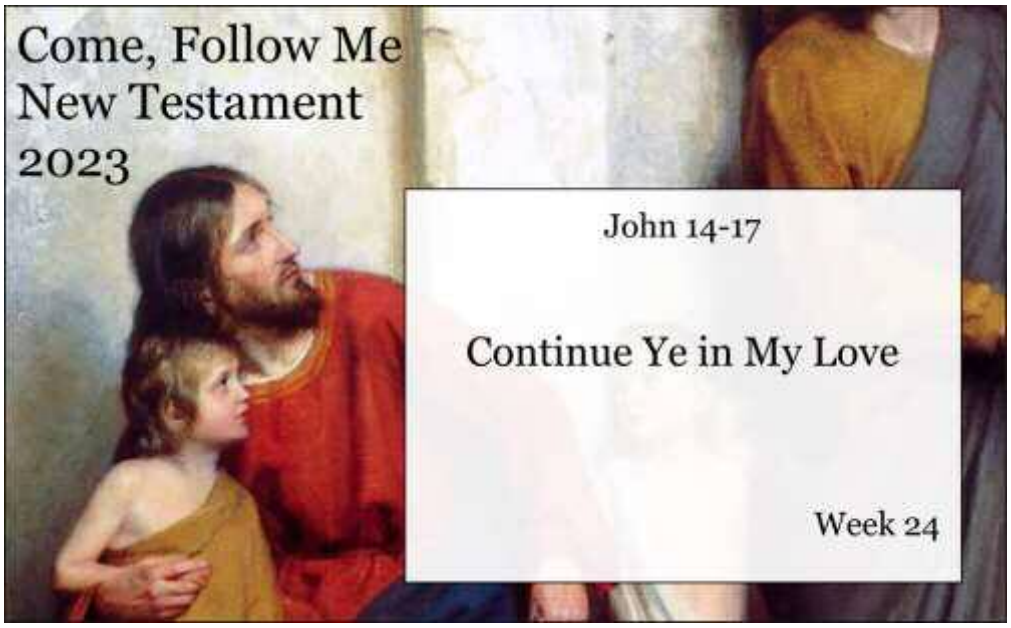

Week 24 is scheduled for study June 5-11, 2023. Let's explore what it means to abide in Christ, and how it changes our life. We'll also look at the purpose behind the Holy Spirit.

Day 1

As you read the Savior's teachings in John 14-17, the Holy Ghost will help you identify messages for you. Record the impressions you receive.

John 14-15 - I show my love for Jesus Christ by keeping His commandments.

John 15:10 tells us love and commandments are connected.

> 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

Let's think of verse 10 backwards. Jesus says that he abides in his Father's love, because he keeps God's commandments. Likewise, if we want to abide in Christ's love, and have Christ favor us as He is favored by God, we must keep Christ's commandments. The application is different. Jesus keeps God's commandments and has God's love engulfs his life, and we keep Christ's commandments and have Jesus's love engulf our life.

This hierarchy is a demonstration of our separation from God, because of our sins, but also our connection to God, because of Christ. Christ is the connection Heavenly Father has given us to bring us back home to God. Whatever happens between Jesus and God, Jesus makes available to us as well, but through himself. This is why Jesus Christ is the only path to salvation. God's love is only available to us through the love given to us through Jesus, and forgiveness of sin is only available to us through Jesus. As I understand it, the only direct connection we have with our Father in Heaven is through our prayers. In all other aspects of our lives, we depend entirely on the saving work Jesus has done for us, and by listening to the Holy Spirit Jesus has sent us.

We cannot show love to Jesus by any other method than to keep his commandments. I have had people ask me questions like, "I have many charitable outlets in my life. Do I have to give my ten percent in the form of tithing? Why can't I give to my chosen charities? Isn't it the same thing?" The short answer is "No, it is not the same thing." Tithing is a commandment. To tell Christ that his commandment isn't good enough for us, and that we have other preferred ways of worshiping, is to tell him that he is not very important to us - that his words and wishes are dispensable in our life. It is like telling Jesus that we can save our selves. We don't need him to do it.

If we believe him, if we love him, we will keep his commandment to pay our tithe as he has instructed us to do. It is up to him to decide where that money is spent and how. We are welcome to donate to other charities as we can afford to do so, but we need to keep his commandment to pay our tithing first and foremost. That is how we honor and respect him. That obedience is how we demonstrate our love for him. Strict obedience demonstrates that we believe he is the only one that knows the way home to God, and that he is the only path to get us there. Our obedience makes him crucial and critical to our salvation, not inconsequential and unimportant.

For a brief discussion on the contents of John 15, I recommend starting with this article - Commentary on John 15.

Day 2

As you read the Savior's teachings in John 14-17, the Holy Ghost will help you identify messages for you. Record the impressions you receive.

John 14-16 - The Holy ghost helps me fulfill my purpose as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever wondered what Adam and Eve have in common with Christ's original apostles? Both groups dealt directly with God or Christ first. It was only after they lost that direct connection that the Spirit entered their lives and taught them the truths of eternity. There were things Jesus couldn't teach to his disciples, because those truths had to be learned through the Holy Ghost. The Spirit couldn't come to them until Jesus had left them. When Jesus was alive his disciples asked him questions directly, and he taught them the truth, and they were influenced by the Holy Spirit. But they did not yet have the gift of the Holy Ghost, which makes all the difference.

Here is John 16:23-25.

> 23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.
>
> 24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.
>
> 25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

Earlier in the verses Jesus tells them he will need to go away for the Spirit to be given to them. In verse 23 he says that when they receive the Spirit they will no longer ask him directly about things. Instead, they will ask the Father, in the name of Christ, and by so doing the Father will give them the answers they seek. Why will He do it? Because they believed in the words of Jesus. Because of their belief, and because they petition God in the name of His Son, their joy will be full.

Verse 25 says that the things Jesus taught them were mysteries to them, proverbs of sorts, but once they received the Spirit they would understand all things. All things would become plain to them. This is the purpose of the Holy Spirit, to reveal truth and to testify of God and Christ. Until they received the gift of the Spirit they were like the woman Jesus refers to in travail with child. They would suffer and wonder if they would live through their trial, but it would be temporary, and when the Spirit finally came, they would forget all their sufferings in their joy of having the Spirit in their life. This is like the mother who suffers temporarily in transition, right before the birth, and then

forgets much of her suffering when that new baby is placed in her arms. Her joy swallows up the suffering that came before.

The Spirit's purpose

The purpose of the Holy Ghost has never changed. His role in the Godhead has always been to reveal truth and to testify of it. He is in our lives to bring us to Jesus Christ. He witnesses of God and Christ, their divinity, their love, and shows us what we need to know in order to fulfill their will to bless the lives of those around us with joy and love. Love is the commanding and guiding force in everything the Godhead does. Even the seemingly mundane commandments are inspired and infused with the love of God and His desire for us to find joy.

Jesus has a direct connection to Father in Heaven. We have an intermediary with Christ, and He is the Holy Spirit. We can pray directly to the Father, but those prayers are effective only when we pray in Christ's name. All of our instructions from Christ come through the scriptures, the words of his chosen servants (Apostles and Prophet), and through the personal inspiration we receive from the gift of the Spirit we received at baptism. We require all of these methods to lead us to Christ. None of them are optional or unimportant.

The scriptures and the words of the servants of God are static, but the Spirit is dynamic and alive in our life. Through the Spirit we are led to seek out knowledge in the written word. We are also taught through experience how to live more like Christ in our daily life. The Spirit is our celestial tutor, our divine teacher. He influences those without the gift to do good, and He does what He can to lead them to Christ's church. But those who have made the covenant of baptism and have been given the gift of His presence in their life have daily aid available to them. Without the gift of the Holy Ghost, we cannot ever successfully come unto Christ and be saved. He makes all the difference in our success or failure.

Day 3

As you read the Savior's teachings in John 14-17, the Holy Ghost will help you identify messages for you. Record the impressions you receive.

John 15:1-8 - As I abide in Christ, I will bring forth good fruit.

If you have read the article I mentioned earlier this week about the Commentary on John 15, you should have a better idea of what it means to abide in Christ and to have him abide in you. As I have read the four chapters in this week's lessons, and have contemplated what they teach, I have come to the conclusion that there is something visceral or physical that happens to us when we abide in Christ and he abides in us. Just as a plant sends nourishment throughout every cell of its branches so that it is better able to produce good things, so too does having Christ in our lives aid us in being better in every way.

I mentioned in the commentary article that the fruit God is looking for is good works. And by the way, those good works aren't just done by anybody. The good God wants to see comes from each of us as we improve and become better people, more righteous, and closer to His Spirit. As the author of all good things, God values, and receives glory from the multiplying of His own goodness through the goodness of His children.

Emulating God's behavior is the only way we can give God more glory than He already has. I believe that this is how God continues to progress in the eternities - it is through the multiplying of His original goodness through His own children and their children, etc. What good originates with Him then ripples throughout all eternity and effects the lives of countless people through the ages as we duplicate what we have seen Him do. It is this goodness that brings joy and happiness to those whose lives it touches.

Keeping the commandments we have been given by Christ not only brings us joy in this life, but in eternity as well. That obedience also multiplies goodness, the good fruit God seeks, through His obedient children. Goodness is a gift we give to each other, to God, and to ourselves. It only comes to us through Jesus Christ.

Day 4

As you read the Savior's teachings in John 14-17, the Holy Ghost will help you identify messages for you. Record the impressions you receive.

John 17 - Jesus Christ intercedes for His disciples.

I would like to address Day 4 and Day 5 together, as they are so closely related.

Day 5

As you read the Savior's teachings in John 14-17, the Holy Ghost will help you identify messages for you. Record the impressions you receive.

John 17:11, 21-23 - Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are perfectly united.

What does it mean to "be one"? Too many in the world believe it means to be absorbed into someone else's will, to give up one's own self/identity and be subjected to the will of another. It is to lose oneself entirely. This is a scary thought, and one that many of us fear. How can we seek to become one with each other when we have such an understanding of what it means to be one?

How about substituting the phrase "be one" with the idea of having a "singularity of focus"? And what are we to be focused on, but doing and being good in all things. Having the same focus doesn't require us to give up who we are, but to hone our attention to focus on doing good in the best way we know how. How would such an interpretation change some of the scriptures in chapter 17? Here are a couple of ideas for you to consider. I have underlined the reworded verses.

> 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;
>
> 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
>
> 21 That they all may be as singularly focused; as thou, Father, art with me, and I with thee, that they may be as focused together as we are: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
>
> 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:
>
> 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be unified in their focus of doing good, even as we are unified.

I know that I don't have the ability to improve on the scriptures, but sometimes swapping out a word or phrase that is confusing to me helps me clarify a passage or

verse that was causing confusion. So take this as an idea to consider when you think of being "as one."

Intercession

The intercessory prayer Jesus offers in chapter 17 is special. It demonstrates his love for those who have chosen to believe in him and obey his commandments, even when they don't have to. He knows how blessed and happy they will become as they keep his commandments. He openly states that obedience to his commandments will bring them the same kind of joy he, himself enjoys.

As you read and reread this week's assignment, try to feel the pleading and the love and respect Jesus has for his disciples, and for those who will one day soon believe the testimony of these very disciples. His heart seems to be overflowing with gratitude to God for what God has blessed him with, and for the opportunities they all have of sharing joy with one another.

FHE/Personal Study

John 15:17-27; 16:1-7 - Why did Christ warn his disciples of persecution?

As always, the attention of Jesus was on the welfare of those who followed him. He told them that until the Spirit was given to them to give them strength they would need to know that life would not be easy. After the Spirit was given, however, though they would suffer much because of their testimony of Christ, the Spirit would teach and testify to them, bringing them peace and comfort of soul. Jesus didn't want them to be surprised when the world openly hated them as they had hated him (Jesus). It was the responsible and loving thing to do, knowing that it is just a fact of life that those who hate and work against God will do the same to His followers.

Jesus wanted them to know that the hatred of the world was not a result of anything they had done to deserve it. The world's displeasure was simply a manifestation of their hatred of what God stands for. It wasn't the disciples who would be personally hated, but what they stood for that would be hated. This truth is no different today than it was two thousand years ago.

It can be difficult to take comfort in trying times. Our comfort must be derived from knowing that if we were promoting the teachings of the world then the world would promote us. They only hate us because we seek to establish the goodness and love we have received from Christ. That is something those of the world cannot abide, for it requires them to openly choose evil over good, and their sense of right and wrong is pricking their conscience. They would rather we just shut up and went way than preach to them the truth about anything.

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

NT24-2023 - Continue Ye in My Love