

## Abiding In Him – Part 7

Well welcome to Abiding in Him, Part VII, May 2, 2007. Remember, we came into the Kingdom through the doorway of salvation and looked at learning to walk by faith in a manner consistent with faith in Jesus Christ. We then came into Abiding in Him. We looked at principles to abide by, to come to the place of abiding, to behold the beauty of the Lord, the major revelation of that being the abiding love of God as part of His beauty, and now we're progressing onward to hopefully come and fulfill II Corinthians 5:14 – for the love of Christ controls us. So what follows when the love of Christ does indeed control us? Well the quick answer is fruit comes forth. So the primary purpose over the next couple of sessions is going to look at the fruit that flows out of this place called abiding, when we are abiding in the abiding love of God.

But I want to start by examining something that's related yet different and that is the gifts of the Spirit. I want to at least mention them in some fashion because I think people often confuse them and equate them when in reality the purpose of the one is to lead to the other; so they're not to be equated. The gifts of the Spirit, you well know, are listed in I Corinthians 12:8-10: faith, knowledge, wisdom, healing, other miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues. (Where does that come from?) I Corinthians 12:8-10. But I want to make a few summary points that are evident to you about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how we're to view them in the Kingdom of God. The very Word tells you that they are gifts from God; and when something is a gift from God, it says at least three things intrinsically. One—they come only from God. Secondly—they cannot be earned by man. And thirdly—natural man cannot understand them for they are not bound by natural law and not bound by human logic.

Secondly, gifts of the Spirit are not only for the one who receives the gift. I Corinthians 12:7 – But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For example, I'm not aware of any person in Scripture who had the gift of healing (as a gift of the Holy Spirit) healing himself by the laying on of his own hands. The healing gift was for the common good for other people. Next, the gifts all fit together to make a properly functioning whole: w-h-o-l-e. I Corinthians 12:12 – For even as the body is one and yet has many members and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body; so also is Christ. And I Corinthians 12:27 – Now you are Christ's body and individually members of it. In other words, the testimony of Jesus Christ is only fully present and fully functioning when all of the gifts are present and functioning in us, the members of His body. The gifts are given for a purpose. We are to desire all of the gifts. We're to even more earnestly desire the greater gift—namely, prophecy. But we always need to remind ourselves we are not pursuing the gifts as our object. They are a transition. Well, why is that? I Corinthians 12:31 – And I show you a still more excellent way. This is after listing all of the gifts of the Spirit, Paul writes, I show you a more excellent way. Well, what is that more excellent way? If not the gifts, what are we pursuing? I Corinthians 14:1 – Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophecy.

So we have a three-fold stratification, if you will. We have the gifts, but out of the gifts we have one that we're told to desire even more than the other gifts and that is prophecy; but in the final

analysis, we're not pursuing gifts (we desire gifts); but we are pursuing love. That's because we are pursuing God and God is love. Thus, love is the object of the spiritual gifts; and in fact the object of all spiritual pursuit. The goal is always greater than the method used to reach that goal. So for instance, a simple analogy in a football game, the goal is to score a touchdown. You may have a long pass, a series of short passes, you may have a pass with an accompanying lateral, you may have a running game for short yardage gaining first downs consistently, or you may have long break-away runs. But the goal is to cross the goal line and it's not critical as to which method you use so long as you cross the goal line. And that's how these gifts, in a way, can be viewed. They're all to be functional and important, but they're not the goal, they're not the object. The object is to become like Jesus Christ and He is love. The greater, the goal, is always greater than the method used to reach the goal. So if you want to go to Iowa City, that's your goal and it's not critically important as to whether you walk, or drive, or fly, or go by train or what. The method that you get there is not as important as the goal being fulfilled. So the goal is to become one with God through Jesus Christ. The goal is to represent His likeness on planet Earth which is love because He is love. That helps us understand even I Corinthians 13:13 – But now abide faith, hope, love; these three, but the greatest of these is love. We're told that without faith you can't even please God; and so often we focus on faith as the end point. But faith is a method to bring us to love. Hope: the optimistic expectation. Faith, according to Hebrews 11:1, the assurance of what we hope for. But love: Galatians 5:6 – Faith works through love.

So hope, when we receive assurance, we now have faith, but that faith is to work through love. So faith is a gift; love is a fruit and the greatest of these is love. I go through this sequence so that we're sure not to equate the two or think that the two are synonyms—namely gifts of the Spirit and fruit of the Spirit. The one is to lead to the other. Now we know that. I Corinthians 13:1-3 (speaks it in an unmistakable form, it hammers it home) – If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. I Corinthians 13:8-10 – Love never fails. But if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away; for we know in part and we prophecy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. Recall I Corinthians 12:7 – The gifts are for the common good. That's because each gift is to help us come into complete love. The common good is that we love one another. John 17:23 says – that they may be perfected in unity. Well, what is this perfection in unity? Why do I keep accentuating oneness as the goal? Colossians 3:14 – and beyond all these things, put on love which is the perfect bond of unity. Not union; you've heard the old saying that I've used before. You can take two tomcats and tie their tails together. They are in union; but they are definitely not in unity. And that would describe many of our relationships and sadly, even many of our churches. So the common good is the purpose of the gifts; this common good is love which is perfection in unity. The common good is not only for the church's well being; it is, in fact, our only meaningful testimony to the world. John 17:23 continues – that they may be perfected in unity that the world may know. Well, that the world may know what? When we, as Christians, are perfected in love, the perfect bond of unity, what will the world know? It will know that Thou, the Father, didst send Me, the Son and didst love them, the world even as Thou didst love Me, the Son. That's the testimony to the world that God not only is, but He is love and He, in fact, loves them as He loves Himself—as the Father in the Trinity loves the Son in the Trinity.

So the flow sheet, we'll go through. We are saved by grace through faith. We enter the doorway of salvation into the Kingdom. Then we walk by faith and to our faith we add knowledge. We learn His ways which are His principles. We apply His principles, which in fact, are principles to abide by. Not only to follow meaning to abide by, but to bring us into the place of abiding in Him. And while abiding in Him, we behold His beauty. We behold His love as the primary manifestation of His beauty; we behold the gifts that flow out of His love for us. The primary gift is that of the Holy Spirit. God gives us God! What gift can you desire beyond that one? Luke 11:13 – if you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? He gives us God, Himself. Then the Holy Spirit, thereafter, gives us gifts; the purpose of the gifts is for the common good; that common good is that we love one another; and that love is the perfect bond of unity. And that love that we have for one another in the church is our testimony to the world that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and loves them too. That's part of the summing up of all things in Christ.

So listen to me now as a practical application. Those who seek unity will always fail. We are to pursue love which is the perfect bond of unity. When we grow in love of God and others, unity will occur without our even thinking about it. Pursue love, and unity occurs. Pursue unity, and a system of man occurs. That is more focused on the appearance of unity than unity itself; because in the absence of love, there will never be unity. Can you now see...yes, Jason. (Question for Dr. Buddy: When you talk about unity like this, you've always talked about the passion for oneness. The passion is the love. Is that right?) Love is a passion for oneness and we'll follow through with some thoughts about that in a moment. But I hope you can see why I spoke of the gifts before speaking of the fruit; because the gifts are not the goal. They exist only to take us to the goal, which is love. The gifts exist to take us to love which manifests as fruit including unity. Well, why do I state this emphatically? Because we often in the church tend to take the gift and make it the goal. Listen to as I go through the following list. The global body of Christ has a faith movement, but not a love movement, a charismatic movement, but not a love movement, a prosperity movement, but not a love movement, a prophetic movement, but not a love movement, a denominational movement, but not a love movement, a healing movement, but not a love movement, a counseling movement, but not a love movement, a tongues movement, but not a love movement, a forerunner movement, but not a love movement, a unity movement, but not a love movement, a seeker friendly movement, but not a love movement, a political movement, but not a love movement. Can you see why I speak of the gifts which are to take us to the goal which is love which then manifests as fruit including unity?

So now that we understand the gifts, let's go back to the real goal which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit which are the fruits of abiding in Him. We mentioned the first fruit which is love. The fruits are listed in Galatians 5:22-23 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Now notice even as I speak, which is consistent with how most speak, we tend to call them fruits in the plural. Paul calls them fruit in the singular and I'll make a distinction. We can distinguish them but we can't separate them. So we use the plural since we can distinguish them. Paul knows that they can be distinguished but not separated, so he uses the singular – fruit. He also knows that at a deeper level, that although they can be distinguished, they all flow out and manifest out of love. That's why we

have to understand love as the first fruit, and in one way of thinking and expressing it, the only fruit. The other fruits are in reality only what love is and how love behaves and what love does. They're all manifestations of love. We do not have the other fruits such as joy and peace and so on and then lead to love. We love and then love is exhibited as the other fruits. Scripture tells us that we are to desire gifts, but pursue love to bear fruit to testify of God. So we must understand love to understand God, His Kingdom, how it's to function and how all other fruit is to manifest.

So the pathway of progression, I'll review again. God is. That's why we started with Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. If you don't walk every moment in the light of that, you will never obey His commandments that I'm describing in the New Testament. You'll not regard Him as other than; and if you don't regard Him as other than, you'll continue to substitute your thoughts for His, indirectly and nonverbally proclaiming that your thoughts are higher than His. If you really thought His were higher, you'd be clinging to His and not your own, you see. So God is; He not only is, He is love – that's I John 4:8. Love is a passion for oneness – John 17:22. We know love by beholding His beauty and we behold His beauty by abiding in Him – Psalm 27:4. We abide in Him by keeping His commandments—principles to abide by – John 15:10. When we abide in Him, we behold His abiding love and His love is so abiding that nothing can separate us from it – Romans 8:38-39. Where no created thing can separate us from the love of the only uncreated thing, which is the God of Genesis 1:1. We know His love for us. I John 3:16 – that's how we know love that He laid down His life for us. And the magnitude of your revelation of the love of God is limited by the magnitude of your revelation about the cross of Christ and what He endured on that cross including the forsakenness by the Father. That's why we talked about the cross before we really talked about love because you'll know love by looking at the cross in all its fullness. Then I John 4:16 (knowing isn't enough) – we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. You can memorize the Bible including all the Scriptures on love and still remain in self worship; but when you know and you believe the love that God has for you, your life will change and fruit will manifest. I John 4:19 (we cannot conjure up love) – We love Him because He first loved us. And if you don't receive the revelation of the love of God, particularly as revealed through the cross of Christ, you will never truly love. I John 3:2 tells us – we will become like Him by beholding Him (not by trying to conjure something up through the works of the flesh). It says we shall be like Him—critical point, when and how will we be like Him? because we shall see Him just as He is.

So our pursuit is to come ever more closely to see the face of God as revealed through Jesus Christ and particularly His love as exhibited on the cross. And then we shall be transformed into His likeness the more we come to see Him as He is. In becoming like Him, we will love like He loves; because when you know His love, you will be transformed into love. And that will include the knowledge of His love for you and then the knowledge of His love for others. That's when you'll fulfill John 17:23 and you receive the revelation that He loves me as much as He loves Himself; He loves my neighbor as much as He loves Himself and you will then begin to love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. We went through that last time. That's when you'll fulfill the progression and completion of the great commandment. Matthew 22: verses 36 and 39 – Love Him and love them as you love yourself...simply stated.

Next poster. This is simply to remind us that love is a passion for oneness. The whole Bible is about that. God tells the children of Israel I set you apart to reveal Me to planet Earth and you can't do that except you reveal My character onto planet Earth. When He says abide in Him, we don't do that when we try to bring our baggage which is not like Him into Him expecting His approval. The whole point of the Bible from beginning to end is that we grow into the likeness of God to reveal Him on planet Earth. That's why we're earthen vessels, but we're full of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and that's what we release just as a flower releases its fragrance. That's how we're to end up. So God's passion is that no part of ourselves remain outside of Himself. That's why He tells us to capture every thought; because every thought that's not like Him that we tolerate will lead to more thoughts not like Him that we tolerate because tomorrow will be like today, only more so. He can't fulfill His love for us while we are tolerating a garden full of weeds that don't represent Him. But He also has a passion to be one with righteousness, remember? Not just with us, but also with righteousness. That's part of His jealousy. He is jealous because He doesn't want any part of ourselves to remain outside of Himself because that fails to fulfill His love; it fails to fulfill our best outcome and it fails to bear witness of Him onto planet Earth.

Then since we've progressed to know His love and receive the revelation of that and begin to function in that reality, we begin to love others including our enemies. And that becomes our testimony to the world. Anybody can have a certain degree of desire for the greater good for their friends; even the lost do that. But when we have a desire for their greater good, which is to come into oneness with God for our enemies, now we're revealing the heart of Christ. How do we know? Because He died for us when we were his enemies, you see. And we express that love, then by adopting attitudes and behaviors that most clearly manifest, reveal, and fulfill the love that God has for them. So we have two choices when somebody crosses us or persecutes us. We can reveal our self-centered desire for anger, unforgiveness and revenge; or we can reveal the glory, the character of God on planet Earth by dying to the need for revenge so as to exhibit the love that God has for them. That's why the gold standard of all spiritual pursuit is whatever brings them and me closer, faster into oneness with God; because that's what love desires. God is love. We cannot come into oneness with God, except we abide in Him, abide in the revelation of His abiding love, be transformed by that abiding love of God and then manifest that abiding love of God onto planet Earth.

Now there are certain associated fundamental ramifications of love. First, it has to include a passion to be one with truth. That's why you have to define truth. What is truth? Truth is what God is and how God views everything else. We do not have a love for God, a passion to be one with God unless we have a passion to be one with truth which is how He views reality. That's why I Corinthians 13 says love rejoices with the truth; because love is a passion for oneness. And love cannot manifest its passion for oneness with untruth; because God is truth, you see. So love cannot rejoice with untruth; love can only rejoice with truth. So though I speak of love, love and truth are yoked and inextricably bound together to where if you love God, you will have a passion to be one with how He views reality, which is what truth is.

We're not to be unequally yoked – II Corinthians 6:14. Why? Because Scripture tells us to become one with two things: Become one with God and become one with our spouses. We cannot become one with two things that are pulling in opposite directions simultaneously. The

only way that I can become one with God and become one with my spouse, is for my spouse to simultaneously be on a pathway of becoming one with my God. That's why we're not to be unequally yoked.

Love works. II Thessalonians 3:10-12 – If anyone will not work, neither let him eat. We command and exhort you in Christ to work and to eat their own bread. So we balance two points: We help people and we fulfill their needs when they're in need. But that's never to excuse parasitism. Paul understood, based on how God views reality, that work is an expression of love. Labor is coined love; we take love and it labors; the labor is then recompensed. So labor is coined love and money is coined labor. So when we have the coin in our pocket to meet needs, it begins with love, expressed as labor which receives recompense; and the money then is used to meet the needs. So work is a provision of God and a fulfillment of love to meet your own needs, your family's needs, your neighbor's needs, and the needs of evangelism and support of the church. Work is love made visible. Parasitism is selfishness made visible.

Also our love of God is always manifest as death to the old self. We have a passion to be one with God and our flesh doesn't. Our flesh is hostile toward God. Romans 8:7 – the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God for it does not subject itself to the law of God for it is not even able to do so. So if you're functioning in the love of God, you will not be functioning in the flesh.

Next poster and we'll end with this poster today. It's what I call the prism of love based on I Corinthians 13:4-7. Now I've rearranged these in some way to help me better understand it. Certain of these things are stated in the positive and certain are stated in the negative. The positive represent the new creation self in the likeness of God; because Ephesians 4:24 tells us to put on the new self which has been created in righteousness, truth, and holiness in the image of God. That's what the new creation is and that's what we're to put on. Others are stated in the negative. That is to say they are not present when love is present. They're not present because they flow out of the old creation which is based on self, not based on Jesus. These are two sides of the same coin. Where the love of God is functioning, the self nature cannot be functioning; because that old self nature is hostile toward God. Where the self in its self-centeredness and self determination is functioning, the love of God cannot be functioning. At every moment, it is either/or like a flip switch. I am either functioning in the love of Jesus Christ, revealing His character and His passion for oneness with all of you at this moment; or I'm functioning in the flesh nature, standing up and taking pride that I can speak before men, taking pride that people listen to what I have to say, you see. So right now I have a flip switch inside me. It's called the will, that which chooses. I will either worship Jesus Christ by decreasing that He increases, that you see Him through the revealing of His word, that you don't see me as a speaker, seeking no praise, desiring no attention, denying self, walking in humility before my God, rejecting pride which hungers for the praise of man and the attention and so on, you see. And it's that way with every single thought that we have every moment of our lives. That's why we're admonished to capture every thought; because every thought is either worshipping Jesus Christ as the revelation of God Himself or worshipping self. It's one or the other.

Now that right column—all of them are aspects of ungodliness. That is to say they're the opposite of love. That's why there are things that we're commanded not to be, because love is

not them. God is not them. They preclude oneness with God. They represent the baggage of the flesh. And that baggage is to be checked at the gate of the Kingdom of God. All of them flow out of pride and God resists the proud. Oneness cannot occur when we cling to that which God resists and God does resist self-worship for that steals the glory of God and we were created for His glory, not our own. So when we look at that old creation self and we read about love in I Corinthians 13:4-7, it tells us love does not act unbecomingly, love does not seek its own, love is not easily provoked, love does not take into account a wrong suffered, and love rejoices in truth and rejoices in righteousness—not in untruth and not in unrighteousness, you see. So the very explanation that the Bible gives about what love is and what it isn't tells us what we are to become and what we are to reject. But nothing will occur except we apply the principles by which we are to abide, to come into abiding, to behold the beauty of the Lord, specifically the beauty of His love that nothing can separate us from, walk in the light of the revelation that God has an absolute passion to be one with me to the degree that He's numbered every hair on my head, that He loves my neighbor to that same degree, that He is right now in Heaven preparing a place for me, specifically for me, Buddy Nichols, not a generic human being, not the generic human race, but a place for me so that I may be with Him where He is for all eternity future. And when that revelation wells up, that has to change your behavior. That has to change your attitude. That has to lead you to want this person to become one with Him so that they can have the same experience for eternity future, you see. And that's when love is manifest as forgiveness, not anger and unforgiveness and so on and so on. And love then is manifest as the fruits of the Spirit which we'll pick up and go into next time. So thank you for listening.