

# CONCERNING THE WAY

December 15, 2009

## LESSON 85: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



### Chapter 15 – Christ the Vine

Jesus and the disciples have left the upper room where they ate their Passover meal, and are making their way to the Mount of Olives, and Jesus is continuing His final instructions to the disciples. It's important to remember that Jesus is speaking directly to the disciples in these chapters, but many of the things He says are general principles that can be applied to all believers. Common sense usually tells us when there is a verse that does not apply to us, but only to the disciples, like verse 26 in the last chapter.

**John 15:1** "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener.

As the entire race of Israel came from the patriarch Israel (Jacob), the new generation of God's people is seen here as originating from Christ, organically united to Him, as branches coming from the vine. This is a fulfillment of Psalm 80:14-17, where "the son of man" (Psalm 80:17) is said to be the vine planted by God.

**Psalms 80:14-17** Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; Look down from heaven and see, And visit this vine (15) And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, And the branch that You made strong for Yourself. (16) It is burned with fire, it is cut down; They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance. (17) Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself (NKJV).

Some like to speculate on what may have caused Jesus to use the analogy of the vine here. It could have been the cups of wine in the Passover meal, or He may have seen a vineyard on their way through Jerusalem. He may have even seen fires burning in the vineyards. The dead vines that were trimmed in the winter were burned during the cold spring nights to keep the frost from killing new growth.

Grapevines were very common in Israel, so much so that the vine became the national symbol of the country. In the Old Testament Israel is referred to as a vine in numerous places (Psalm 80:8-16, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21, Ezekiel 15:1-8, 17:5-10, 19:10-14, Hosea 10:1). The vine was symbolic of Israel, but these passages are usually expressing this symbolism in terms of Israel's faithlessness to God. The Messiah was described in Ezekiel 17:22-24 as a cedar tree, not as a vine. So this is new imagery Jesus is giving us, not related to the Old Testament. Jesus seems to be saying that He is the true vine, unlike Israel which never consistently bore fruit, so He fulfills what was intended for Israel.

Jesus is using this imagery to describe our position in Him. The believer's union and communion with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life. He is the vine and we are the branches. We get our spiritual nourishment from Him. It's similar to the head-body metaphor Paul uses, with Christ being the head and believers being members of the body.

*"There is no fixed line that says the vine ends here and the branch begins there. That is why Jesus couldn't have chosen a better illustration of the intimate bond He seeks with His followers. He*

wants us to identify so closely with Him that others cannot tell where He leaves off and where we begin.” Wayne Jacobson

**John 15:2** He takes away every branch that does not bear fruit in me. He prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it will bear more fruit.

First realize that Jesus is not speaking of salvation here, but of believers bearing fruit. What is fruit? Galatians 5:22 tells us:

**Galatians 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Remember that, if you truly are in Christ and have eternal life, then you will naturally produce these things (Matthew 3:8). One who does not produce this fruit at all shows that he does not have the life (1 John 4:20). The following table by Elmer Towns lists the various kinds of fruit that ought to be produced by the believer:

<i>Fruit of the Believer</i>	<i>Evidenced in:</i>
The fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:9)	Character
The fruit leading to sanctification (Romans 6:22)	Conduct
The fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11)	Contentment
The fruit of the lips (Hebrews 13:15)	Conversation
The fruit of our hands (Proverbs 31:16, 31; 1 Corinthians 3:10,14)	Concrete service for God
The fruit of the righteous (Proverbs 11:30, Romans 1:13)	Converts
The fruit of the womb (implied in Romans 7:4)	Children (spiritual)

He TAKES AWAY every branch that is not bearing fruit IN HIM, and trims every branch that is bearing fruit so it can be more fruitful. What is Jesus saying here? Are we to assume that if we do not do good works for Christ, then we will be removed? Can we lose our salvation if we’re not fruitful enough? Well, if this were what Jesus is meaning, then that would make salvation based on works, and the Bible is clear that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. Also, Jesus made it very clear in John 10:28-29 that the believer’s salvation is secure in the hands of Jesus. So this leaves us with several possibilities:

Some think It could refer to someone who was never a genuine believer in the first place, like Judas and other Jews who fell away after Jesus’ difficult teaching in John 6:66. In that case this does refer to eternal judgment and loss of salvation. These are false believers, those who profess to belong to Jesus but really do not. Judas is the best example of this kind of person. The problem with this interpretation is that a false believer never would have been connected to the vine (Jesus) to begin with, so they couldn’t very well be broken off. But maybe we’re stretching the analogy too much.

Another interpretation is that this refers to the works of an unfaithful, disobedient believer, who is judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ and still gains eternal life, but “through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). The Christian who does not remain in Christ cannot do what pleases God; therefore, his works will be burned up in this judgment, though he himself will be saved. The removing of the branch in some cases may even mean the physical death of a disobedient Christian.

But here’s another possibility. The Greek word for “take away” can also mean “take up” or “lift

up”. The vinedresser does not cut away a living vine that has no fruit but lifts it up to where it can get more sun so it can bear fruit. It seems that there is a progression in a believer’s life of fruit-bearing. In this verse we have three stages. First, there is a time when there is no fruit. At that point, God can deal with this believer to cause them to produce some fruit, exposing them to good Bible teaching, drawing them closer through the conviction of the Holy Spirit to the realization that they need to stick close to Christ. This is the “lifting the branch to where it can get more sun” phase.

Secondly, that leads into the fruit stage, where the discipling efforts by the Holy Spirit are having an effect, and the believer is producing fruit. Third, there is the pruning stage, where the Lord actively and sometimes severely trims the branch so it will produce “more fruit”. The Greek word for pruning literally means “he cleans”. This recalls what Jesus said in John 13:10, that the one who has bathed needs only to wash his feet. This regular foot washing helps us remain in close fellowship with Christ. The pruning produces a more abundant harvest the next season.

A grapevine’s purpose is to produce fruit, that’s what it exists for. No plant produces fruit instantly; fruit is the result of a process. Believers are the same way. To get a good crop, the vinedresser has to cut back the vines and get rid of unproductive and dead branches. Grapevines are pruned way back for the first three years so they won’t bear fruit, because the fruit isn’t very good when they’re that young. As the plant ages the fruit gets better quality. Each year after the third year they are pruned in late winter so they would yield a larger harvest in August and September. If a vineyard wasn’t pruned, it was useless.

The pruning is what God does to us believers to make us more fit for service to Him. It can be a painful process, but very necessary, just as it is necessary to prune tree branches to make them grow better. As the vinedresser, God knows exactly the kind of pruning we need to produce good fruit. He allows pressure and pain in our lives to cause us to turn to Him so we’ll learn to depend on Him and be more like Jesus, which in turn produces fruit in us. We learn that the secret of fruitfulness is not by our own effort of trying to produce more grapes, but by remaining in the True Vine, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do that, He will transform us and prune us to produce “much fruit” (verse 5).

**John 15:3 You are clean already because of the word that I have spoken to you.**

This verse confirms that Jesus is not talking about salvation, but works here, because He is reminding the disciples that they are clean already, apart from any works that they have done. He had said this to them originally back in chapter 13 verse 10, but excluded Judas.

**John 15:4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.**

We cannot bear fruit for God unless we stick with Jesus. And we cannot grow or have peace unless we stay in Christ. This is why so many believers never grow and don’t have peace, because they do not stick with the vine, the root. That is where we get our nourishment. Remember that this is a relationship we’re talking about. When you become completely washed, trusting Christ for your salvation, that’s a done deal. Nothing can change that. But like any relationship, our relationship with Christ has to be worked at. For it to grow, it has to be nourished. That happens through frequent prayer, Bible study, worshiping God alone and with other believers, and serving others. I might mention here that these verses in this chapter are not just meant for the disciples, but for

all Christians, because these themes are repeated again in the epistles which are written to believers like you and I.

**John 15:5** "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me — and I in him — bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing.

Here's the fourth stage of fruit-bearing. After you have been pruned and produce "more fruit", then as we remain in Him, we will produce "much fruit".

**John 15:6** If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up; and such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and are burned up.

Like verse 2, there are at least four interpretations of this verse. One is the Arminian view that this is speaking of loss of salvation - that if you do not remain in Christ, you will lose your eternal reward and be thrown into hell.

Another view is that the "burned" branches refer to professing Christians who, like Judas, are not genuinely saved and therefore are judged. Like a dead branch, a person without Christ is spiritually dead and will be punished in eternal fire (Matt. 25:46). Judas was with Jesus; he seemed like a "branch." But he did not have God's life in him; his destiny was like that of a dead branch.

Then there is the view that this is a believer who will lose his reward, one who has not remained in Christ - the fire is not hell, but the fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ which will burn up the believer's worthless deeds. And then there are some who believe this refers to premature death of a disobedient Christian, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. They also give as examples believers who die because they fail to judge themselves before taking the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28-30), and the "sin that leads to death" (1 John 5:16).

There is also another possibility. Some teach that the original Greek in that last sentence implies that "men" are the ones that are gathering the branches and throwing them in the fire (and that is how the King James version reads). If that is correct, then since men do not throw people into hell, this is speaking of being judged by men. If we do not do good works for God, then men will judge us; they will believe we are not true Christians. In that case, like a dead branch, we've become worse than useless. Our witness to unbelievers is thrown out and dried up, like a dead branch. All people judge us by the fruit we produce.

**John 15:7-8** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. (8) My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples.

This is similar to what Jesus told the disciples in 14:13-14, only here, the condition for God doing things for us is that we remain in Christ - stick close to Him in relationship. We must be in harmony with Christ and staying in His words. Knowing His words will control and guide our prayers so He can answer them. So, if we do not remain in Him, our prayers will not be effective. In verse 8 you see that by bearing fruit we prove that we are Christ-followers. And this brings glory to God.

**John 15:9-10** "Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in my love. (10) If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

This is how we remain in Him, by obeying what He said. If you really love someone, you want to please them; make them happy. It's a natural expression of our love, and should be our attitude if we are truly believers.

**John 15:11 I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.**

Jesus gives us His joy, and it makes our joy perfect in Him. This is another reason why we must stick close to Jesus in relationship, because He will fill us with His joy and peace that nothing can take away. In addition to the joy that Jesus gives, there is also joy in obeying Him. It is the only thing that will give us a lasting sense of personal fulfillment. The purpose of obeying His teachings is so that we might have an abundant life! So Jesus is giving three gifts to His disciples here: His love, His commandments, and His joy.

**John 15:12-13 My commandment is this — to love one another just as I have loved you. (13) No one has greater love than this — that one lays down his life for his friends.**

All of Jesus' previous commands are summed up in this one commandment - to love each other as He loved us, and He showed us how to love each other, by dying on the cross for us. This kind of love is expressed by self-sacrifice, even up to the point of death.

**John 15:14-15 You are my friends if you do what I command you. (15) I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father.**

Jesus had previously called His disciples servants, but now called them friends. In our culture we think of the term friend in a much more casual way than Jesus and the disciples understood it. For them, friendship included loyalty, equality, the sharing of possessions, and sharing secrets, someone that we think of a "best" friend. Only two people before Jesus are called friends of God - Abraham and Moses. Now everyone who remains in Him is considered His friend!

Just as with other people in our lives, if they display a self-sacrificing love to you, then you would consider them a real friend, so Jesus considers us to be His friends if we display the same kind of love to Him as He gave to us. And if He can consider us to be His friends, then He will confide in us, and teach us so much more. We are slaves to Christ, but if that's all we were we would just be doing what our Master wanted without any knowledge of His purposes. But we are more than slaves, we are His friends if we sacrificially love each other, and He will reveal His mind to us.

**John 15:16-17 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. (17) This I command you — to love one another.**

If we are slaves that have been elevated to friends, we are friends who have been chosen by Jesus, not the other way around. Here again we see the fact that Christians are chosen by God, we do not choose Him, which Jesus has taught before in John 6:70 and 13:18, and Paul teaches in Romans 8:33, Ephesians 1:4, Colossians 3:12, and Peter in 1 Peter 2:4.

The fact that Jesus says that we are appointed to "go and bear fruit" tells us that fruit is more than just character qualities that we saw listed in Galatians, but also involves a mission which affects the



lives of others. And Jesus repeats His command to love one another, He is really emphasizing this above all else.

**John 15:18-19** "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me first. (19) If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you do not belong to the world, but I chose you out of the world, for this reason the world hates you.

The world truly does hate Jesus Christ. They don't acknowledge Him as Savior; they don't acknowledge Him as God. You can see what people think of Christ by how easily so many people use His name as a curse word. You'll normally only see Him in books, television, and movies in an irreverent or insulting way. And that hatred is growing. So if that's what the world thinks of Jesus, how do you expect them to treat you any better?

When you trust Christ, just like Him, you are not of this world any more. Our citizenship is in heaven. He has chosen us OUT of the world. We must still live in the world, but we do not belong to it, as Jesus will pray later in 17:15-16. And if the world loves you, that is an indication that you belong to it, not to Christ. John also speaks of this in 1 John 4:5-6 and James in James 4:4.

**John 15:20-21** Remember what I told you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they obeyed my word, they will obey yours too. (21) But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me.

We, as Christ's slaves, will be treated by the world the same way our Master was treated. We should not expect any different. Jesus is warning the disciples, and us, of the response by most to the message of the gospel that we spread.

***Four things the Disciples Should Remember in Persecution:***

The world hated Jesus first (verse 18)

The hatred of the world proves they (the disciples) are not of the world (verse 19)

They are sharing their Master's lot (verse 20)

They are not only suffering with Him but for His sake (verse 21)

**John 15:22** If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. But they no longer have any excuse for their sin.

Jesus is saying that if He had not come, then He would not have been rejected by the world, and so they would not be guilty of that. But since He did come and spoke the truth about who He was, now they are guilty of rejecting the only one who can save them. Rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ is the one ultimate sin for which there is no forgiveness, because in rejecting Jesus you've rejected the only cure for the terminal sickness you have. Jesus said something similar to the Pharisees in 9:41.

**John 15:23-24** The one who hates me hates my Father too. (24) If I had not performed among them the miraculous deeds that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen the deeds and have hated both me and my Father.

Jesus came to reveal to the world who the Father is, but they rejected Him, which means they're also guilty of the sin of rejecting the Father.

**John 15:25** Now this happened to fulfill the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without reason.'

Jesus is quoting from Psalm 35:19. Usually "the law" is just considered to be the Pentateuch (the first five books of the OT), but sometimes Jesus refers to other parts of the OT as the Law also. Jesus is speaking specifically about the Jews who rejected Him, but He was also speaking of the world, too, so this still applies today. The world cannot tolerate the message of the gospel.

**John 15:26-27** When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father — the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father — he will testify about me, (27) and you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Here again we have all three members of the Trinity in verse 26. The Greek sense of the phrase "the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father" is one of a continual going out. The Holy Spirit continually goes out from the Father. There's a constant and direct pipeline there between the two, and since the Holy Spirit continually indwells us as believers, there is a continual pipeline between us and the Father as well.

Verse 27 is interesting, it is a verse that we believers cannot claim, it is only about the disciples - they are the only ones that were with Jesus from the beginning. In a real sense the apostles were able to testify about Jesus like no one else ever has since, that is why we value the books and letters that they wrote so highly. The New Testament was written by two types of witnesses - the Holy Spirit, and the disciples. The human authors were inspired by the divine author. Jesus says here they will both testify about Him.

## Chapter 16 – Christ the Teacher

There is not really a break between these two chapters; Jesus continues His final instructions to the disciples as they're on their way to the Mount of Olives the night before He was crucified.

**John 16:1** "I have told you all these things so that you will not fall away.

Before the night is over the disciples will experience great fear and doubt because of what is happening to Jesus. They will face persecution on their own and even martyrdom in the future. Jesus is preparing the disciples for all that is coming so they will not fall away like Judas and many others did.

**John 16:2-3** They will put you out of the synagogue, yet a time is coming when the one who kills you will think he is offering service to God. (3) They will do these things because they have not known the Father or me.

Verse 2 is one of those only about the disciples. They would be excommunicated from the Jewish synagogues, and most of them would eventually be killed. To be expelled from the synagogue meant being cut off socially from family and friends. Some rabbis taught that God would not hear prayers unless they were said inside a synagogue. Church tradition holds that all of the disciples

were put to death before 70 A.D., except for John, who apparently lived into the 90's and died a natural death, although tradition says that attempts were made on his life as well.

The Jews who had rejected Christ thought the disciples were false prophets and so they were doing God's will by persecuting and killing them. Saul of Tarsus is a good example of one of these. He was one of the greatest persecutors of the early church, thinking he was doing great service for God, until he met Christ Himself on the road to Damascus. Paul found out that he didn't really know the Father at all.

**John 16:4-6** But I have told you these things so that when their time comes, you will remember that I told you about them. "I did not tell you these things from the beginning because I was with you. (5) But now I am going to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking me, 'Where are you going?' (6) Instead your hearts are filled with sadness because I have said these things to you.

The last time Jesus said He was going away, they asked Him where He was going, but this time they are so sad that they don't say anything. And He didn't tell them the bad things that were coming at the beginning, but now that He is about to leave He must tell them. The disciples have just been told that Jesus is leaving and they will be killed, so they are understandably depressed and confused.

**John 16:7** But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I am going away. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you.

Jesus is telling them that it is very important that He leaves so the Holy Spirit can come. In a way it would be even better with the Holy Spirit because He could be everywhere at all times, where Jesus in His human body could only be in one place at a time.

**John 16:8-11** And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment — (9) concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; (10) concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; (11) and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

“prove the world wrong” is also translated “convict”, or “expose” the world. The Latin derivative of “convict” is to “cause one to see”. So, when you are convicted of sin, you see your sin for what it is. The Holy Spirit will bring conviction (or exposure) of sin, conviction about what is righteous, and judgment upon the world because of this.

He (notice the masculine pronoun is used for the Holy Spirit) will convince the world of its sin so that at least some will repent. The world is exposed by its sin because they don't believe in Jesus - that's easy to understand, the vast majority of the world does not believe in Him. And that is the worst and most basic of sins - unbelief. His coming forced the world to take sides either for or against Him, there is no middle ground. So the Holy Spirit causes people to see their unbelief.

He will prove the world wrong about righteousness - the world does not know right and wrong without the Holy Spirit. You can see this in the world today - increasingly what the Bible teaches is right is considered wrong by the world, and vice-versa. The world thinks that being righteous is just obeying a set of do's and don'ts. But beginning with Christ's ascension and the Holy Spirit's arrival,



righteousness became the perfection of Christ, not something that can be attained by obeying a set of laws. He is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). So when unbelievers are convicted they see themselves in light of Christ. This is a much higher standard than good works.

He will prove the world wrong about judgment because Satan has been judged - everything that has happened with Jesus actually is a condemnation of Satan, and he is the current ruler of the world. The world follows Satan, not God. The judgment of Satan isn't immediate, but it is certain. The Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers today based on the judgment of Satan at the cross of Christ.

**John 16:12-13** "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. (13) But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever he hears, and will tell you what is to come.

Now Jesus turns from speaking about the Spirit's ministry to the world to His ministry to the believer. Jesus would continue to say the "many more things" to the disciples after He had returned to the Father, through the Holy Spirit. He will continue to teach them through the Spirit, even teaching them about things to come. This seems to be directed primarily to the disciples, and goes hand in hand with what the Lord told them in 14:26, that the Spirit would help them remember everything He said.

This is important, because it teaches us that we should consider the teachings of the disciples, in the books that they have written, to be on the same level as the teachings of Jesus in the gospels. They are the words of Christ Himself, because He has taught them everything through the Spirit. These verses are explicitly about the original apostles, including Paul, not about us, although the Holy Spirit does some of this for all believers today. The main way that the Holy Spirit guides believers into truth today is that He illumines the scriptures for us. He brings conviction into our hearts, but this is always through the revelation of the Word of God ((1 Corinthians 2:10-13).

**John 16:14-15** He will glorify me, because he will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you. (15) Everything that the Father has is mine; that is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you.

To sum these verses up about the Holy Spirit's ministry to believers,

1. He guides them into truth (verse 13). In the disciples case, He guided them into "all", or "complete" truth. So this implies the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the New Testament. For us believers today, the Holy Spirit guides us into truth using the Word of God (Psalm 25:5).
2. He showed them things to come (verse 13) – this applies to the disciples, because this doesn't mean eschatological events to come, but doctrines of the Church which were about to be revealed to the disciples (especially Paul) and written down in the Epistles. Again, for us today, we are shown these things to come by the Spirit through the Word.
3. He glorifies Christ, not Himself (verse 14) – The Holy Spirit does not glorify personalities, preachers, the virgin Mary, a church, or anything else. He glorifies Jesus Christ. If a person or group is glorifying someone or something other than Christ, it is not biblical. In this age and in the Kingdom Jesus receives the glory, which in turn only glorifies the Father. The Holy Spirit produces works in us that glorify Christ.

**John 16:16-18** In a little while you will see me no longer; again after a little while, you will see me." (17) Then some of his disciples said to one another, "What is the meaning of what he is saying, 'In a little while you will not see me; again after a little while, you will see me,' and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" (18) So they kept on repeating, "What is the meaning of what he says, 'In a little while'? We do not understand what he is talking about."

"After a little while you will see me" most likely refers to the appearances He makes to the disciples after His resurrection. Some think He is speaking spiritually here, that we would see Him through the Holy Spirit (which is certainly true), but there's no indication that Jesus is speaking of seeing Him spiritually here, He is obviously speaking of seeing Him physically.

**John 16:19-20** Jesus could see that they wanted to ask him about these things, so he said to them, "Are you asking each other about this — that I said, 'In a little while you will not see me; again after a little while, you will see me'? (20) I tell you the solemn truth, you will weep and wail, but the world will rejoice; you will be sad, but your sadness will turn into joy.

This could be speaking of the short term, when the world will rejoice that He is dead, and then when He rises from the dead the disciples will be happy again. But it could also mean the long term return of Christ. Christ brings hope to the world, those who trust Him will rejoice and their sadness will turn to joy.

**John 16:21-22** When a woman gives birth, she has distress because her time has come, but when her child is born, she no longer remembers the suffering because of her joy that a human being has been born into the world. (22) So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

Jesus compares what the disciples will be going through to a woman in childbirth. The disciples will go through real pain and anguish at the crucifixion of Jesus. But after Jesus has risen and appeared to them, they will forget the pain and anguish they suffered because they will be so full of joy at His reappearance. All of you ladies who have experienced childbirth can certainly get this analogy! This will be true of us as well in our lives. All of us go through pain and anguish at times in our lives. All of that will be washed away with the pure joy of seeing our Lord come back for us! This idea is also in Isaiah 66, which is a Messianic Kingdom passage. Isaiah 66:7 uses the same imagery about a woman giving birth, and verse 14 speaks of the rejuvenating joy we will feel at the coming of the Lord and the Kingdom.

**John 16:23-24** At that time you will ask me nothing. I tell you the solemn truth, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. (24) Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive it, so that your joy may be complete.

We now have a direct pipeline to God in prayer, but we don't take advantage of it! What a privilege we have! Sometimes it seems like it's the last thing we think of, when it should be the first. We need to pray unceasingly!

**John 16:25** "I have told you these things in obscure figures of speech; a time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in obscure figures, but will tell you plainly about the Father.

We're not sure about when the Lord is speaking of here, when He will tell the disciples plainly about the Father. He could be referring to when He will send the Holy Spirit to indwell them and He will teach them many more things, including more revelation about the Father.

**John 16:26-28** At that time you will ask in my name, and I do not say that I will ask the Father on your behalf. (27) For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. (28) I came from the Father and entered into the world, but in turn, I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

Because Jesus provides forgiveness of sins through His death and now intercedes for all believers at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 7:25), we have direct access to the Father. We do not need the intercession of a priest, because Jesus acts as our High Priest before God. After Jesus' ascension, the disciples would be able to pray directly to God the Father.

*"Why is our love so important to God? Why does He care so much whether or not we love Him? I think it's because He has always been a relational God. He was never a lonely, solitary figure somewhere out in eternity, all alone in the empty reaches of space. He has always been a triune God in intimate relationship - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in loving communion. And before time began God decided He wanted to include many others in that circle of love." Ruth Myers*

**John 16:29-30** His disciples said, "Look, now you are speaking plainly and not in obscure figures of speech! (30) Now we know that you know everything and do not need anyone to ask you anything. Because of this we believe that you have come from God."

This is pretty funny, because Jesus has said this to them plainly before, but it's like the light suddenly came on. They are finally starting to get it! However, we will see that they are not there yet, because of what happens after Jesus is arrested and crucified.

**John 16:31-32** Jesus replied, "Do you now believe? (32) Look, a time is coming — and has come — when you will be scattered, each one to his own home, and I will be left alone. Yet I am not alone, because my Father is with me.

Jesus predicts what's going to happen to the disciples after He is arrested - they will scatter and will return to their homes, because they will be fearful for their own lives. **You will be scattered** is a fulfillment of Zechariah's words which spoke of the Shepherd (the Messiah) being stricken, which caused the scattering of the sheep (Zechariah 13:7). In spite of the disciples' loyalty, faith, and love, they soon failed Him miserably. His prediction, "I will be left alone", was fulfilled by all His disciples deserting Him (Matthew 26:56) when He was arrested and by Peter's denial (John 18:17, 25-26).

**John 16:33** I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage — I have conquered the world."

There are three aspects of this trouble and suffering: (1) general trials that come just because we

live in a sinful world (Romans 8:35-36); (2) afflictions that God allows to come into our lives (2 Corinthians 12:7); and (3) chastisement that comes more directly from God (Hebrews 12:6).

Jesus ends His last conversation with the disciples before the cross with an encouragement and promise of peace. This is a wonderful promise not only to the disciples but also to us. Jesus tells us clearly that we will have trouble and suffering, but despite that we can have His peace and trust that He is in control, and will eventually deliver us, because He has conquered the world. The things we go through in this world are only temporary!

<b><i>When Life Hurts:</i></b>	
Remember that the Helper (the Holy Spirit) has come	16:7-15
Be assured that God will ultimately turn your sorrow into joy	16:20-22
Take advantage of your tremendous power	16:23-24
Claim the victorious peace of Christ in every battle	16:25-33