**Receiving the Gift of Peace**

*A Bible Study and Discussion Guide of John 14*

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We become Christians when we put our trust in Jesus. We trust him to remove our guilt and the penalty for our sin. Since we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, it only makes sense then, that he is also **the best one to trust for every single aspect of our everyday life,** not just for getting into heaven. But we discover as we go through times of crisis that we haven’t fully trusted him as we thought.

It’s not our employment, the abundance of cash in the bank, the stability of our health, the wisdom of government officials, or the overwhelming superiority of our military that is ultimately trustworthy. It’s Jesus.

**What can we do?** We have to go deeper. All of us to varying degrees have been living under the illusion of being safe and in control. We’ve been standing half on the rock and half on the sand (half trusting in Jesus and half trusting in other things) …and as everything that we’ve been standing on starts to shift, the invitation is to move toward the rock. Move to Jesus. Trusting Jesus is where we will find peace. This was Jesus’ message during his last supper with the disciples. And it is his message to us today. Reality is that Jesus controls all aspects of our ordinary life including stay-at-home orders and the spread of Covid-19. We trust him as our Savior AND **we trust him for each day of our life because, knowing who he is (Almighty God, Lord of the universe) it only makes sense**. We are held in his nail-pierced hands.

**Meditating on the Truth of Who God Is Throughout the Week**

May I suggest that you choose a psalm to read each day (you can begin with Psalm 1 or any Psalm you love) and along with the truths in the psalms, use the quotations following each lesson to enhance your reflection on our Lord God.

*Knowing God* is a Christian Classic. In it, J.I. Packer explains that knowing facts about God needs to become personal, relational, knowledge of God. The way we do this is to turn each truth that we learn about God into a matter for meditation and prayer. Simply put, we need to take 5 minutes and prayerfully, with our head bowed and our eyes closed, keep before our mind one truth about God and let it sink in deeply and then consider how it relates to us today. The truth about God will transform how we are thinking about our present situation and help us to find our footing on the rock of Truth. Our doubts and fears give way to TRUST as we more clearly grasp the reality that is our God. In Packer’s words:

“What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—the fact that he knows me. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind. All my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him, because he first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters. This is momentous knowledge. There is unspeakable comfort—the sort of comfort that energizes, be it said, not enervates—in knowing that God is constantly taking care of me in love, and watching over me for my good. There is tremendous relief in knowing that his love for me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me so that no discovery now can disillusion him about me.” From J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*

**Art Journaling Project**

Be sure to take a look at the Art Journaling Project at the very end of the Discussion Guide. You might want to use this idea, or other creative ways, to capture the truths that you’ll be gleaning as you reflect on the Scriptures.

**How to Use this Discussion Guide**

This Discussion Guide is designed for groups that would like to discuss John 14 and share their personal reflections. Typically, the conversation is enhanced if women will read through the lesson during the week and come prepared with how the Lord has met them or opened the passage to them. But if women don’t do anything during the week, they can still come and fully participate in the conversation and find the discussion helpful. I allow at least an hour for the conversation, plus however much time you’d like to add for greetings and prayer. I encourage the Leader to read through the Lesson ahead of time and select the questions that are the most interesting to her. She can prepare to open the group with some time for everyone to check-in and share how they are doing and then pray for everyone. The discussion can begin with a review of the previous week, and an overview of the topic to be discussed. And at the end of the time, it’s good if the Leader underscores the main ideas that have been talked about and everyone has a chance to reflect for 1 minute on what they are taking with them, and then go around the group and let people share where the invitation to them is for the upcoming week.

**Teaching Notes** throughout this discussion guide are in the “Comments” in case the Leader would like to see how other groups have answered the questions or read some commentary on the Scripture passage. You can turn them on or off under the “Review” menu > “Tracking” > “Show Markup.”

To see them, go to the REVIEW tab, click on TRACKING, and click on “Show Markup” and be sure that “Comments” are checked. This will let you see in the document where there is a comment. (If it’s not turned on, click on “Show Comments” in the Comments section.) You can print the document with, or without, the comments. For more information about working with Comments, click on the HELP feature in WORD.

**Week 1**

**Receiving the Gift of Peace**

**John 14:1: “***Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me*

***John 14:27*** *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

**Opening Discussion**: Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper just before his betrayal, arrest and crucifixion: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” How could they not be troubled? **Jesus is going to teach them important concepts so that even though their whole world was being shaken, they didn’t need to be overwhelmed by stress, anxiety and fear, but could find peace in the midst of the storm. I’m hopeful that by grounding our thinking in these truths, we, too, can find peace when our world is being shaken.**

**Brainstorm a list of all of the things they had to be troubled about:**

**Take a minute to write down your concerns. What are you troubled about?**

**John 14:1:** *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. [[1]](#footnote-1)*

1. **In John 14:1, what two things did Jesus tell his disciples that he wanted them to do?**
2. **Read the following passages and discuss what Jesus means when he tells the disciples “do not let your hearts be troubled.”**

“Troubled” is *tarassesthō* in Greek, meaning “stirred, agitated” from the same verb translated “troubled” in John 11:33; 13:21; 14:27 below.

**When Jesus arrives at the home of Mary and Martha after Lazarus has died:**

John 11:33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34“Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

35Jesus wept.

36Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

37But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” [[2]](#footnote-2)

**Just an hour earlier at the Last Supper when Jesus said that one of them would betray him:**

John 13:21After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

**As they were leaving the Upper Room and heading to the Garden of Gethsemane:**

John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

**What do you notice from these passages? What do you think Jesus means when he tells the disciples “do not let your hearts be troubled”?**

1. **What does it mean to “believe”? Some Bible versions translate this verse, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me.” (NIV-1984) How is “believing” connected to “trust”?**

In Greek, the word translated “believe” or “trust” means: “**to be persuaded of**,” and hence, “**to place confidence in, to trust**,” “**reliance upon”**.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In English, we use the term “believe” in a variety of ways: You believe that 2 + 2 = 4. You believe that it’s going to rain today. You believe that the Senate will pass a stimulus bill. Discuss the continuum between doubt and belief.

**The disciples had grown up in the Jewish faith. Think about the way God reveals himself in the Old Testament and what they believed about God. (God is Creator, Lord of Heaven and Earth. He is the Lawgiver and the Judge, the One who meets Moses on Mt. Sinai, the One so holy that no human can see. God is the One who leads them out of slavery in Egypt using a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He parts the Red Sea and provides a way of escape. He rules the nations and orchestrates the rise and fall of kings.) Let’s read John 14 again and this time underline every reference to God the Father and the Son.**

John 14:1

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. [[5]](#footnote-5)

2My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4You know the way to the place where I am going.”

5Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

8Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

9Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

**What did Jesus want them to believe?**

Their image of God must be expanded. God is not only filling the universe, the Almighty Ruler, the Holy One that no one can see or touch. God, the One and only God, is the Father, is Jesus, is the Spirit. The three are ONE. Jesus shows us who God is. For the disciples, their image of God must have been shifting. God is Jesus. God is now warm and personal. God is their Friend. They are coming to understand what we now refer to as the doctrine of the Trinity: we worship One God, who is Three Persons: Father, Son and Spirit. “We worship Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Jesus, who just washed their feet at the beginning of dinner, is Almighty God. This is incomprehensible, beyond their understanding, but it was essential at this moment for the disciples to be told. It expands their concept of God. They have learned to trust Jesus during the past three years. They know his heart. And they have trusted God. “You believe in God. Believe also in me.”

We can lose our sense of PEACE when our concept of God is too small. If you are feeling overwhelmed, turn to the psalms and let David remind you about the character and nature of God.

1. **David also wrestled with a troubled heart. Read Ps. 62. What did David believe about God which enabled him to find rest for his soul?**

Psalm 62

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation;

he is my fortress, I will not be shaken….

One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard:

that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are

loving.

Surely you will reward each person according to what he

has done.

Brennan Manning writes: “Unwavering trust is a rare and precious thing because it often demands a degree of courage that borders on the heroic. When the shadow of Jesus’ cross falls across our lives in the form of failure, rejection, abandonment, betrayal, unemployment, loneliness, depression, the loss of a loved one… It requires heroic courage to trust in the love of God no matter what happens to us.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Have you had an experience that took courage to trust that God was in control and would carry you through?**

1. **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.” Is he asking them or commanding?**

Here they are, sitting around a table, eating the traditional Passover dinner that they’ve celebrated with their families their whole lives, and Jesus tells them “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” Have the *same trust* in me that you have in God. “You trust in God, trust also in me.” **What do you think was their response?**

Once again, Jesus is making himself equal with God. But he’s not telling them to “transfer” their trust from God to him, but to broaden their belief/trust to include both of them, God the FATHER and God THE SON as One. *This is astounding*.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**What is the connection between being troubled and believing in God? Discuss the impact** that beliefs have on the state of our hearts? How have you seen this connection in your own experience?

1. **Discuss the wisdom of Mother Teresa:**

“When John Kavanaugh went to work for three months at “the house of the dying” in Calcutta, he was seeking a clear answer as to how best to spend the rest of his life. On the first morning there he met Mother Teresa. She asked, “And what can I do for you?” Kavanaugh asked her to pray for him.

“What do you want me to pray for?” she asked. He voiced the request that he had borne thousands of miles from the United States: “Pray that I have clarity.”

She said firmly, “No, I will not do that.” When he asked her why, she said, “Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of.” When Kavanaugh commented that she always seemed to have the clarity he longed for, she laughed and said, “I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. **Discuss doubts. What happens to your trust when you have doubts about the goodness of God? What form do your doubts take?**

Gerald May writes: “I know that God is loving and that God’s loving is trustworthy. I know this directly, through the experience of my life. There have been plenty of times of doubt, especially when I used to believe that trusting God’s goodness meant I would not be hurt. But having been hurt quite a bit, **I know God’s goodness goes deeper than all pleasure and pain**—it embraces them both.” [[10]](#footnote-10)

**Discuss or write a personal reflection on Gerald May’s quote. Do you think that trusting God’s goodness means that you won’t be hurt?**

Jesus is telling his disciples to let go of all self-made props and trust that God is enough for them. “The root choice is to trust at all times that God is with you and will give you what you most need.” [[11]](#footnote-11)

1. **Notice John 14:2-3. How are verses 2-3 connected to verse 1?**

**Peace is the presence of God, knowing he is with us. It is not the absence of conflict or challenges or being hurt.**

Christians experience peace when they trust in Christ and grow in their faith. Jesus says, “27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” [[12]](#footnote-12) When Jesus said, “My peace I give to you” he means he is giving us peace, security, tranquility. In this verse, **Jesus links peace with the encouragement not to be afraid** (John 14:27; compare John 16:33; Rom 8:6). Paul further promises that when believers cast their cares on God through prayer, “the peace of God that surpasses understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7).[[13]](#footnote-13)

1. **Jesus wants to give us his peace. What might you need to do to receive the gift of peace he desires to give you?**

Why should our hearts be troubled when the Creator and Governor of the universe is *our own Father? And why should we be agitated when it is Jesus, the Son of God, who we know as a friend, who loved us and died on the Cross to save us, is our Savior?*

There is no need for us to have troubled hearts because he is good. He is loving. He is strong. And he is in control.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Go back to your list of concerns, and speak to your heart over each one: God is Good. God is Loving. God is Strong. Let your belief (confidence, reliance upon, trust) in God bring your heart to a place of peace.

We can trust in him!

**Back on the Rock**

***“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me...Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:1, 27)***

**Our hearts are troubled. It’s impossible to watch the news and hear the stories of loved ones who have died, and see how many jobs have been lost, and not feel sad and worried about the future. The disciples’ world was also being turned upside down. It was in the midst of crisis that Jesus offers to give his peace. But something must take place within our souls so that we can receive his gift. We must be able to trust.**

When we moved to San Jose, we found that the cost of living was much higher than we had anticipated. It wasn’t just rent that was higher, everything was more expensive. Although I was looking for a job, I wasn’t being hired. One day at a stoplight on my way home from yet another interview, the thought came to me: *You are on your own to find a job. God isn’t going to help you.* A seismic shift happened in my heart. My confidence in God was shattered. I arrived at the intersection trusting God and by the time the light turned green, I was trusting myself. Eventually, I was hired but my trust in God took several more months to recover.

*If God wasn’t strong enough to help me when I needed him the most, how could I ever trust him?*

For weeks I prayed: “Lord, I believe, help me in my unbelief.”

One morning I randomly opened, *The Divine Conspiracy*, and picked up where I had left off several months before. As I began reading, my faith came back to life. Dallas Willard writes: “We are all products of this modern thought system, and you yourself can test its power by observing your response to a representative statement about God… in the old words of Adam Clarke:

“God is the eternal, independent, and self-existent Being; the Being whose purposes and actions spring from himself, without foreign motive or influence; he who is absolute in dominion; the most pure, the most simple, the most spiritual of all essences; infinitely perfect; and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that he has made; illimitable in his immensity, inconceivable in his mode of existence, and indescribable in his essence; known fully only by himself, because an infinite mind can only be fully comprehended by itself. In a word, a Being who, from his infinite wisdom, cannot err or be deceived, and from his infinite goodness, can do nothing but what is eternally just, and right, and kind.”

Dallas Willard is right; I had become a “product of the modern thought system.” I had been letting my inability to find a job define who God is. As I read the theology of Adam Clarke, I remembered the Truth about the nature of God: God is all-powerful, infinitely good. Truth pulled me out of the sandy thinking that God wasn’t able to help me and placed me on a solid rock.

Knowing God, knowing his character, knowing he is strong and good, is the bedrock of our lives. As I spent time contemplating these truths, my confidence in God returned. **God is almighty.** If in his wisdom he allows me to go through hard times, I can trust it is for my best. Jesus knew this which is why he could trust the Father implicitly. And now I had learned it on a much deeper level.

*Father, Help us in our unbelief. As our communities have become infected with the coronavirus and our financial future seems so uncertain, teach us the truth about what the Bible reveals about who you are so that we may confidently trust in you and receive your gift of peace.*

**Meditating on the Truth of Who God Is Throughout the Week**

May I suggest that you choose a psalm to read each day (you can begin with Psalm 1, or Psalm 27, or any Psalm you love) and along with the truths in the psalms, use the following quotations to enhance your reflection on our Lord God. Our desire is to let the truths of **who he is** settle deeply within our soul.

**Day 1**

Who is the Lord? St. Augustine writes:

Most high, most excellent, most powerful, most almighty, most merciful, and most just;

most hidden, yet most present;

most beautiful, and most strong;

stable, yet mysterious;

unchangeable, yet changing all things;

never new, never old

making all things new and bringing age upon the proud, though they know it not

always working, yet always at rest;

still gathering, yet lacking nothing

sustaining, filling and protecting

creating, nourishing, and maturing

seeking, yet possessing all things

God loves without passion; He is jealous without anxiety;

He repents, yet has no sorrow;

is angry, yet serene;

changes His ways, yet His plans are unchanged;

recovers what He finds, having never lost it

never in need, yet rejoicing in gain

never covetous, yet requiring interest

He receives over and above, that He may owe—yet who has anything that is not His?

He pays debts, owning nothing; remits debts, losing nothing.

And what can anyone say when they speak of Him?

Yet woe to those who keep silent, since those who say the most are as the mute!

**Day 2**

Now, majesty is a word which the Bible uses to express the thought of the greatness of God, our Maker and our Lord. “The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty…” (Psalm 93:1). “They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty” (Psalm 145:5). Peter, recalling his vision of Christ’s royal glory at the Transfiguration, says, “We were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). In Hebrews, the phrase “the majesty” twice does duty for “God”: Christ, we are told, at His ascension sat down “at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven,” “at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven” (Hebrews 1:3; 8:1).

The word majesty, when applied to God, is always a declaration of His greatness and an invitation to worship…But this knowledge which Christians today largely lack; and that is one reason why our faith is so feeble and our worship so flabby. We are modern men, and modern men, though they cherish great thoughts of man, have as a rule small thoughts of God. We are poles apart from our evangelical forefathers at this point, even when we confess our faith in their words. When you start reading Luther, or Edwards, or Whitefield, though your doctrine may be theirs, you soon find yourself wondering whether you have any acquaintance at all with the mighty God whom they knew so intimately.” J. I. Packer in *How Great Thou Art,* p. 5.

**Day 3**

“Love and mercy and righteousness are His, and holiness so unutterable that no comparisons or figures will avail to express it. Only fire can give even a remote conception of it. In fire He appeared at the burning bush; in the pillar of fire He dwelt through all the long wilderness journey; He came at Pentecost as a fiery flame and rested upon each disciple.” Tozer, *How Great Thou Art,* p.6.

**Day 4**

“No heart can measure, no tongue can utter, the half of the greatness of God. The whole creation is full of His glory and radiant with the excellency of His power. His goodness and His wisdom are displayed on every hand. The countless hosts of terrestrial beings, from man the head to the creeping worm at the foot, are all supported and nourished by the Divine bounty. The solid fabric of the universe leans upon His eternal arm.

Universally is He present, and everywhere is His name excellent. God works always and everywhere. There is no place where God is not. God is there in a thousand wonders, upholding rocky barriers, filling the flower cups with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of His mouth. Descend, if you will, into the lowest depths of the ocean, where the water sleeps undisturbed and the very sand is motionless in unbroken quiet—but the glory of the Lord is there, revealing its excellence in the silent palace of the sea. Borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea—but God is there.

Nor on earth alone is God extolled, for His brightness shines forth in the skies above the earth and His glory exceeds the splendor of the starry heavens. Above the region of the stars He has immovably set His everlasting throne, and there He dwells in light indescribable. Let us adore Him who “alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south” (Job 9:8-9) Charles H. Spurgeon, quoted in *How Great Thou Art*, p 7.

**Day 5**

“There is nowhere in space, whether within or without creation, where God is not. The great God, the eternal, the almighty Spirit, is as limitless in His presence as in His existence and power…Without Him, everything would in an instant sink into its primitive nothing.” John Wesley

**WEEK 2**

**Welcomed into the Triune Heart of God**

* **This is Jesus’ Commencement Address–the disciples are “graduating”**
* **Jesus’ Last Words before things are changed forever–they are heading into the greatest test of their lives**
* **He’s building the bridge to his new relationship with them–He wants them to have PEACE.**
* **John’s writing his gospel 20-30 years after the others. He wants us to know this conversation which Matthew, Mark and Luke don’t record.**
* **Jesus says more about his relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit now —**
* **John’s style is impossible for us to outline. Not like Paul. Many concepts in one paragraph and the progression is not linear but circular. Contemplative.**
* **John 14-17 contain the most profound spiritual insight, “a feast we’ll enjoy for eternity”–we need a lifetime to contemplate the mystery revealed here**
* **If we knew the Father as Jesus knows the Father, we’d trust as Jesus trusts. If we knew the Father’s heart as Jesus knows his heart, we’d love as Jesus loves. If we grasped the Father’s mission to welcome each person into his kingdom of love, we’d lay down our lives to advance his kingdom as Jesus did.**
* **The challenge to us: contemplate these Truths to know them more and more deeply in our soul.**

**REVIEW: Receiving the Gift of Peace “My Peace I Give You”**

**Being able to live with a deep sense of personal well-being during challenging times is a direct result of what we believe about God**. Last week we heard Jesus tell his followers, *Do not let your hearts be all stirred up and agitated. You believe in God to the point that you have full confidence in him, trust also in me*. (John 14:1) **Our sense of peace is a direct result of having our confidence grounded in God. We believe in God to the extent that we have a settled confidence in his trustworthiness. And we know that we are not alone–the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their home in us.**

**Jesus knows what it is to be troubled.** John describes Jesus in John 13 as “troubled” when he tells them that one of them will betray him. So Jesus is not forbidding a troubled heart (for that is how our brain—the amygdala and hypothalamus—is designed)[[15]](#footnote-15), but he is instructing us to make the choice to refocus our thinking on the trustworthiness of God (He is good, He is strong, He is loving) as we talked about last week. We must add to our mental conception of God, the person of Jesus: “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” **The holiness and majesty of the Lord of heaven and earth must now be blended with our personal experience of knowing Jesus**. The disciples have been with him for three years and have become his intimate friends; they have personally experienced his compassion and graciousness and care, and now they need to trust Jesus as they trust God. Believe. Trust. **Our peace comes from what our beliefs actually are**. During the next twelve hours, they will experience the full extent of God’s love for them as they watch Jesus die on the Cross. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

The first part of receiving the peace that Jesus gives us is **not letting our hearts get stuck in the worry-anxiety loop, but instead, we must intentionally turn our thoughts to God the Father AND Jesus, God the Son, believing in God to the extent that we are confident that we are not alone**. We are not the victims of some evil scheme nor random events, but **we are secure, safe, held in his keeping and care**.

Philip blurts out, “You talk about the Father all the time. Just show us the Father and that will satisfy us.” Jesus replied, “Haven’t you yet understood who I am, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). **Could the character or personality of God the Father really be that of Jesus? The stunning answer is, “Yes indeed.**”[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Read John 14: underline every time Jesus tells them about: a) himself, b) the Father, or c) the Holy Spirit. (You could use three different colors of highlighters, or colored pencils if you like.) Make a list of what you see.**

John 14:5-31: Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” 6Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now one, you do know him and have seen him.

8Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father that will be enough for us.”

9Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father? 10Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. 12Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

15“If you love me, keep my commands. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—17the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

22Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

23Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

25“All this I have spoken while still with you. 26But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

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“Come now; let us leave.

John 14:5-31: Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” 6Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

**Jesus**

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The Truth

The Life

Access to the Father is thru Jesus

Knowing Jesus=Knowing the Father

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The Father is in Jesus

The Father lives in Jesus

The Father is doing the work that Jesus is doing

Jesus is going to the Father

Jesus will answer prayer

Jesus will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit

Jesus will not leave them as orphans

Jesus will come to them

They will see Jesus

Because Jesus lives, they will live

Jesus will be in them

Jesus will love those who love him

Jesus will show himself to those who love him.

Jesus and the Father will come to those who love and obey him.

Jesus and the Father will make their home in those who love and obey him

The Father sent Jesus

Jesus leaves us Peace.

Jesus gives us his Peace.

Jesus is going away.

Jesus is come back to them

The Father is greater than Jesus

Satan has no hold on Jesus

Jesus loves the Father

Jesus does exactly what His Father commanded Him

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15“If you love me keep my commands. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—17the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

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Holy Spirit is Another Advocate

Holy Spirit helps us

Holy Spirit is with us forever

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth

The Holy Spirit is not accepted by the world

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**Father**

**Jesus**

**The Revealed Mystery**

Figure The Trinity - see footnote 20

1. **What have you been taught about the Trinity?**

[God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Christianity) is [one God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monotheism), but three Persons—the [Father](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Father), the [Son](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Son) ([Jesus Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ)), and the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_in_Christianity). The three Persons are distinct, yet are one "substance, essence or nature.”

When we worship the Trinity, we worship a unity. We are not worshiping three gods. “The Father, Son, and Spirit are relationally distinct from each other, such that the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father—though each of these three is, without qualification, the one and only God.”[[17]](#footnote-17) One God. One nature, three Persons.

**🙠 🙢**

Church Fathers as they wrote the doctrine of the Trinity were very careful to be true to the Scripture as they stated what the Scriptures reveal. It took them 200 years, and the insight of debate over four main heresies that tried to make God more understandable, for them to write it. It wasn’t that they couldn’t make God easier to understand. That would have been easy. They had to be true to Scripture and what God revealed about himself in it.

**The Nicene Creed (325 AD and 381 AD)**

*All Christians (Eastern, Western, Catholic, Protestant) Hold this Creed*

We believe in **one God,**

**the Father Almighty**, Maker of [heaven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven_(Christianity)) and earth, and of all things visible and invisible

And in **one Lord Jesus Christ**, the only-begotten[[18]](#footnote-18) Son of God, begotten of the Father [before all worlds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-existence_of_Christ) (æons), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was [crucified](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus) for us under [Pontius Pilate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontius_Pilate), and suffered, and was [buried](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entombment_of_Christ), and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and [ascended into heaven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascension_of_Christ), and [sitteth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Session_of_Christ" \o "Session of Christ) on the [right hand of the Father](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_Hand_of_God); from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge [the quick and the dead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_quick_and_the_dead_(idiom)); whose [kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_God_(Christianity)) shall have no end.

And in **the Holy Ghost**, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.

In [one holy catholic and apostolic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Marks_of_the_Church); we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the [resurrection of the dead](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resurrection_of_the_dead), and the life of the [world to come](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_to_come). Amen.

**[But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'— they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]**

**🙠 🙢**

1. **As you think about the Trinity, do you have questions or parts that puzzle you?**

**Our God — A Revealed Mystery, a Wonder to be Contemplated and Worshiped**

God is not a “problem or puzzle to be solved” by a mystery that has been revealed to us. “As God’s image-bearers, we are created to know God, to love God, to enjoy God. God desires and intends to be known and loved, and so he has invited us into his “privy counsel,” so to speak. Yet he certainly gives us no promise that we will find him to be less astonishing and wondrous as a result. On the contrary**, the invitation is precisely to enter into this glorious wonder more deeply, and to be fed and nourished by what we cannot fully comprehend**…If God is the incomprehensible mystery that Christianity has always declared, then Christian affirmations about God begin to make more sense…Christians can enter into reflection on God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit without nervous jokes about incoherence, and with an abiding doxological (worshipful) wonder instead.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

\*\*If God is a made-up idea by humans you would expect him to be like us…if God is who is revealed in the Bible, you would expect him to be of a higher order–of another dimension–beyond our comprehension.

1. **In your relationship with God, how do you find yourself thinking about or relating to the tri-unity?**

**Ultimate Reality: Love is at the Heart of Creation**

Our God is a communion of distinct Persons supremely united in personal love…**ultimate reality consists in divine Persons perfectly united in ecstatic love**—and every human person discovers an intrinsic longing for just this kind of interpersonal intimacy…And what would be more natural than that our deepest experience should reflect the God who created us?[[20]](#footnote-20)

1. **Do you agree or disagree with the statement that people are longing for interpersonal intimacy and love? Discuss this. Are you aware of this longing within yourself?**

**From *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable*:**

“If we **think of God as personal, then love becomes possible**, but the notion of a personal God, taken by itself, may tempt us to think that our love for God somehow completes or fulfills him—as though this supremely relational being had been pining throughout eternity for a creature to relate to. When we move to an understanding of God as “intensely” personal or as tri-personal, we counteract that temptation by acknowledging that **God has always “had someone to love,” that the love of the Father and the Son and the Spirit is an everlasting communion that leaves no room for any silly talk about a divine loneliness that must be overcome**.

“All of this is good, but **the temptation we face when we think of God as complete and fulfilled in his own tri-personal being is to imagine this completeness as debilitatingly *exclusive*.** After all, we might think, if we are not “needed” by God, if God is just fine all by his tri-personal self, then you and I may seem to be left out in the cold. We peer in the window, looking at the happy, three-member family gathered around the dinner table, but there is no empty seat at the table and no sign that we outsiders belong there. They do not “need” us, and so we had better look elsewhere for a relationship of love that will really matter.

“But it is not so. God is not just tri-personal; he is expansively, creatively tri-personal. **The triunity of God is something that unfolds and opens out,** not something that curves in and closes down on itself. God’s intrinsic relational completeness, the unimaginable eternal intimacy between the Father and the Son in the Spirit, *does not exclude* other relations; it is instead the *ground* of other relations. The unquenchable divine joy that makes creation unnecessary also makes creation possible in the first place, for the love of Father, Son and Spirit is in no way threatened or imperiled by flowering out beyond itself into the created world….**God is love, and creation itself is the wholly free outpouring of that love, in generous, gratuitous, openhanded bounty**, a bounty that is infinitely hospitable not because it needs us but simply because it is itself.



“**The implications for the spiritual life are immense**. It is a great thing to be invited to a party that is about us, where we are being celebrated, where the party will be canceled if we do not attend. We are supremely necessary to such a party, and we can pat ourselves on the back for our sublime significance. **But it is a greater thing yet to be invited to a party, to be welcomed into a joy, that is vastly larger than ourselves.** This party does not wait on our arrival. The music, the laughter, the cheer and delight, do not need us to initiate or to sustain them. They have their own inner dynamism of joy and life and power, **a dynamism that is not dependent upon us and that can buoy us up and draw us in and carry us along** for just that reason. Far from depending on us for its life, **it offers us life**. Far from merely celebrating what we are, it celebrates something higher and more glorious, and it carries us to that height and enables us to enter into that glory.

“The mystery of the Triune God is just such a life-giving reality. We can enter into the mystery with fulfillment and joy rather than with confusion and frustration, for as we extend our minds and hearts into this inexhaustible, incomprehensible, infinitely personal truth, we find that its incomprehensibility makes other things more comprehensible, even as its inexhaustibility overcomes our exhaustion. Here, mind and heart can rest. **True knowledge of the Triune God is thus a holy feast that nourishes, encourages, enlivens, and gladdens. We can expect to be fed by this mystery at levels deeper than the most rigorous logic can penetrate—and fed for all eternity.** We will never tire of the Trinitarian dishes offered to us by God, nourishment that only a redeemed, re-created humanity can digest. At present, we experience hints of the banquet to come. In the age to come we feast on the full meal.[[21]](#footnote-21)

1. **Many of us hold ourselves back from entering into the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We resist his love. Why? Why do we hold back when the invitation is to courageously enter in? Do any of these reasons ring true for you?**
   1. **We don’t really believe that God loves “me” — We know he loves the “world” but we don’t believe that he specifically loves me.**
   2. **We don’t really believe we can trust God–we have interpreted the experiences of our lives to mean that God doesn’t really care about us**
   3. **We don’t feel worthy–God may forgive, but we can’t forgive ourselves. We don’t feel we deserve to be loved.**
   4. **We don’t know how to courageously enter in. (You might begin with the spiritual practice of wordless prayer contemplating God’s delight in you.)**
   5. **It’s rare to find unconditional love in human relationships. It’s hard to believe he completely knows us and loves us so completely.**

**Conclusion:** God is love. Love is who God is. The Son reveals the character of the Father and brings us back to love. The love Jesus demonstrates is the love that he’s known from eternity. “Jesus came to **show us what surrender to such love looks like**.[[22]](#footnote-22) We’ll talk more about the roles of each Person of the Trinity next week. This week, **bask in the glory of being welcomed into the heart of the love** of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **We can receive Jesus’ gift of peace when we know we are loved.**

**Meditating on the Truth of Who God Is Throughout the Week**

Choose a new psalm to read each day (you can begin with Psalm 145 or any Psalm you love) and along with the truths in the psalms, use the previous lessons and the following quotations to enhance your reflection on our Lord God. Our desire is to let the truths of **who he is** settle deeply within our soul. Knowing God, knowing his character, knowing he is strong and good, is the bedrock of our lives. He is where we find peace. Try to spend 5 minutes holding before your mind the character of God in silent, meditative prayer.

**Day 1**

“When we reflect on the eternity of God, our tendency is to think that He has “lived a long time.” That He is very old. That He has been around for ages. But Scripture says something very different from that. It says that God simply *is*.” David Needham, *How Great Thou Art,* p. 10.

**Day 2**

All of the people in Scripture, no matter how graciously God revealed himself to them, respond in fear and awe and such dread of the Majesty of God that they leave their encounter with him amazed that their life was preserved. (Gen 28:10-17; 32:30)

**Day 3 – From J. I. Packer, *Knowing God, p 78***

Three costly errors. Let Isaiah now apply to us the Bible doctrine of the majesty of God, by asking us the three questions which he here puts in God’s name to disillusioned and downcast Israelites:

1. Is. 40:25 – To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal that I should be like him? Says the Holy One.

This question rebukes wrong thoughts about God. ‘Your thoughts of God are too human,’ said Luther to Erasmus. This is where most of us go astray. Our thoughts of God are not great enough; we fail to reckon with the reality of His limitless wisdom and power. Because we ourselves are limited and weak, we imagine that at some points God is too, and find it hard to believe that He is not. We think of God as too much like what we are. Put this mistake right, says God; learn to acknowledge the full majesty of your incomparable God and Savior.

**Day 4 – From J. I. Packer, *Knowing God, p. 78***

1. Is. 40:27 “Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God’?”

This question rebukes ***wrong thoughts about ourselves.*** God has not abandoned us any more than He abandoned Job. He never abandons anyone on whom He has set His love; nor does Christ, the Good Shepherd, ever lose track of his sheep. It is as false as it is irreverent to accuse God of forgetting, or overlooking, or losing interest in, the state and needs of His own people. If you have been resigning yourself to the thought that God has left you high and dry, seek grace to be ashamed of yourself. Such unbelieving pessimism deeply dishonours our great God and Saviour.

**Day 5 – From J. I. Packer, *Knowing God, p. 79***

1. Is. 40:28 – “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired and weary. “

This question rebukes ***our slowness to believe in God’s majesty.*** God would shame us out of our unbelief. What is the trouble? He asks: have you been imagining that I, the Creator, have grown old and tired? Has nobody ever told you the truth about Me? The rebuke is well deserved by many of us. How slow we are to believe in God as God, sovereign, all-seeing and almighty! How little we make of the majesty of our Lord and Saviour Christ! The need for us is to ‘wait upon the LORD’ in meditations of His majesty, till we find our strength renewed through the writing of these things upon our hearts.

**Week Three**

**Receiving the Gift of Peace Through Knowing God**

*“The God who created, names, and numbers the stars in the heavens also numbers the hairs of my head. He pays attention to very big things and to very small ones.* ***What matters to me matters to Him, and that changes my life.****” –Elisabeth Elliot*

**Review:**

Jesus gives us the gift of his peace.

1. We need to believe that **we are not alone**: we have a place being prepared for us where we will be with Jesus, and now the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (One God, three Persons) make their home in us. (John 14:1-8)
2. We need to know the Father. We need to **know Jesus is the Son of God**. When we see Jesus, we see the Father (like when we see water, we see ice). We need to know the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants us to believe in the Tri-unity of God. This knowing is not mere head knowledge of facts, but heart-to-heart knowing. Relationship. “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?... Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” (John 14: 10-12)
3. We need to believe that **we are loved, that by his nature God only has good intentions** for us and the world, and we are welcomed into the loving relationship of the Three Person God. **We can have peace knowing we can trust his goodness.**

*Read John 14:1-14*

**We Need to Know God**

***If we knew God the way that Elisabeth Eliott knew God, then we would love him and give our lives to go the unreached people to share his love as she did. And when they killed our husband, we wouldn’t give up the mission. We’d return with our young daughter and the other missionary wives and keep sharing the love of God. It would only make sense.***

***Opening Discussion:***If you were to explain to a friend what it means to know God personally, what would you say?[[23]](#footnote-23)

***Private Journaling Prompt*:** Rate the level of intensity you have about wanting to know God. Explore your answer*.*

**Discuss the relationship between knowing and trusting your friends and knowing and trusting God. How are they the same? Different?**

**If you were to explain to a friend the process of knowing God personally, what has helped you get to know him?**

Last week we said that **if we knew God the Father the way Jesus knows him, then we would trust him as Jesus did.** What did Jesus know about God? Jesus wanted his disciples to know God—One God, now revealed as Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One nature. Different Persons with different roles.

**What is God’s Nature?**

From the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*: “Some have talked about “the ‘outside’ and the ‘inside’ perspectives. From the ‘outside’ God appears to be one, totally unique in his absolute and mysterious supremacy. This is how the ancient Israelites perceived him. But Christians, having entered into his inner life, see him differently—as **three co-equal persons sharing the one divine being**. These three persons interpenetrate each other in such a way that, although they can be distinguished from each other, they cannot be separated. This is brought out most clearly in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation. Who is speaking in Revelation 1:8, the Father or the Son? Who is seated on the throne? At first it appears to be the Father, but in Revelation 1:17–18 it becomes clear that the writer is talking about the Son. Similarly, although it is the Son who addresses the letters to the seven churches, each of them concludes with the assertion that this is what the Spirit is saying to them (Rev. 2–3). **In John’s Gospel, we are told by Jesus that when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts, the Father and the Son will accompany him, so that all three will dwell together with us (John 14:23). The three Persons are nowhere confused, but neither are they separated from one another, and it is this dual reality which forms the basis for the subsequent development of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.**”[[24]](#footnote-24)

**One Substance (Nature, Essence)**

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit:** almighty, all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere present, holy, compassionate and kind, slow to anger, abounding in unconditional love. Everything revealed to us in Scripture about the nature of God, Jesus knew during his earthly life, and his life demonstrates what a life of knowing the Father and trusting him looks like. Every component of life is within the Father’s knowledge and control. Jesus knew this.

Statement about God from a century or so ago:

“God is the eternal, independent, and self-existent Being;

the Being whose purposes and actions spring from himself, without foreign motive or influence;

he who is absolute in dominion;

the most pure, the most simple, the most spiritual of all essences;

infinitely perfect;

and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that he has made;

illimitable in his immensity, inconceivable in his mode of existence, and indescribable in his essence;

known fully only by himself, because an infinite mind can only be fully comprehended by itself.

In a word, a Being who, from his infinite wisdom, cannot err or be deceived, and from his infinite goodness, can do nothing but what is eternally just, and right, and kind.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

Not easy reading, but incredibly rich.

From the Westminster Confession: **“God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchanging in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.”** (Love is not mentioned because love is defined as a manifestation of goodness.)[[26]](#footnote-26)

God is “Unchanging”–He is the same. Always. That is why he is referred to as the Rock. He does not change in his nature or purpose. His people can trust in him. The cosmos can pass away but God remains unchanged. He has only one thought. He doesn’t come to know anything–He knows all, always.

**Three Persons: Distinct Yet Inseparable**

**As you read these verses of Scripture and thoughts of God, highlight what stands out to you.**

**The Role of the Father:**

**Psalm 103:13:** As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;

**Matthew 6:8–10:** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven.’”

**Romans 8:14–16:** For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, *“Abba,* Father.” 16The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

**2 Corinthians 1:2–3:** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,

**Galatians 4:5–6**: to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, *“Abba*, Father.”

This is the Truth about who God is…He is our Father. Jesus says that he is the “WAY” to the Father: John 14:5-6. “No one comes to the Father except through me.” And when Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus answered: Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?” Jesus continued: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

**The Role of the Holy Spirit**

**Read John 14:15-20:**

15“If you love me, keep my commands. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **advocate to help you and be with you forever**—17the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But **you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.** 18I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

**John 14:26-27:**

26But the **Advocate**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you**. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

**John 15:26-27:**

26“When the **Advocate comes**, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will **testify about me**. 27And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

**John 16:6-15:**

6Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. 7But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, **the Advocate** will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8When he comes, **he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:** 9about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

12“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13But when **he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.** He will not speak on his own; **he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.** 14He will **glorify me** because it is **from me that he will receive what he will make known to you**. 15All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

**What do we learn from these passages in The Upper Room Discourse about the Holy Spirit?**

“The Holy Spirit is intimately involved in **the creation** of all things and **sustains all things**. He is also intimately involved in the **redemption of man**, being not only the **author of moral purity**, but the Spirit who **inspired the prophets** to tell of the coming Savior. He **indwells individuals**, making them **His temple**, **purifying them inwardly** and **identifying with them in their struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil**, and in their **aspiration of God**. By **His mighty power, with which He raised up Jesus from the dead**, **He will raise up the saints** in the last day…”[[27]](#footnote-27)

**The Spirit is called Lord**, in a way which recalls the use of the term *YHWH* (2 Cor. 3:17). He is portrayed as a **life-giver** (Rom. 8:2), and spiritual life can be given only by God. He is described as **proceeding from the Father** (John 15:26), he is **worshipped and glorified** along with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19) and he is credited with having **inspired the people who wrote the Scriptures** (2 Pet. 1:21), which are elsewhere described as having been inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16).[[28]](#footnote-28)

**What is the role that Jesus plays in our life?**

**Conclusion:** Knowing God, knowing his nature, knowing his character, knowing he is strong and he is good, is the bedrock of our lives. We get to know Jesus in his humanity in the Scripture and as we get to know him, we get to know the Father. We know him so we can trust him. “What matters to us, matters to him” (Elisabeth Elliot).

God is Master of the Universe and in complete control over all spiritual forces of evil and he is good. **The Truth is God is Good. This is his nature. This means he only has good intentions toward us**. **If in his wisdom he allows me to go through hard times, I can trust him that he has allowed it for my best. He uses difficulties for my good. He is with me, always.**

We can have our troubled hearts calmed and receive the peace of Christ. Jesus speaks to us: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me…. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:1, 27)

Watch this PBS 4 min. clip of Kim Phucs’ testimony, and see how she has come to know God, and how she has reinterpreted her life experience in the light of God’s character. He used wartime tragedy in her life to draw her to himself. As she came to understand what the Lord did for her on the cross, she came to forgive those who harmed her and she joined God’s mission of love to reach the world. She shares her scars and pain with children who have suffered and have their own scars and pain, and **she shares her story of redemption.**

When we get to know God, and increasingly grasp his goodness and love, we surrender our lives to his love. It only makes sense. His love overflows our life and enfolds others. And we find so much joy in joining God’s mission of rescuing others who are in despair and helping them to know God. Once we are standing on the rock, we can help others find it, too.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/kim-phucs-brief-but-spectacular-take-on-pain-and-forgiveness>

**“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Cor. 13:14)**

**Meditating on the Truth of Who God Is Throughout the Week**

Choose a new psalm to read each day (you can begin with Psalm 18 or any Psalm you love) and along with the truths in the psalms, use the previous lessons and the following quotations to enhance your reflection on our Lord God. Our desire is to let the truths of **who he is** settle deeply within our soul.

***Day 1***

**We want to dare to believe in God’s mercy, goodness and love. Brennan Manning writes:**

“Though we often disregard our need for **an unfaltering trust in the love of God**, that need is the most urgent we have. It is the remedy for much of our sickness, melancholy, and self-hatred. **The heart converted from mistrust to trust in the irreversible forgiveness of Jesus Christ is redeemed from the corrosive power of fear.** The existential dread that salvation is reserved solely for the proper and pious, the nameless fear that we are predestined to backslide, the brooding pessimism that the good news of God’s love is simply wishful thinking—all these combine to weave a thin membrane of distrust that keeps us in a chronic state of anxiety.

So life-changing is this ultimate act of confidence in the acceptance of Jesus Christ that it can properly be called the hour of salvation. So often what is notoriously missing from the external, mechanized concept of salvation is self-acceptance, an experience that is internally personalized and rooted in the acceptance of Jesus Christ. It bids good riddance to unhealthy guilt, shame, remorse, and self-hatred. Anything less—self-rejection in any form—is a manifest sign of a lack of trust in the total sufficiency of Jesus’ saving work. **Has he set me free from fear of the Father and dislike of myself, or has he not?”**

“**Wallowing in shame, remorse, self-hatred, and guilt over real or imagined failing in our past lives betrays a distrust in the love of God.** It shows that we have not accepted the acceptance of Jesus Christ and thus have rejected the total sufficiency of his redeeming work. Preoccupation with our past sins, present weaknesses, and character defects gets our emotions churning in self-destructive ways, closes us within the mighty citadel of self, and preempts the presence of a compassionate God…

Understandably, then, we hide our true selves from God in prayer. We simply do not trust that he can handle all that goes on in our minds and hearts. Can he accept our hateful thoughts, our cruel fantasies, and our bizarre dreams? we wonder… We conclude that he cannot and thus withhold from Jesus what is most in need of his healing touch.

**In order to grow in trust, we must allow God to see us and love us precisely as we are.** The best way to do that is through prayer. As we pray, the unrestricted love of God gradually transforms us. We open ourselves to receive our own truth in the light of God’s truth. The Spirit opens our eyes to see what really is, to pierce through illusions so that we can discover we are seen by God with a gaze of love.” [[29]](#footnote-29)

***Day 2***

What are the words of worship? What do the angels say?

“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”

“Worthy art Thou, O Lord, to receive honor and glory and power and dominion”

“You alone are Worthy.”

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” Rev. 5:13

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.” Rev. 7:11-12

And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.” Rev. 11:16-17

***Day 3***

“In the presence of God we may well experience what Mole felt (if I may draw on the wisdom of *The Wind in the Willows*) when a great awe fell upon him, “an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror—indeed he felt wonderfully at peace and happy—but it was an awe that smote and held him, and without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august Presence was very, very near.”

*How Great Thou Art,* p. 18.

**Day 4**

**The nature of Spirit is personal**

“Spirit is personal, not impersonal. None of that “the force be with you” stuff is relevant here… Of course, the personal nature of spirit is seen at its highest and clearest in the Trinitarian nature of God. “God is in himself a sweet society,” an old Puritan writer used to say. What personality is, is finally understandable only in the light of the Trinitarian nature of God. **God is Spirit. He is personal reality and power**—the power that works by thought and choice and evaluation, not a blind force that can be manipulated if you can only find the correct technique.”

From *[The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship](http://links.biblegateway.mkt4731.com/ctt?ms=NjUyOTM1NjES1&kn=19&r=MTg1ODk3Njk3Mjc0S0&b=0&j=MTg4Mjg0OTA4MwS2&mt=1&rt=0" \t "_blank)*. Copyright © 2006 by Dallas Willard. All rights reserved. Used with permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

**Day 5:**

**Spiritual Practice:** **To grow in our belief/trust in the Lord, and to fall more deeply in love with him**, we want to see Him: to hold Him before our mind with as much fullness and clarity as possible, and adore Him. In prayer but without needing to say any words, take 10 minutes to contemplate his beauty and love for you individually, personally:

1. See his beauty, truth and power while he lived among us
2. See Jesus’ execution as a criminal among thieves for people who hated him and see his death specifically for you (I am bought by the suffering and death of Jesus and I belong to God, Romans 5:8). This is who our God is! It is God looking at me from the cross who compassionately provides for me the way.[[30]](#footnote-30)
3. See the reality of Jesus risen, his actual existence now as a person who is present among and within his people.
4. See Jesus the King of kings and Lord of lords – the master of the created universe and of human history—**delighting in you**.

**Our love for Jesus grows as we see his love for us. “We love him because he first loved us.”**

**Week 4**

**Receiving the Gift of Peace through Love**

***Loving Jesus, Loving Others***

**Receiving the Gift of Peace through Love**

**Loving Jesus, Loving Others on our Team**

Review:

Jesus gives us the gift of his peace. “Let not your hearts be troubled….my peace I give you.” We’ve been looking at John 14 to see if we can find the connection between what Jesus told his disciples during their Last Supper and his offer of PEACE. We have discerned what we need to do in order to be able to receive his gift of peace. We said that:

1. We need to believe that **we are not alone**: we have a place being prepared for us where we will be with Jesus, and now the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (One God, three Persons) make their home in us. (John 14:1-8) We are not alone.
2. We need to know the Father. We need to **know Jesus is the Son of God**. When we see Jesus, we see the Father (like when we see water, we see ice). We need to know the Holy Spirit. **Jesus wants us to believe in the Tri-unity of God.** This knowing is not mere head knowledge of facts, but heart-to-heart knowing. Relationship. “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?...Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me (John 14: 10-12)”
3. We need to believe that **we are loved, that by his nature God only has good intentions** for us and the world, and we are welcomed into the loving relationship of the Three Person God. **We can have peace knowing we can trust his goodness.**
4. Knowing God, knowing his nature, knowing his character, knowing he is strong and he is good, is the bedrock of our lives. We get to know Jesus in his humanity in the Scripture and as we get to know him, we get to know the Father. We know him and thus we can trust him. **“What matters to us, matters to him” (Elisabeth Elliot).**

**We can receive his gift of peace.**

**What is the relationship between Love and Obedience?**

Jesus speaks a lot about love in the Upper Room Discourse. Today we will discuss these passages. And then consider what Love has to do with Peace. You don’t have to discuss all of the questions under each passage, but discuss the ones that are of interest to you:

**“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.” John 14:15**

1. How do we demonstrate our love for Jesus?
2. Does this verse mean that if we don’t keep Jesus’ commands, that we don’t love him?
3. Discuss the relationship between love and obedience.
4. What are Jesus’ commands that we must keep?
5. Why do we not keep Jesus’ commands?
6. What is the relationship between love, obedience, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
7. Is the love that Jesus is talking about in John 14 a feeling? Discuss the definition of Agape Love. (See below)

**LOVE**

**The definition from Vine’s, Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words**

LOVE - “*Agapē* and *agapaō* are used in the NT

(*a*) to describe **the attitude of God** toward **His Son**, John 17:26; the **human race**, generally, John 3:16; Rom. 5:8, and **to such as believe on the Lord** Jesus Christ, particularly, John 14:21;

(*b*) **to convey His will to His children concerning their attitude one toward another**, John 13:34, and **toward all men**, 1 Thess. 3:12; 1 Cor. 16:14; 2 Pet. 1:7;

(*c*) to express **the essential nature of God**, 1 John 4:8.

“**Love can be known only from the actions it prompts**. God’s love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9, 10. But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, Rom. 5:8. **It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself**, Cf. Deut. 7:7, 8.

**“Love had its perfect expression among men in the Lord Jesus Christ**, 2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 2:4; 3:19; 5:2; **Christian love is the fruit of His Spirit in the Christian**, Gal. 5:22.

“**Christian love has God for its primary object**, and **expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to His commandments**, John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; 2 John 6. **Self-will, that is, self-pleasing, is the negation of love to God.**

“Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is **not an impulse from the feelings**, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. **Love seeks the welfare of all**, Rom. 15:2, and **works no ill to any**, 13:8–10; **love seeks opportunity to do good to ‘all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith**,’ Gal. 6:10. See further 1 Cor. 13 and Col. 3:12–14.”\*[[31]](#footnote-31)

**Discuss how Love and Obedience are connected in the Old Testament as well (Deut 5:10, 29)[[32]](#footnote-32) As we read these verses, put a check-mark in the margin of anything that stands out to you.**

From the Ten Commandments

**Ex 20:6**“…but showing love to a thousand generations of those **who love me and keep my commandments.** [[33]](#footnote-33)

Moses proclaimed God’s word as the children of God were going into the Promised Land:

**Deut. 6:1-9** These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me **to teach you to observe** in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 2so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live **by keeping all his decrees and commands** that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. 3Hear, Israel, and **be careful to obey** so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

4Hear, O Israel: **The Lord our God, the Lord is one. y 5Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength**. 6These commandments that I give you today **are to be on your hearts**. 7Impress them on your children. **Talk about** them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8**Tie them as symbols on your hands** and bind them on your foreheads. 9**Write them on the doorframes** of your houses and on your gates. [[34]](#footnote-34)

**What did you notice in the above passages?**

**Discuss why we resist the idea that if we love God we will obey his commands?**

**Do any of these reasons ring true?**

1. We think that salvation is by grace and doesn’t require obedience
2. Obedience to anything in our culture is looked at suspiciously
3. Unrealistic goal–impossible for us to attain. I’ll never get there.
4. Legalistic. God’s love is unconditional and this sounds conditional.
5. Abusive human relationships twist the concept of love.

**John develops this theme in more detail in his first epistle (cf. 1 John 2:3–11; 3:16–18)**.[[35]](#footnote-35)

**I John 2:3**We know that **we have come to know him if we keep his commands**. 4**Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar**, and the truth is not in that person. 5But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6**Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.**

7Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

9Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister q is still in the darkness. 10Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. 11But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them. [[36]](#footnote-36)

**I John 3:16**This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

19This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: 20If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. 23**And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24The one who keeps God’s commands lives in him, and he in them.** And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. [[37]](#footnote-37)

**What did you notice about love and obedience in the I John passages?**

**DISCUSS:** The Commentaries say that1)We show our love by our obedience. “Some may claim to love God while walking in sinful disobedience. However, they are wrong. Love for God is not a mere feeling…the grace of God is not a license to sin. Rather, grace is a powerful incentive to obedience.”[[38]](#footnote-38) 2) Obedience is a test of our devotion to the Lord.

Do you agree with this or disagree, and why?

**“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.” (John 14: 20)**

1. Who has Jesus’ commands? Is having his commands enough?
2. Who loves Jesus?
3. Who is loved by Jesus’ Father? Loved by Jesus?
4. Who does Jesus show himself to?
5. Why are love and obedience tied to Jesus showing himself?

**“Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.” (John 14: 23-24)**

1. Who does Jesus show himself to?
2. Who is the “world”?
3. Why does Jesus intend to show himself to the disciples but not to the world?

**“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.” (John 14: 28)**

1. What does this statement mean?
2. What does loving Jesus have to do with them being glad that he’s leaving them?
3. In what way is the Father greater than Jesus?

**“…for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.” (John 14: 31)**

1. Why did Satan come?
2. Who is “the world”?
3. What is the relationship between love and obedience?

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s command and remain in his love.” (John 15:10)**

1. What do we learn from this verse about Jesus’ love for his disciples?
2. Discuss what “remain in my love” might mean.

**SUMMARIZE WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT LOVE**

**How can we become lovers? The Work of the Holy Spirit**

**“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.” John 14:15**

The Holy Spirit helps us keep the Lord’s commands.

Love is the proper temple for the indwelling of the Spirit…thus we are admonished to keep the Lord’s commands so that we might be the proper place for the Spirit to dwell.

Jesus knew that they would need help to fulfill their task, and the promise of the *Counsellor* must be seen in this context. The word in the Greek is ***paraklete* which literally means one called alongside to help, and was used of a legal advocate**. The title contains the idea of strong encouragement. The fact that *another* Counsellor is promised suggests that the Spirit would do what Jesus himself had done during his ministry, by bringing the words of Jesus to their minds (*cf.* v 26).[[39]](#footnote-39)

**Conclusion**

“Indeed, the history of the church and of individual communities of faith suggests that to love one another may be the most difficult thing Jesus could have asked. There are many circumstances in which it is easier to love one’s enemies than it is to love those with whom one lives, works, and worships day after day.”

The motivation to love comes not from our sense of obligation, but from a heart of gratitude. We love in response to having been so undeservedly loved by God. Anyone who would love us as Jesus has loved us, deserves our whole lives. Our love for God overflows in obedience. It only makes sense to do what he says because we trust in his love. And like the disciples, even when our whole world is spinning upside down, we love him and seek to do what he commands. As Charles Spurgeon said, “God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. When we cannot trace His hand we must trust His heart.” And this confidence in him brings us a deep sense of peace. We can rely upon him.

Love isn’t a reservoir, it’s an ocean! God’s love pours into us and overflows to those closest to us, then expands out to touch the whole world. On the evening news, night after night during this pandemic, we’ve seen men and women selflessly pouring out their love in hospitals and skilled nursing facilities and neighborhoods. It’s truly been amazing. People living in their cars so that they can continue to work and not bring the virus home. Employees leaving their families and moving into the skilled nursing facility 24/7 so they wouldn’t endanger the residents. A young man in a poor community extending credit to everyone in the neighborhood so they could buy groceries from him with just their signature. Acts of heroism, of generosity, of people risking their own lives to care for others.

As we are living our normal, everyday lives, we all have the opportunity to tangibly love, and sometimes that means sacrifice and sometimes that means being tough. Tough love is also love. Thankfully, God has provided the Holy Spirit to be our helper!

*May the Lord give each of us the strength to be women who love.*

**Meditating on the Truth of Who God Is Throughout the Week**

Choose a new psalm to read each day (you can begin with Psalm 136 or any Psalm you love) and along with the truths in the psalms, use the previous lessons and the following quotations to enhance your reflection on our Lord God. Our desire is to let the truths of **who he is** settle deeply within our soul.

**Day 1**

*Abide in my love.*  
  
He didn’t say: abide in your fear about what might come next.  
He didn’t say: abide in your inadequacy, or guilt, or failure, or weakness.  
He didn’t say: abide in your resentment about how merely human authorities are handling this.  
  
We all abide in something. For we have minds, and minds must think, and what we think about is what we abide in.  
  
*Abide in my love.*  
  
*Abide*means to dwell, to remain persistently, to linger unhurriedly. To shelter.  
  
The image that Jesus uses in this passage in the fifteenth chapter of John is that we are to abide in his love the way that a branch abides in a vine.  
  
How often does a branch abide in a vine? All the time. The branch is *never*‘not-abiding.’ It is drawing life and nourishment and goodness from the vine continuously, endlessly, without strain or interruption. What a vine does physically, we are to do with our thoughts and perceptions and desires.  
  
*Abide in my love.*  
  
This guideline has been extended eternally, for the benefit and flourishing of all humanity.  
  
Jesus says the way to abide in his love is to keep his command. And he says his command is “Love one another.” We are to live love-immersed lives, to make love visible in our words and our work and play and rest. (Written by John Ortberg – on his blog)

**Day 2**

“God delights in what he creates. His affirmation of goodness is not simply an evaluative statement, it is love bursting forth in an expression of joy and pleasure  
  
God‘s love is the source and fulfillment of all creation. From the beginning, God‘s love has been evoking life in all its abundance. It is “the passion—the oxygen, the flame, the glue—fueling, firing, connecting the universe in its amazing array.“ Apart from the ever-creative outflow of God‘s love there would be nothing but darkness, void and nonbeing.” - David Benner, *Surrender to Love.*

**Day 3**

“God‘s love is the source of everything that is good, and this is supremely true of human beings. God becomes even more directly involved in the generative processes as he fashions humans in his image. Even more remarkable, now he shapes his creations with his hands and vitalizes them with his breath. His delight in seeing the result is like the joy of a parent on first seeing a newborn child. He expresses his pleasure by declaring humans to be not just good but “very good“ (Genesis 1:31). Effusing with exuberance, God’s love spills forth into creation, and the result is women and men.  
  
“Creation is an outpouring of love—an overflow of love from the heavens to earth. Creation not only declares the inventiveness and resourcefulness of God but reveals the abundance of his love. **Creation declares that humans are born of love and for love, created in the image of a God who is love.** Love is our source and love is to be our fulfillment.” David Benner, *Surrender to Love.*

**Day 4**

“Creation was God’s plan for friendship. We were not brought into existence simply so that we could worship God. Nor were we created simply for service. **Human beings exist because of God’s desire for companionship**.” David Benner, *Surrender to Love.*

**Day 5**

“Humans were created for this intimate communion with their head-over-heels-in-love-Creator God. **When God thinks of us he feels a deep, persistent longing—not simply for our wholeness but, more basically, for our friendship**. This possibility lies at the core of our own deepest desires. It also lies at the core of our deepest fulfillment.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

**Week Five**

**The Vine and Its Branches**

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.” Jn 15:9**

**REVIEW: I**n John 16, Jesus says, “I have told you these things (presumably the things he said during his last dinner with them), so that in me you may have peace.” Over the last several weeks we have been seeking to discern the connection between the topics that Jesus talked about and our ability to receive his gift of peace. We’ve discussed:

1. We need to believe in the Father and the Son to the extent that we can confidently trust God. We can receive the gift of peace as we confidently trust in God.
2. We need to believe that we are not alone – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their home in us. We can receive the gift of peace as we realize God is with us.
3. We need to believe in a triune God. We need to expand our concept of God. He is beyond our comprehension yet we can know him personally. He has revealed himself to us as One God, Three Persons, who by his nature is good. We can receive the gift of peace as we trust in his good intentions toward us.
4. We need to believe that we are loved. We are welcomed into the loving relationship of the Three Person God. We can receive his gift of peace as we trust in his love because we know that what matters to us, matters to him.
5. Our love for God overflows in obedience. It only makes sense to do what our loving, transcendent, all-knowing, everywhere present, all-powerful good God tells us to do. We love in response to his love for us and that brings us peace with God.
6. Our love for God overflows in love for other people, sometimes that means being tough, sometimes that means selfless sacrifice. Nurturing loving relationships with others brings us peace-filled relationships with our family and friends.

Today we are going to explore HOW we go about being people who receive Jesus’ peace.

God’s love is the source of all creation. Our love for God and our love for each other brings us into the beauty of the love of the Tri-Person God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When we live, knowing we are enfolded in love, knowing God is with us, nearer than our own breath, what can trouble our hearts? What is there to fear? *Perfect love casts out fear.* We can receive God’s gift of peace.

Slowly, prayerfully read once again what David Benner writes in *Surrender to Love*:

God delights in what he creates. His affirmation of goodness is not simply an evaluative statement, it is love bursting forth in an expression of joy and pleasure  
  
God‘s love is the source and fulfillment of all creation. From the beginning, God‘s love has been evoking life in all its abundance. It is “the passion—the oxygen, the flame, the glue—fueling, firing, connecting the universe in its amazing array.“ Apart from the ever-creative outflow of God‘s love, there would be nothing but darkness, void and nonbeing.  
  
God‘s love is the source of everything that is good, and this is supremely true of human beings. God becomes even more directly involved in the generative processes as he fashions humans in his image. Even more remarkable, now he shapes his creations with his hands and vitalizes them with his breath. His delight in seeing the result is like the joy of a parent on first seeing a newborn child. He expresses his pleasure by declaring humans to be not just good but “very good“ (Genesis 1:31). Effusing with exuberance, God’s love spills forth into creation, and the result is women and men.  
  
Creation is an outpouring of love—an overflow of love from the heavens to earth. Creation not only declares the inventiveness and resourcefulness of God but reveals the abundance of his love. **Creation declares that humans are born of love and for love, created in the image of a God who is love.** Love is our source and love is to be our fulfillment.  
  
Made in God’s image, humans are invested with a non-negotiable dignity. We are compatriots of God, not just creatures of God. Even more astounding, God chooses us to be his friends. That imputed status was never annulled, despite our sinful rebellion and declarations of independence.  
  
Creation was God’s plan for friendship. We were not brought into existence simply so that we could worship God. Nor were we created simply for service. **Human beings exist because of God’s desire for companionship**. We are the fruit of God’s love reaching out toward creatures who share enough similarity that relationship is possible.  
  
Humans were created for this intimate communion with their head-over-heels-in-love-Creator God. **When God thinks of us he feels a deep, persistent longing—not simply for our wholeness but, more basically, for our friendship**. This possibility lies at the core of our own deepest desires. It also lies at the core of our deepest fulfillment.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

Choose one sentence from the above quote to read aloud to the group. Why did you choose that sentence?

**PRIVATE REFLECTION**: When you imagine God looking at you, right now, what do you think he feels?

**Read John 15:1-9 — Notice how strongly Jesus tells us to REMAIN in his love.**

**Underline every time the word “remain” appears.**

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command. 15I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17This is my command: Love each other. **[[42]](#footnote-42)**

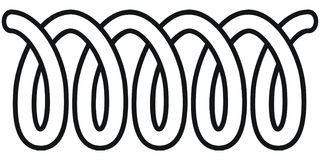
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Figure Just like the tendrils on a grape vine, the themes in this passage anchor us. Write those themes in the picture

****

1. Commentators think that as Jesus and his disciples left the Upper Room (where they were having the Last Supper) and walked to the Garden of Gethsemane, they passed by a vineyard. So **Jesus used the vineyard to teach a key principle** to his disciples. (Typically an analogy has one main truth that it is illustrating so not every aspect of the physical reality has to have a corresponding spiritual reality.)
   1. **Discuss the analogy — Who are the main actors in the analogy?** 
      1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
      2. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
      3. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
   2. **What does each do?** 
      1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
      2. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
      3. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
   3. **What’s the main principle that Jesus is teaching.**
2. **What is the purpose of *remaining*?**

“The word **remain** is Greek *menō* which occurs 11 times in this chapter, 40 times in the entire Gospel, and 27 times in John’s epistles. What does it mean to **remain**?

Remain means **to abide**, **to dwell, to remain persistently, to linger unhurriedly, to shelter, to make our home in.**

**The image that Jesus uses is that we are to abide in his love the way that a branch abides in a vine.**  John Ortberg writes:How often does a branch abide in a vine? All the time. The branch is never ‘not-abiding.’ It is drawing life and nourishment and goodness from the vine continuously, endlessly, without strain or interruption. What a vine does physically, we are to do with our thoughts and perceptions and desires.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

1. **What is the benefit of remaining?**

Remaining in the vine is closely linked with prayer.

Those close enough to the vine will not wish to ask anything not aligned with the vine himself.

This paragraph ends (8) with a further emphasis on the need for fruitfulness; it is not an end in itself but is meant to bring glory to the Father.

1. **Practically, what does it mean for the disciples to “remain in Jesus” or “remain in my love”? Is “remaining in Jesus” the same as “remaining in Jesus’ love.”**

**The truth here is not so much that we stay focused on how much we love Jesus, but that we stay focused on how much Jesus loves us. Remain in his love.** We tend to read this passage and think we need to double down on how much we love Jesus, but that’s not the point. Talk about the difference between being focused on how much we love, as opposed to being focused on how much God loves us and the different impact that the two approaches have in our inner life.

**What do you think that the Vine analogy taught the disciples about remaining in Jesus that they needed to know on this particular night?**

**What does the Vine analogy teach us about making our home in God’s love?**

1. **Why do we need to be told to REMAIN?**
   1. **It seems that we would only need to be told to REMAIN if we have the strong propensity to leave. Why do we leave?**
   2. **Why do you leave a focus on God’s love for you, and switch to a focus on your love for God?**
   3. **What helps you to return to depending, clinging, making your home in, abiding, drawing your life sustenance from, remaining in the Father’s love and Jesus’ love for you?**
2. **What does this passage teach us about Love and Obedience?**
3. Christian Love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Remember that the Three Person nature of God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable.) It is the Holy Spirit’s role to enables us to love and obey Jesus. We are called to be fruitful and to do this we must remain in Jesus. Stay focused on his love for us and our dependence on him to produce fruit.
4. 
5. What is Jesus’ command?
6. If Jesus uses this Vine analogy to help them to envision what their relationship with each other is supposed to look like–what are the lessons from the vine that we learn about the Christian community and the church?

The Father’s love for the Son is the pattern for the Son’s love for his disciples (9).

The Son’s obedience to the Father is the pattern for the disciples’ obedience to the Son (10). The need to *remain in my love* is repeated three times in vs 9–10.

1. **What’s joy got to do with this?**

The Son’s joy is the basis for the disciples’ joy (11). There is a particular poignancy here in view of the approaching passion (but *cf.* Heb. 12:2). We can have an abundance of joy while experiencing deep sorrow and grief. Have you ever been surprised by joy?

1. **What does it mean to be a FRIEND as opposed to a SERVANT?** 
   1. **Is it possible that a friend is focused on relationship, love, trust and a servant is focused on obligation and obedience–just doing what they are told without understanding why. Do you think of yourself as a friend or a servant of Jesus?**
   2. **Jesus talked about the branches that the Gardener removes from the vineyard by throwing them into the fire. Does this raise concerns within you that perhaps you might not be fruitful enough and the Gardener will remove you? I don’t think that should be our concern if we have trusted in Jesus as our Savior. Notice what Jesus says in v.3 and v.6 and John 13:10-11. Who was clean and who was not clean?**
2. **What does it mean in our everyday life “to remain”? What did it mean for Jesus? How did he model this for his disciples?**
3. **What does this passage teach us about prayer?**

Have you ever been puzzled by unanswered prayer? How have you come to understand these verses on prayer? It can seem like we have a universal promise that Jesus will do whatever we ask, yet our experience shows us that he doesn’t? How have you reconciled this, or have you?

1. **When you consider the staggering statement that Jesus has chosen us, loved us to the point of laying down his life for us, appointed us, indwelt us, brought us into his inner circle, and wants us to be with him forever—how does that make you feel?**

**And then consider that his inner circle is the love of Father, Son and Spirit.**

**From these passages, what does Jesus want his disciples to understand about receiving His peace on the eve of his crucifixion?**

Abide in my love.  
  
He didn’t say: abide in your fear about what might come next.  
He didn’t say: abide in your inadequacy, or guilt, or failure, or weakness.  
He didn’t say: abide in your resentment about how merely human authorities are handling this.  
  
We all abide in something. For we have minds, and minds must think, and what we think about is what we abide in.  
  
Abide in my love.  
  
Abide means to dwell, to remain persistently, to linger unhurriedly. To shelter.  
  
The image that Jesus uses in this passage in the fifteenth chapter of John is that we are to abide in his love the way that a branch abides in a vine.  
  
How often does a branch abide in a vine? All the time. The branch is never ‘not-abiding.’ It is drawing life and nourishment and goodness from the vine continuously, endlessly, without strain or interruption. What a vine does physically, we are to do with our thoughts and perceptions and desires.  
  
Abide in my love.  
  
This guideline has been extended eternally, for the benefit and flourishing of all humanity.  
  
Jesus says the way to abide in his love is to keep his command. And he says his command is “Love one another.” We are to live love-immersed lives, to make love visible in our words and our work and play and rest.

Written by John Ortberg on his blog

**Jesus’ Concluding Prayer**

**Jesus’ prayer for us: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

**Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.**

**When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples…” (John 17:20-25)**

**Re-read this passage and highlight the requests that Jesus makes.**

**Spiritual Practice: Consider the wonder of these truths in prayer. Practice holding each one before your mind in prayer for 1 minute. Then spend a minute or two receiving Jesus’ gift of peace.**

1. That we might be one, just as the Father and the Son are one.

2. That we may be in the Father and the Son.

3. That our unity with other believers and with the Father and the Son will be a testimony to the world that the Father sent Jesus and loves us "as the Father loves Jesus."

4. We have been given the glory that the Father gave Jesus.

5. Jesus has given us the glory of unity with the Triune God and each other. Complete unity.

6. Jesus wants us to be with him - where he is.

7. Jesus requests that we can see his glory.

8. Jesus prays that the "love the Father has for him may be in us and that Jesus himself may be in us."

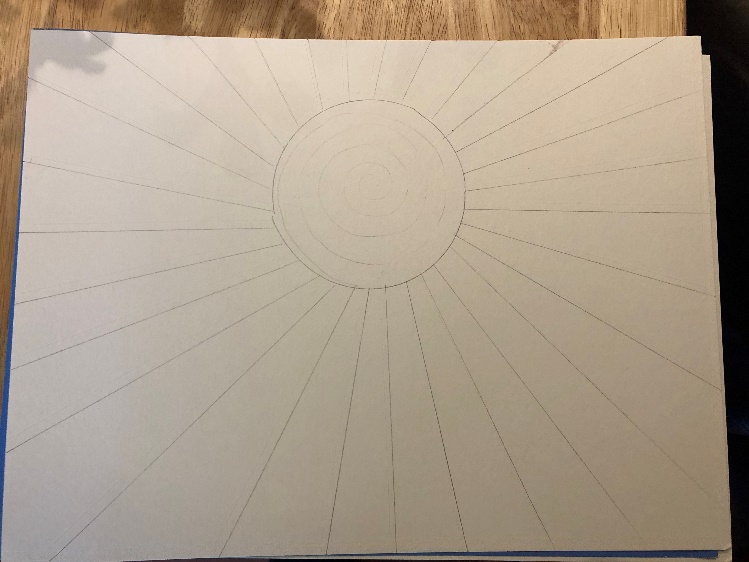
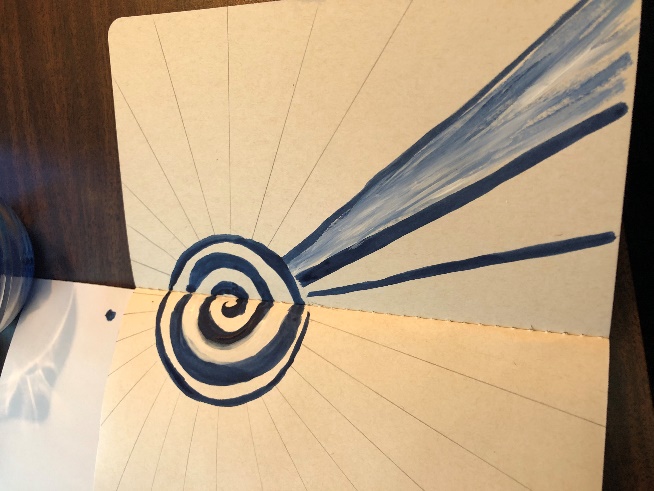
9. Receive his gift of peace.

If we love him, it’s because we have experienced his love for us. And his grace motivates us to love others and to share his love with others. It only makes sense to join his mission of love—bringing people into loving relationships with him. Love begins with those closest to us and extends out to enfold the world.

We will **find the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts** to the extent that we enter into the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Remain in their love. Let the Three Person God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit produce the fruit of Christian love within us, so that we are prompted to obey the Father’s command to love, not to put ourselves first but to seek the welfare of others, to seek to do good to all, to live in a community of people who are all-loving God and loving each other. Then we will experience peace with God and peace with those closest to us. Peace. It’s a gift that Jesus gives. And when we fail, we return to God and confess our failure to love and receive his grace. And as we sincerely appreciate his kindness toward us, as we receive his forgiveness, then we extend that kindness to others. Grace overflows. We love. We remain overwhelmed by his love for us. We seek to honor him and express our love by doing what his asks—it only makes sense. We love others. We join God’s mission to bring his love to the world. Fruit is produced. That’s the goal we strive toward until we arrive in heaven and live in Christ’s peace forever.

**As you reflect on all that you’ve discussed during the last 5 weeks, where is Jesus’ invitation to you? Is there a truth, or a practice, a passage of Scripture, that you want to take with you into the coming days?**

**ART JOURNALING Project**

You might enjoy engaging in a little art as you go through these Discussions. Take a full page of paper, or two facing pages in your journal and using a mug or something round, draw a circle. Then using a ruler, extend lines out to the margins. Using colored pencils, watercolors, or acrylic paint, paint the spiral and the lines of the rays. Finish by painting/coloring the rays in a lighter blue – use a combination of lighter variations.



When it’s dry, write what you are feeling inside the swirl. If you are sad, or disoriented, feeling unmotivated, etc. And as you go through the lessons, write in the lighter blue rays the insights, the truths, the Scripture verses that you’d like to remember.

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9. Brennan Manning, *Ruthless Trust*, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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12. [*The New International Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/niv2011?ref=BibleNIV.Jn14.27&off=0&ctx=have+said+to+you.%EF%BB%BFj+~27%C2%A0Peace+I+leave+wit). (2011). (Jn 14:27). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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16. Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, p. 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Steven D. Boyer, Christopher A. Hall, *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable*. Ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. “The Father is said to “beget” or to “generate” the Son while being himself “unbegotten” or “ingenerate”; the Son relates to the Father as “begotten”; the Holy Spirit “proceeds” from the Father (or from the Father and the Son). …we know that relationally the Son is different from the Father because the Son, as “begotten,” finds his source, his “begetting,” from the Father. That is what “Father” and “Son”, “begetting” and “begotten,” means. Yet, the moment we say this, we are…left with absolutely no adequate categories in the created order. **The begetting of the Son is a noncorporeal (non-physical) begetting, a generation that has no beginning and no end. It is therefore a begetting or a generation unlike any we could ever imagine**. If we were to employ our normal classifications and connotations for the concept of biological generation…we would think that the Father begets the Son as human fathers beget human sons…. yet **to think that the begetting of the Son by the Father is like the begetting of human children by a human father would be a ghastly mistake**.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Steven D. Boyer, Christopher A. Hall, *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable*. Ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The Trinity, tempera and gold on parchment by Taddeo Crivelli, from a manuscript from 1460–70; in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. God the Father holds the crucified Christ, with the dove—as the Holy Spirit—between the two [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Steven D. Boyer, Christopher A. Hall, *The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable*. Ch. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. From David Benner, *Surrender to Love: Discovering the Heart of Christian Spirituality.* [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
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