



## Week 1 - UP

*The main Bible passage we will be going through this week is John 15:1-17. I would encourage you to read it every day this week. Each day we will highlight a portion of this passage and also bring in some other passages from the Bible to further look at a component of our UP relationship with God. Each day will also include some background on what was happening during the time that the scripture is talking about, some reflection or discussion questions, and a prayer direction to guide you as you pray. Each day, one of our pastors will be doing a short podcast giving their reflection and some application. You can find it at [www.iheardsomethingcooltoday.com](http://www.iheardsomethingcooltoday.com).*

*Enjoy the Journey*

### Day 1 – Walking Daily

From the Bible: John 15:1-17 (Focus on verse 7); John 1:35-39, 43; John 21:19

Background: Jesus trained 12 men to continue on his mission to change the world. He did this by living with them for 3 years; they went where he went, watched what he did, and were given opportunities to do what he had modeled for them. He would spend time teaching them, correcting them, challenging them and inspiring them. The result was 12 revolutionary men who made great sacrifices but were catalysts for a movement of about 150 people to become what we know as Christianity. We are here because of these 12 men and the many millions that have come after them. What was the secret to their success?

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- John 1:35-39 and 43 record Jesus recruiting some of his 12 disciples; what was his invitation?
- John 21:19 records some of Jesus' last words to one of his 12 named Peter; what was his instruction?
- John 15:7 is an if/then clause. There are two requirements listed of us; what are they?
- List your spiritual practices to spend time with God. Would you say that they would characterize you as daily walking with God?
- What is it that you enjoy doing? How could you invite Jesus to come along with you as you do that (this does not replace reading the Bible and praying, but it allows Jesus access to you continually, not just during those times you set aside)?

Prayer Direction: Start every day off this week acknowledging God as you get up and invite him to walk with you as you go through your day. Periodically as you begin something new in your day, invite him to join in and listen for his guidance in that activity. Don't forget that God is Holy and does not want to be a part of sin.

### Day 2 – Complete Dependence

From the Bible: John 15:1-17 (Focus on verses 4-6); John 4:27-34; John 5:19-20

Background: A common misconception about Christianity is that the call to be like Jesus is impossible and that we are set up for failure. Jesus is God, so doing what he did must have come naturally and easy for him. This

is not true; Philippians 2:7 tells us that Jesus made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Now Jesus did not have a sinful past to deal with, but he did face the same, very real temptations that we face. His success was because of what we read today. Jesus grasped and modeled walking with God like we talked about yesterday and as he was walking, he was in tune to what the Father was doing and joined in. In John 4:27-34, Jesus had just had a conversation with a Samaritan woman (a big no-no for Jewish man). She was transformed by her interaction with Jesus and went to go tell people in her town and bring them to Jesus. The disciples return from a food run, are surprised that he is talking to this woman, but more surprised by him talking about some other food. Jesus often used the analogy of food and water to his relationship and dependence on the Father. In John 5:19-20 he tells us that he could do nothing on his own, only what he sees the Father doing. In John 15:4-6 he tells us the same is true for us. We can do nothing on our own, but we can do great things (bear much fruit) if we are in tune to him and depend on him.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- What does Jesus say his food is in John 4:27-34? How long do you go without eating actual food? How long do you often go without the food Jesus depended on?
- Are there any times in your life that you tried to do good things on your own without the leading of God? What was the result?
- If God did not exist and the Holy Spirit did not live inside of you, what things in your life would be impossible to continue because you do them in dependence of him?

Prayer Direction: In your prayer time today, start by repenting of any areas of your life that you are not living in dependence on God. Ask Him to tune your ears in even more to hear his voice clearly and focus your eyes so that you can better see where he is working and how you can get on board with what he is doing.

## **Day 3 – Obedience**

From the Bible: John 15:1-17 (Focus on verses 9-14); Luke 4:1-13; John 14:23-24

Background: Even before Jesus had selected his 12 disciples, taught his first lesson or did his first miracle to launch his 3-year ministry, he spent 40 days in the wilderness with God and was tempted in 3 ways. By twisting the Scriptures, Satan tempted Jesus to be self-sufficient (make his own food), worship someone other than God and use God for his own purpose. If Jesus would have fallen to any of these temptations it would have disqualified him from his mission. The implications are massive. Jesus understood the importance of obedience and lived it out on earth. In the John 14 and 15 passages Jesus connects obedience to love - when we love God, we obey him and when we do not obey him, it shows that we do not love Him. He modeled obedience for us and demands it from us.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- Knowing that God connects love with obedience, based on your life right now, how much do you love God (remember – delayed obedience is still disobedience)?
- What areas are hardest for you to be obedient in? Why?
- How is that disobedience in your life hurting you, those around you and your witness for Jesus?

Prayer Direction: Begin your prayer time by repenting of all disobedience you know exists in your life and commit to God to turn from it. Also ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any hidden disobedience in your life – any attitude, prejudice, wrong relationship or anything else that is contrary to God and his expectations.

## **Day 4 – Resting in God**

From the Bible: John 15:1-17 (Focus on verses 1 & 2); Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 1:35-39; Mark 6:30-32

Background: We are human beings, not human doings. While that is a corny statement, it packs a lot of truth, especially in our busy culture. Jesus tells us that we are to be pruned so that we can be more productive. The law of diminishing return tells us that continually working more and harder doesn't get us more product. As we fatigue, our productivity goes down. This is especially true in our life with Christ, because when I work harder and longer it will probably be that God is not in some of the work and I am doing it on my own power (Day 2 – dependence). Jesus modeled in Mark 1:35-39 that he needed to get away with the Father to rest and be renewed by him. He then took his disciples away in Mark 6:30-32. In Matthew 11:28-30 he offers us rest. In verse 29 he tells us to take his yoke upon us, not our own. His yoke is easy and the burden is light. Pruning happens when we swing the pendulum away from working and being fruitful for a time to rest and be pruned and renewed by God.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- If your life had a gas gauge, where would the needle be pointing?
- Reflect on this last month; were you more focused on being with God or doing things for God? Why? What has been the result?
- What are the ways that you find rest in God?
- Do you have times in your days, weeks, months and years for resting in God and being pruned?

Prayer Direction: Take some moments to rest in God. Imagine yourself leaning back against him and just be with him. I know it is cold outside, but take a walk through a park or in some woods or even through your neighborhood and reflect on God and his creation and let him speak to you about your current state. Schedule time weekly for resting with God. If you don't do that, the calendar might fill up with other less important stuff.

## **Day 5 – Being Fruitful**

From the Bible: John 15:1-17 (Focus on verses 5, 8 and 16); Galatians 5:22-23; John 14:12-14

Background: Some of the most radical words spoken by Jesus are recorded in John 14:12-14. Those who have faith in Jesus can do what he did while he was on earth and even greater things. John 15:1-17 is littered with the expectation that we will be fruitful in our relationship with God. I think many times we automatically think that means we will lead people to Christ. That is part of it, but not all of it. The fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 illustrates what we are to be. By being spirit-filled, this fruit will naturally come out of us and we will continually grow in this list and our lives will be characterized by it. In being that type of person, we will also be productive for the kingdom, making a difference in other people's lives, even having God do miraculous things through us like he did with Jesus.

### Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- Would you describe your life as fruitful? Why or why not?
- How can your life be more fruitful (remember the focus is on being before doing)?
- Is there a season in your past that you were more fruitful? What was going on in that time that led to being more fruitful?

Prayer Direction: Pray through the list of the fruit of the Spirit and ask God to plant and grow them in your life. Make a list of the people far from God that you deeply care about and begin to pray daily for them and offer yourself to God to be used in bringing them to Him. Ask God to reveal to you which of the problems in the world (hunger, AIDS, homelessness, etc.) burdens you the greatest and pray for its resolution and offer yourself to God to be used in righting this wrong.