

Lean in and Listen. Jesus has a Message for You  
Week 5 notes  
A Message of Warning  
John 15:18-16:4

Jesus is focusing on relationships in John 15. First, our relationship to Him is vital if we are going to fulfill our purpose as believers. We must abide in Him and be obedient to His words in order to produce any fruit.

He then focuses on our relationship to other believers and COMMANDS that we love one another. In light of this week's message, and the stark contrast of the world's response to us, we can better understand why it is imperative for believers to love each other, thus allowing the church to be a balm and haven for fellow believers.

Verse 18 begins the contrast and Jesus introduces the word "hate". It is jarring. He warns believers, "the world will hate you". But why? And who exactly is the world?

The word "world" is used three different ways in Scripture:

1. The earth as created by God
2. Humanity that lives on the earth (people) "For God so loved the world..."
3. Society apart from and opposed to God.

The third definition is what Jesus means in John 15. The world system is hostile toward God. It is part of that three-pronged enemy Paul talks about in Ephesians 2:1-3.

- a. Satan is the kingpin of it all for a short time until God seals his fate,
- b. the world system is under the domain of Satan for that short time and is therefore opposed to God
- c. the third prong of the enemy is our own sinful flesh nature. Humans are born with it because we are related to Adam. When we become believers, the Spirit of Christ indwells us, but our bent toward sin is not eradicated—instead it must be crucified daily—we must die to self each day. The unbeliever, however, operates entirely based on his fleshly nature—he has no other option. The flesh is always self-seeking, selfish, and works according to its own desires. It is always in opposition to God.

Jesus tells the disciples *why* He is warning them of the world's hostility in John 16:1. He wants them to know what is ahead. He knows difficult days are in their future and He does not want them to get discouraged and "stumble".

"To stumble" means to *take offense or to reject*. In difficult days, Jesus is warning there is a danger of being offended by Him, His commands, and His call to a different life. He loves us and never wants us to be blindsided by the trials of life or the response of a world system who opposes God.

## I. The World's Response to Believers

### 1. The world hates Jesus (John 15:18)

Jesus leaves no room for misunderstanding who He is. John 14:6 **"I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me."**

Jesus makes no room for any other religions or any other provision to have a relationship with God. He is it! He is authoritative in His words. He draws a line in the sand. He disrupts every religious order on the planet by His claim. Even those who say they do not believe in God, are hostile toward Him.

Matthew 10:43 may cause us to scratch our heads and wonder. But Jesus clearly says He came to not to bring peace but a sword. Huh? How?

Jesus brings peace to the hearts of believers, but He divides people when it comes to the lost world and the followers of Christ. Test that truth. You can sometimes easily talk about God in everyday circles, but as soon as you say "Jesus", you too have drawn a line in the sand—and controversy can easily break out. Major world religions can discuss civilly the concept of God but they cannot tolerate the claims of Jesus. He divides.

John 8:12 Jesus says. "I am the light of the world." Darkness and light are a common metaphor throughout Scripture. Darkness is always opposed to light. It wants to either run from the light, or extinguish the light. Light on the other hand, always exposes and dispels darkness. The world is darkness. Jesus is the light! They are always in conflict.

Romans 1:18-32 teaches us the direction of sinful mankind. It has been a downward spiral for all the ages of history. The result is a society—a world system—that hates God.

## 2. **The world hates Jesus' followers** (John 15:19)

Matthew 5:14 Jesus says. *"You are the light of the world."* We know God because we know Jesus. In knowing Jesus, we represent Him to the world. We are the face of Jesus to the world. And the world hates us because it hates Jesus. Darkness wants to stay in the shadows, but by our very presence, we expose the darkness. Darkness will do anything to be free of the Light of Christ.

As we live and operate in this world, We are warned not to be conformed to the world. Romans 12:2, *"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

"Conformed" means *poured into the mold*. We must avoid being poured into the mold of this world—even though we must live in the world, we cannot become like the world. *Abiding is the key!* As we abide, the Spirit of God within us uses the Word of God to train and renew our minds, teaching us what the things of God look like and how to live like a child of God.

Paul instructs the church in Ephesians 4:17-19 not to live like people who do not know Christ. Those people have a darkened mind—they cannot see or understand the things of God and therefore live in opposition to Him. Don't live that way! Live as children of the light!

## 3. **We can expect persecution** (John 15:20-21)

Persecution means *hostile pursuit*.

Jesus was persecuted unto death. He warns His disciples ---and us—we should not be surprised by the same.

[www.openwindowsusa.org](http://www.openwindowsusa.org) is a ministry that tracks the persecution of Christians worldwide today. The statistics are alarming and disconcerting to us here in America. While we experience hostility, pressure, and oppression in other ways, most of us do not fear for our lives.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 warns us the days will grow more wicked as the return of Christ nears. 2 Timothy 3:12 assures us we will suffer persecution if we have a desire to glorify God. 1 Peter 4:14 also assures us that we are blessed because God's Spirit is in us—even in the midst of persecution .

As the world grows darker, we must be aware that we indeed are the light of the world because we know Christ. We cannot “hide the light” but rather we are to set it out for all to see (Matthew 5:14-16). We are not called to be silent witnesses for Christ but we are called to give an account of the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15). When we do—we will be persecuted.

#### **4. The world will be held accountable (John 15:22-25)**

Because Christ came, because the gospel is truth, because sin has been exposed--- the world is accountable for all it does to the believer in Christ. The world does not get off scot free. Even though at times it may feel like darkness is winning and the evil man profits, a day of reckoning is coming when Christ will set all things right. (Psalm 37)

## **II. The Believer's Response to the World (John 15:26-27)**

### **1. Our Helper**

We are not in this thing alone! We have the Holy Spirit within us. He strengthens us, empowers us, and leads us in all things. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Helper or paraclete. It means *to come along beside*, like a lawyer helps a client, or a teacher helps a student, or a doctor helps a patient, or a friend helps a friend.

At the moment of salvation we receive the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit. He is the seal-or guarantee that we belong to Christ. He does not come and go. He is a permanent resident in the life of the believer. He is not a ghost—He is the Spirit of Christ living within us.

Acts 1:8 says. “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...*” The Holy Spirit is the power source for this Christian life. He is the sap running through the Vine and into the branches, producing the fruit that glorifies God. He is the energy and the life for us in our daily walk with Christ.

Philippians 2:13 “*It is God at work in you (through the Holy Spirit), both to will (to want to) and to do His good pleasure.*” God is working in us to give us the desire to please Him and then as we respond, He gives us the ability to please Him. God has equipped us to live as he has commanded us to live.

So there is great comfort when it comes to living in a world that is hostile to us because we are followers of Christ. We have the Holy Spirit in us.

## 2. Our Witness

Jesus tells His disciples they will be a witness which means *to give a report*. We are witnesses! How do we do that?

**We simply obey Christ. It all goes back to abiding and obedience.**

As we continue to abide in Christ, He teaches us truth and we listen and obey. So what has He told us to do?

Luke 6:27 “*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*” Well that sounds impossible! Yes, it’s impossible! John 15:5 reminds us, “*apart from Me, you can do nothing.*” Certainly, we cannot love those who hate us apart from Christ in us.

Jesus uses the word *agapeo* in Luke 6:27. Remember, agape love is a love of the will. It may or may not be accompanied by feelings of warmth. It is love that loves the person as they need to be loved, not necessarily like they want to be loved. Only God can demonstrate agape love but His love is manifested to us through Christ and therefore we are equipped to demonstrate it through the Holy Spirit. God loved us—now we love others.

John 1:14 states Jesus is full of grace and truth. Paul admonishes us to speak with truth and love (Ephesians 4:15). Grace and truth/ truth and love cannot be

separated. If we are to love our enemies, we must speak truth. We are not just going around acting like creampuffs, spouting sweet words to everyone and doing nice things. Our good works and our good words point to Jesus, and they are filled with loving truth.

Love without truth is fluff. Truth without love is cruel. We must have both because Jesus has both—the Holy Spirit enables to do both.

Luke 6:28 *“Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”* Again, these are impossible apart from abiding in Christ and allowing His Holy Spirit to empower us and to lead us.

Darkness hates light. Darkness will do anything to intimidate us and push us into silence. The world will tell us we are narrow, we are bigoted, we are fearful and fearmongering. It will attempt to silence truth and love any way it can. We must abide in Christ daily—or we will be powerless when the world is hostile.

Matthew 10:16 is interesting. Jesus tells His disciples He is sending them out into the world and they must be as shrewd as serpents but as innocent as doves. But how?

*The Holy Spirit will give wisdom as well as power.* James writes, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives it graciously...”(James 1:5). We need wisdom to operate in a world that hates us. We need to know when to speak and when to be quiet. We need to know whom to serve and whom to leave alone. We need wisdom in all things—especially in dealing with the world. Wisdom from God is peaceable and gentle—never harsh and mean-spirited (James 3:13-18). *Truth, wrapped in wisdom, is always delivered in love. Love, wrapped in wisdom, is always accompanied by truth.*

Indeed there is a tension of living in this world-- trying to love a world that hates us while also not being conformed to the world and also operating in both truth and love. We need the Holy Spirit to live this way. We must abide .

We are not the world’s doormats. We are servants of the Most High God. We serve Him. When people reject us, we need to adjust our focus. We must see our service as directed towards Christ—who never rejects us or brushes us off.

1 Peter 3:14-17 talks about persecution. In fact, much of 1 Peter is about persecution. Peter reminds us to *give an account of the hope that is within us*. THAT MEANS WE HAVE TO SPEAK UP. We cannot assume our silent witness and our acts of kindness are enough in and of themselves. *When we have the opportunity*, give a verbal witness for Jesus. Use wisdom. He will direct you.

In closing, our words and our deeds matter. We must show love to one another in word and deed. But we must also demonstrate love to those who hate us—demonstrating love in both word and deed. Is it hard? NO. It is impossible—unless we abide in Christ—we can do nothing.