

Online Grace Bible School

With

Ken Legg, Australia

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www.kenlegg.com.au

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**Online Grace Bible School
Phase 6
The Authentic Christian Life**

1) Abiding in Christ

- ✓ The Farewell Discourse of Jesus (John 14-17) was spoken the night before the cross.
- ✓ Is John 15 speaking of union or communion - salvation and the possibility of losing it, or fellowship and fruitfulness? Do we lose our salvation by non-fruit-bearing? See Jn.10:28.
- ✓ Jesus is introducing us to the fruitful life, (e.g. see Jn.15:2, 4, 5, 8, 16).
- ✓ After the cross 'following' was replaced by 'abiding'. Abiding means one person remains in fellowship with another.
- ✓ We abide in Him and participate in divine life. As we abide in Him we have His mind, heart and will.
- ✓ Abiding is to be available to Him. We abide in Him and He produces the fruit.
- ✓ The secret of the Christian life is that He does it all. The only reward we will receive is for what we did not do. Everything we did will be burned up. God doesn't look at the work you do but the source of the work.

- ✓ John 15:1. 'I am the true Vine'. This sets the tone for the passage. When a branch is grafted into a vine what life does it get? The vines'. When we were grafted into Christ we received His life.
- ✓ 'True' (*alethinos*), as opposed to counterfeit, simulated or replicated. When tested discovered to be real. E.g. in contrast to a type, (Heb.8:2). God created the vine to teach Jesus.

- ✓ Jesus mentions the Father before the branches. All that He was and had on earth was from the Father.
- ✓ The vine is the glory of the gardener and the branches are the glory of the vine. His care for the vine includes the branches. The gardener has a vision for the vine. He is going to take care of the vine.
- ✓ Jn.15:2. A vine needs branches to bear fruit. The vine *produces* the fruit, and the branches *bear* the fruit.
- ✓ Where there is no fruit His desire is for fruit; where there is fruit His desire is for more fruit. 1) Every branch that does not bear fruit he lifts up; 2) Every fruitful branch He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

- ✓ The word for 'pruning' is *kathairo* meaning to cleanse or purge from that which is hindering fruitfulness, (Heb.12:7,10). So we must connect this word with Jn.15:3 where we are told we are already clean by the Word. This is justification. This work will manifest on the outside, i.e. sanctification.
- ✓ Sanctification does not determine my union with Christ. If I do wrong behavior God rejects that behavior but He doesn't reject me. My relationship is based upon justification.
- ✓ He uses chastening to bring change. Spurgeon: 'The handle of the knife is affliction; the blade is the Word'
- ✓ The vine needs constant pruning. It is not weeds that are removed but long shoots from the previous year, produced by the vine.
- ✓ God is not tied to previous ways and ministry. He is always doing something new. We must not become tied to past blessing but move on to fresh ministry.
- ✓ When we want past fruitfulness, in a subtle way, we place our trust there.

- ✓ Jn.15:4. Being grafted in is the job of the Gardener. There is a mistaken belief that when you abide you struggle to hold on. He will hold you to Himself and keep you abiding in Him. The graft becomes one with the vine and abides in it. The sap begins to flow into the graft and eventually produces fruit.
- ✓ Jn.15:5-6. Jesus says, 'Abide in Me and let Me do the work'. 'Much fruit' is not a demand but a promise. It is a certainty when a branch abides in the vine because the vine supplies the sap, the life.
- ✓ The branch abides, rests. Don't be occupied with the abiding. Be occupied with Christ. Our life is in Him.

- ✓ 'If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you' (Jn.15:7). This promise is in relation to the disciples mission. He was sending them into the world.
- ✓ It was not a blank cheque for anything they wanted for themselves. 'Words' – *remata*, i.e. specific instructions rather than *logos* of the Word. This is how Jesus abode in His Father's love, (Jn.8:55).
- ✓ 'By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples' (Jn.15:8). We glorify God by letting others see the fruit which is the product of Christ's life.

2) The Authentic and the Counterfeit

- ✓ Counterfeit Christianity emphasizes organization. Authentic Christianity is organic.
- ✓ Organic Christianity is spontaneous. It is pulsating with life. Zoe – the quality of life as possessed by the One who gave it.
- ✓ There is nothing more natural than growth. Growth is just an expansion of the life we already possess. It cannot be organized. We trust the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His people.

- ✓ We recognize the anointing on each person and release them to function in it.
- ✓ There is leadership, but not control. Leadership empowers.

- ✓ Counterfeit Christianity tries to make things happen. Authentic Christianity responds to what God is doing. There is a difference between bearing fruit and performing dead works.
- ✓ He has prepared works for us. There is nothing random or impulsive about what God does.
- ✓ Faith is our response to that which God initiates. It is like the ears of the spirit. The ear does not generate sound; it receives it. Faith comes by hearing. We cannot generate God's activity, we can only receive it.
- ✓ Faith is responsive, not manipulative. Faith does not make God do anything.
- ✓ The counterfeit is driven; the authentic is drawn. Satan pushes; God leads. His yoke is easy.
- ✓ People who don't understand this accuse us of passivity. Abiding is not lazy. It is not inactivity, but directed activity. It's not getting God where I want Him but vice versa.

- ✓ Counterfeit Christianity emphasizes deficiency. Authentic Christian life teaches sufficiency. We are complete in Him, *'His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness'* (2 Pet.1:3).

- ✓ Counterfeit Christianity wants fame. Authentic Christianity wants to glorify His name. Counterfeit Christianity emphasizes the big and spectacular. Authentic Christianity emphasizes seemingly insignificant things, e.g. how Christ enables me to turn the other cheek, be patient in suffering, love the unlovely, etc.

- ✓ Counterfeit Christianity demands conformity. Authentic Christianity allows uniqueness. Counterfeit Christianity seeks to mass produce disciples, like sausages. They become clones. Yet, fruit is not like that.
- ✓ Everyone is different, so God works in our lives in different ways, 1 Pet.4:10. Don't be an echo, be a voice.

- ✓ Counterfeit Christianity is sin-conscious. Authentic Christianity is righteousness-conscious. Counterfeit Christianity obsesses on sin and is angry and judgmental towards those who are caught up in sin.
- ✓ Authentic Christianity emphasizes focusing on Jesus. He is our righteousness and holiness. Focus on the root, not the fruit. It is the root that produces the fruit. Jesus faced sin and all evil and conquered it.
- ✓ A doctor doesn't get angry with his patient. He doesn't attack the person but the sickness.

- ✓ Counterfeit Christianity is based on feelings. Authentic Christianity operates by faith. When you are in the will of God you feel nothing. The will of God is faith in Christ. When you walk according to the flesh you are controlled by feelings and will always feel a series of highs and lows. In the world we call this bi-polar.

- ✓ Counterfeit Christianity sees only the destination. Authentic Christianity believes in the journey. Counterfeit Christianity emphasizes instant fulfillment. If you don't see immediate fulfillment there's something wrong with your faith, life, etc. Fruitfulness is a gradual process. There is no quick fix. We mature in stages and grow in grace.

- ✓ True faith is not about making God do what we want when we want Him to do. It's about how long you can wait when God doesn't act. The longer you wait the stronger you become. E.g. Abraham was promised a child, then remained barren for decades! David was promised the throne, then lived as a fugitive for years.

3) Abiding in His Love

- ✓ John 15:9. Jesus learned to abide in His Father's love. This is seen in the intimacy they shared in the Father's plans, Jn.5:20.
- ✓ So we are the object of His love, Jn.13:1. We learn to abide in His love and enjoy the same intimacy as He does with the Father. Jesus shared His plans and purposes with the disciples, Jn.15:14-15.
- ✓ John 15:10. The key to Jesus' fruitfulness was to abide in His Father's love. The way to abiding was, once He knew His Father's will and commandments, to do them, Jn.4:34; 5:19; 5:30.
- ✓ When Jesus was on earth He did not function on the basis of needs, but the will of God, Jn.5:17. He only did what His Father showed Him, Jn.6:38. By this He glorified the Father, Jn.17:4.
- ✓ This provides us with the best understanding of what it is to abide in Christ. As Jesus remained in the Father's love by obedience to His commands, so we remain in His love by obedience, Jn.8:29.
- ✓ It is possible to know the same intimacy and fruitfulness that Jesus experienced, Jn.14:21, 23.

- ✓ What does it mean to abide in His love? Love has a very broad range in the Bible. John 15 speaks of Jesus' **relational** love for His disciples. Relational love is reflected by the way we treat one another.
- ✓ We don't obey because we want to be accepted but to demonstrate our love. *'But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do'* (Jn.14:31). *'For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome'* (1 John 5:3). *'Keep yourselves in the love of God'* (Jude 21).

- ✓ Obedience is a subject that can be mishandled in 2 ways: 1) Legalistically, i.e. to preach it as a means to acceptance; 2) To avoid it, i.e. fail to teach obedience. Yet obedience leads to fruitfulness. Jesus was fruitful by abiding in His Father's love through obedience, Phil.2:8.
- ✓ Faith is the requisite for salvation, obedience for discipleship, *'Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed"'* (Jn.8:31).

- ✓ Which commandments? There is a difference between His commandments and His will.
- ✓ Under the NC, His will is individual for each of us and revealed to us step by step by the Holy Spirit who has replaced the Law. Example in Jesus' life, see Jn.10:17-18.
- ✓ The Holy Spirit leads us all differently. That's why we must not judge others.

- ✓ But what about commandments? *'If you love Me, keep My commandments'* (Jn.14:15). Are these the 10 commandments? No. Jesus referred to these many times, but never as His.
- ✓ He had already told them what this was, i.e. to love one another, Jn.13:34-35. This is His commandment and the only true proof of discipleship, 1 Jn.2:3; 3:23-24; 4:12-13; 2 Jn.5-7; Gal.6:2; Jas.2:8.
- ✓ John 15:12-13. We are not only one with the Vine but also the branches.

- ✓ John 15:17-19. Jesus loves us but the world will hate us. All the more reason for us to love one another.
- ✓ John 15:14-15. Abiding branches are friends, in contrast to servants. It expresses intimacy.
- ✓ We are privy to what He is doing in the earth. A slave was told what to do, not why it was being done.
- ✓ The Holy Spirit ushered in this new relationship. We all have access to it.

- ✓ John 15:16. We have been chosen by Him and ordained (*tithemi*) for special service, sent for a special reason. The Vine brings forth the branch as and where it will. Appointed to bear fruit that will remain.

- ✓ John 15:11. Abiding Christians are joyful, 1 Pet.1:8. This is a part of the fruit of the Spirit.
- ✓ Jesus' joy flowed from His obedience to the Father. He delighted to do His will. It was His food.
- ✓ The same Jesus that said that lives in you and me. We are made for obedience.
- ✓ Disciples who obey Jesus experience His joy. Obedience is the one thing that satisfies the believer. We can know fullness of joy.