesh.

When you're walking in the Spirit you will display and deliver self-control.

Receive: Review your memory verses. Spend some time with the Lord asking Him to show you the areas where gentleness and self-control are lacking.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #29 - Identify and Engage

For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. (John 5:16 - 20)

The vinedresser is always at work around you. His work of life-transformation is alive and well. This great work takes place with those you come in contact with every day. There are many good activities in life to get involved in. God wants you to be dynamically involved in His work of changing lives. The Christian life is not about staying busy and joining several ministries at church. It's about living through the vine and helping others realize this same connection in their lives.

God wants you to be dynamically involved in His work of changing lives.

Identify and engage. God's desire is to magnify His name through your life as you identify His work and get involved. Living through the vine is critical in this process. As you learn to hear God's voice and respond to his ways, your capacity to engage in His work increases. As you come in contact with others this week, prayerfully consider these questions as you speak with them:

- How does the Lord want me to encourage them today?
- Is there a specific need in their life I can pray for?
- How can I express just how much God loves them?
- How can I deliver God's love in a meaningful way?

As you learn to hear God's voice and respond to His ways, your capacity to engage in His work increases.

Receive: Keep memorizing your verses and reading through the Gospel of John. Ask the Lord to help you identify His work and then respond to His lead.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Day #30 - Finish the work

I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which
You have given Me to do. (John 17:4)

Finish God's work through your life! We all love a great finish as we watch a good movie. The intensity of a final scene often moves people physically and emotionally. There's nothing like a great finish. God loves to watch a great finish in the lives of His people. He loves to see lives transformed by His awesome power. He loves to see relationships healed and marriages restored.

God loves to watch a great finish in the lives of His people.

God loves to see forgiveness demonstrated and mercy distributed through His people. He loves to see His great work accomplished through your life. God wants you to finish the work He chose you to do. He wants you to persevere and make a difference in the lives of those around you. He wants you to finish well.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.
(2 Timothy 4:7-8)

The vinedresser is counting on you to deliver and get the job done. He's invested heavily in your life and He's looking forward to a generous return. Remember, the enemy wants to destroy your life. He doesn't want you to finish the work. He will do everything he can, and even use other branches to discourage you along the way. Don't get sidetracked...finish the work.

He {Jesus} who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

Living an abiding life is the way to end well and finish God's great work. Living an abiding life is the key to glorifying God and fulfilling His purposes for your life.

God wants you to finish the work He chose you to do.

Receive: Review all memory verses. Spend time thanking God for helping you finish this study. Continue studying God's Word and receiving from His Son each and every day. Let God finish His great work through you through abiding.

Rejoice: God is teaching me to _____

Release: Who can I share this with today? _____

Abiding Thoughts



The Christian life is as simple as receive, rejoice, release.
It is as simple as receiving from Jesus what He is ready, willing and able to give, enjoying now what he is giving and releasing to others what has been received because there is more where that came from.

Jesus was behaving naturally 100% of the time.
His essence was so at peace with the Father that his effort and effect always revealed God's glory.

Every church can have perfect health, produce much fruit and become a vineyard full of abiding branches glorifying God.

As a branch in the vine, my concern should be the vine, not the fruit. The vinedresser will watch for the fruit he wants and do all the pruning necessary to produce it.

The greatest compliment I pay to God each day is to show up empty and ask.

Being perfect is always about right now. I am perfect moment by moment and that is only possible if God's moment by moment perfection flows from His open heart through my open heart.

One simple question can inform my behavior toward people in sin. "How should we who will never die treat those who may never live?"

What's next?

Great question! The answer however may surprise you. You don't have to run out and digest 2-3 Christian books per week, listen to Christian radio 24X7, or add several new activities to your schedule. What you do now is simply build on the foundation already laid over the last thirty days: receive, rejoice, and release. Your daily spiritual nourishment will vary but the source will remain the same. The vinedresser will work through the vine to shape your life for greater impact.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2 Peter 1:5-8)

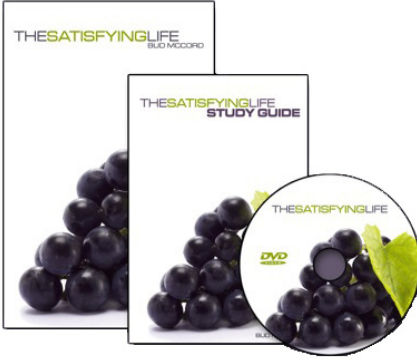
Branches don't change what they're doing to grow and bear fruit. They do however change certain characteristics about themselves as new nutrients are introduced from the vine. Now is the time for you to know the Lord more intimately by adding to this way of life, the abiding life, rather than replacing it with a totally new one. Your old nature was designed to die and be replaced but your new nature was designed to live and generously grow.

How can you continue growing in your faith? Remember the goal. You were designed to glorify God by bearing much fruit. You grow in your faith by bearing fruit. As you grow spiritually you will bear more fruit. Here are some questions for you to consider as you build on the foundation of an abiding life:

- What changes are still pending for me to make to wholeheartedly follow God's Word? What deliveries to others are still on hold?
- What can I eliminate or reduce from my schedule to help me spend more time in prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with other believers?
- What other books of the Bible would be best for me to study next and who can coach me along the way?
- What class or group do I need to attend to help increase my love for God, His word, His people, and others? How can the church help me grow in my knowledge and application of God's Word?

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:27)

Recommended Resources



THE SATISFYING LIFE by Bud McCord

Book & Small Group
DVD Course



Six Metaphors of a Happy Marriage
Small Group DVD Course
by Bud McCord

www.thesatisfyinglife.com
www.budmccord.blogspot.com

ABIDING LIFE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL
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www.abidinglife.com



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