

Life of Jesus

Session 18: Abiding in the True Vine

Here in the West, Jesus is a familiar figure to Christians, dominating Sunday School lessons and sermons since our earliest memories. Yet, removed as we are by 2,000 years since he walked the earth, He remains somewhat mysterious. Why did He come? What did He teach? What was He really like?

Let's take an adventure to know more of this person about whom we assume so much familiarity. We will be exploring the Life of Jesus in 21 sessions. Let's experience the Life of Jesus together!

Deep Hope: May we, together, (re-) fall in Love with the Messiah as we understand, imitate, and experience the Life of Jesus.

PART I: Review

1. The Holy Spirit is Jesus with (and within) us; everything God the Father wants to do *with* and *for* us happens *through* the Spirit. We must stir up and submit to His influence in all things!
2. God is a waterfall of love and always moves toward the "poor." Being a disciple of Jesus means we must tap into His resources so we can look past obstacles and truly know, value, and love others.
3. We get a limited time to use "our" money to transform ourselves into people of love who will be comfortable in the coming world of love and give others a sneak peek into what it will look like.
 - What did the Spirit prompt you to do about/with your money and/or possessions last week?

PART II: Abiding in the True Vine

1. Jesus is gone. How can we stay connected? By _____!
2. Many things function through being connected. So does our walk with Jesus.
3. We abide by obeying Jesus' _____.
4. What does Jesus command us to do? Three things:
 - a. _____ in Him and His love.
 - b. _____ for anything and everything
 - c. _____ like He has loved us.
5. The Golden Rule is not a "nice idea." It is a call to _____ and _____!
6. The life connected to Jesus bears _____. What is it?
7. Big idea: A life of _____ in Jesus is simply hearing God's music playing at all times—and joining in.

Part III: Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. If you feel comfortable, please share anything the Spirit prompted you to do about last week's message concerning money/possessions.
2. Has it ever bothered you that you can't see/hear/feel Jesus? Do you miss Him?
3. What has your experience trying to connect with Jesus in the past been like? Please share if you feel comfortable.
4. The first command Jesus gives is to believe/trust Him and His love. Is this easy or hard for you?
5. What stands in the way of you asking and/or thanking God for everything/anything?
6. The Golden Rule is not just an abstract principle, but a command to get actively involved with the specific people in your sphere of influence. Who might God be calling you to love? In what particular way? Use your imagination and ask the Spirit to guide you!
7. How is this vision for the abiding life different or the same as the vision you currently have of the Christian faith?

Part IV: Gospel Reading: Read John 18-19

The life of Jesus comes to a dramatic climax as Judas betrays him and Jesus is arrested and tried. Bounced from one court to another, Jesus comes face-to-face with the politics of His world. What is Jesus' stance about the powers of this earth—how does he react and respond to those in authority? Let's take a deep dive into some fascinating conversations and interactions on the day of Jesus' crucifixion that might give us a glimpse into the politics of our own time.

Prayer: *“Father, we long to be connected. We ache for love; we strive to fill the vacuum within us in so many different ways. As our gardener, you can see it all so clearly, yet you have longings, too. You long to see us be thriving branches, bearing sweet fruit through a vibrant connection to Your Son. Help us, through Your Spirit, to trust Your love, to ask You for everything, to love our neighbor (and our enemy!) as ourselves. We need You to help us do this because we can do nothing on our own. Lead us into the abiding life of true joy! Amen.”*

