

# The Source of Love

*Love the Way Jesus Taught It*

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**Bible Text:** John 15:1-17

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I'd like to begin with a question: has there ever been a person in your life that you found challenging to love? Maybe you had an actual neighbor who was difficult to deal with from time to time. Maybe you have a boss, a co-worker, a person at school that you just find difficult to love. In fact, there are even times when you were like, "Alright. I'm gonna love 'em today. Today's the day I'm gonna love 'em." And at the end of the day you say, "Nope, didn't happen. I tried. I failed. Didn't love 'em." Well, I think if we're being honest we'd have to say that we all have some people in our lives that we find difficult to love.

Pastor Viars began our year by helping us think through the story of the Good Samaritan and we love teaching the story of the Good Samaritan but, boy, we sure hate living it, huh? I mean, after all, Jesus said there is no possible way for us to minimize or limit the call to genuinely love others as ourselves and that's why our annual theme this year is "Loving Our Neighbors." I want to zero in just a little bit more here and I want you to picture in your mind, not the person you have the hardest time loving, but the person that you have the easiest time loving. So, maybe this is a spouse, maybe it's a child, maybe a parent, a grandparent, a really close friend. Alright, have you got that person in mind now? Have you ever found it difficult to love them? Maybe they were just a little bit snarky with you? Maybe they were misbehaving? Maybe they were doing something that was embarrassing to you? And in that moment, you just found it really hard, "Yes, I love you in the big picture. No, I don't love you right now," kind of thing. I think if we're being honest, we'd have to say that we find it difficult to love in certain moments but maybe, just maybe, part of the difficulty lies not so much with the other person but with the source of our love.

With that in mind, I'd like you to turn in your Bibles to John 15. As you're turning there, we are continuing our study through John 13-17 normally called the Upper Room discourse and as Pastor Viars has led us in this series, we have seen that this all about loving the way Jesus taught it. So far in our series, we have seen the position of love: that was Jesus' humility was on display as he was washing his disciples' feet. We've seen the loyalty of love: that is Jesus' loyalty to his disciples as seen in sharp contrast with the betrayal of Judas. We've seen the power of love: where Jesus explains that love is actually an identifying feature of his children. We've seen the preparation of love: that is

where Jesus' love was displayed not only in the fact that he is going to the cross soon but also in the reality that he is preparing a place for those who are his disciples. Then we saw last week, the provision of love: that is Jesus' love shown in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now we turn our attention to John 15 and that is the source of love. Please follow along as I read the word of the Lord. John 15, beginning in verse 1, Jesus says,

“1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

“12 This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. 17 This I command you, that you love one another.”

Some passages in the Bible flow together like a meal where everything is separate: you have the nice juicy steak, you have this healthy clump of asparagus, you have a loaded baked potato and you enjoy each element one at a time. Then there are some Bible passages that are more like awesome soup where everything is just mixed together and every delicious bite contains just a little bit of all of it. Well, John 15 is kind of like the soup. We can't say that point 1 is verses 1-4 and then point 2 is verses 5-8 and so on, instead there are themes that are running through this section, themes that we need to think about and themes that we need to appropriate.

Let's consider three themes from John 15:1-17 that explain God's intentions for those following his Son. The first one is fairly obvious. I mean, you read the passage and you walk away saying, "Alright, I got the main point. Here's what it is: it is to remain in the true source of love." Remain in the true source of love. Verse 1 said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." And then verse 5 says, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do," the text says, "nothing." So, the word opens with a very simple statement: in order to accomplish anything of spiritual value, you have to abide, you have to remain in the true source of love. There aren't any other options, there are no shortcuts, there are no bypasses. This is a requirement for every follower of Jesus to abide in him.

That begs the question: what does it mean to abide? Or to remain? I'd like to suggest that the answer is a little simpler than we think. I'd like to use the word for this as "stay." Normally we think of the word "stay" and we think of a dog and I remember a couple of years ago I was not having a very lucid moment and I agreed to a weekend trial period for a dog. In fact, I would say that was a rather foolish moment I had and to make it worse, here's how I was thinking, I thought, "You know, this is going to be great. The dog's going to bark all night. It's not going to be house-trained and by the weekend, everybody in the family is going to be absolutely convinced that having a dog is a foolish idea." Well, it turns out that that weekend the dog was like perfect and the exact opposite occurred. They were absolutely convinced that our lives would be enhanced and enriched by a dog and if I gave the dog back, I mean, I was going to be penned up right next to Adolf Hitler. That's what was at stake here. My reputation was going from really high to in the tank in five seconds. So we kept the dog.

As nice as our dog is, there is one concept our dog has absolutely no clue about and it's "stay." You see, the spastic nature of our dog fits pretty well with the spastic nature of our family. But "stay" is not in his vocabulary and yet "stay" is a perfect word for abiding. Not physically, mind you, but spiritually. Stay. Stay in the true source of love. Have your mind stay right there. Practically speaking, it looks like this: constantly remembering and giving thanks for the expressions of love by Christ. Since we began this series in John 13, the cross has cast a huge shadow on all the words and the events described here. We are merely hours from Jesus' arrest, his betrayal, where he will be publicly be displayed as a beaten, bruised and forsaken Jesus who takes on the wrath of God as an expression of love.

A few verses in John 15 highlight this. Verse 12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." You see, the category here is that Jesus says, "Look disciples, I'm calling you my friends because I've made myself known to you. I have disclosed to you all that the Father has given to me and so you are my friends and now here's what's happening: I am going to lay down my life for you." His love was on display that he was literally going to die for them.

So, here's how I stay, here's how I remain, here's how I abide: I constantly remember the love of Jesus at the cross. You see, when you're not treated very well or as well as you'd like, now your mind needs to stay. Right there in that moment. Not just in the big picture but in that moment right there you have to stay. You have to stay fixed on the love of Jesus exhibited at the cross. Right there. That's the opportunity. When you're by yourself, when you're just thinking, "Man, I've got some things to do," and your mind just reflects on some of the annoying or challenging things that you have experienced, instead of letting your mind stay there, it has to go somewhere else and that is back to the love of Christ at the cross.

I'd like to unpack a little bit of the passage that Pastor Dustin read earlier this morning, Romans 8. If you could just flip over there, I want to highlight a few of the truths from that text because it's going to remind us, again, what it looks like to stay. So, the first application of stay or abiding or remaining is that I am dwelling on and thinking about the ways in which Jesus died for me on the cross. Now, here's a second set of truths I can reflect on: Romans 8:31, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" You see, he makes a logical progression here. He says, "Look, if Jesus was not withheld from us, if God the Father had not given him then will he not also with him freely give us all things?" The answer to that question is? Yes. You see, as we abide, as we remain, as we stay fixed on the love of God in Christ at the cross, it takes us to another place and that is that I have been freely given all things in Jesus. So, what do I need? Well, I don't need anything. I don't need anything because I have been given everything that I need in Christ.

The text goes on, verse 33, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." You see, there are some questions in life that are like really more important than other questions. Like: who won the basketball games like night may be of a little importance but who gets to justify and who gets to condemn, that's a really important question and that one gets answered only by God. Who is the one who justifies? Who is the one who condemns? Jesus is the one who does both and so here's what I could think: Jesus' words deal with the most important questions. Jesus' words deal with the most important questions. That's something I can abide in. That's something I can remain in. That's a place where I can let my mind stay.

The text goes on one more verse, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" You see, the two questions that are asked here, the first one is a who question: so who can do that? Can the person who is really challenging to love do that? Can the person who is just being challenging right now, can they do it? And the answer is absolutely not. There is not a who that can ever separate a genuine believer from the love of God in Christ. Then the text goes on to add a series of whats: tribulation, persecution, peril, nakedness, sword. And the answer to that is no. No. So here's where my mind can stay: it can stay in the

reality that I am secure in the love of God in Christ. Yes, there may be some insecurities, things out here but where can my mind stay? It can stay in the reality that I am secure in my relationship with Christ. It can stay right there.

You see, these truths are a stabilizing force in the midst of circumstances that I am in whether they be calm or whether they be chaotic. We can broaden this out a little bit. In fact, you see how this progression follows: I stay, I remain, thinking about the love of God in Christ and then that draws me to a text like Romans 8 which reminds me that I need nothing because I have everything in Christ. It reminds me that Jesus' words deal with the most important questions. And reminds me that I am secure in the love of God in Christ. Then that can cause me to begin to dwell on some broader biblical themes.

Themes like: I am redeemed instead of being in the slave market of sin; I am adopted instead of being an orphan; I am a friend instead of an enemy; I am reconciled instead of separated; I am free instead of bound; I am prayed for instead of ignored; I am in his presence instead of being alone; I am loved instead of hated; I am regenerated instead of dead; I am rescued from wrath rather than being the recipient of it.

You see friends, that's where our minds can stay. That's where our thoughts can dwell. And they don't have to dwell and they don't have to be in all of the chaos that the world has. They can be right here, staying in his love. In a very helpful book, one that has been mentioned many times by Pastor Viars is called "The Gospel Primer." In it, he unpacks how this kind of thinking can help us deal with some other challenges so we're talking right now about the challenge of loving people who are either not being loving in the moment or people who are just challenging to love in general. "The Gospel Primer" broadens that just a little bit and asks a question like this: how does staying, how does abiding, how does remaining help you with guilt in your past? And here's the answer: "As long as I am stricken with guilt of my sins, I will be captive to them and I will find myself recommitting the very sins about which I feel most guilty." You see the progression? You see, I start with guilt, guilt leads to captivity and captivity leads to recommitting of those same sins which leads to guilt squared.

"The gospel on the other hand, slays sin at its root point and thereby nullifies sin's power over me. The forgiveness of God made known to me through the gospel liberates me from sin's power because it liberates me first from its guilt. The preaching of such forgiveness to myself is a practical way of putting the gospel into operation as a nullifier of sin's power in my life." Do you see it? Do you see the power of stay? What it says is, "As I dwell on the gospel, as I dwell on the reality of the love of God in Christ at the cross, the reality that he's given me everything that I need, the reality that I'm reconciled instead of separated, the reality that I'm prayed for instead of ignored, it reorients my thinking to forgiveness and reorients my attitude to freedom." We were just singing about that.

Well, how does abiding, how does remaining, how does staying help us in our bad days of performance versus our good days of performance? Again, the book answers the question this way: "The gospel reminds me that my righteous standing with God always holds firm regardless of my performance because my standing is based solely on the

work of Jesus and not mine so my worst days of sin and failure, the gospel encourages me with God's unrelenting grace toward me." You see? On my worst days, it's God's unrelenting grace toward me. "On my best days of victory and usefulness, the gospel keeps me from relating to God solely on the basis of myself. It keeps me relating to God on the basis of Jesus' righteousness so I don't relate to him any differently than I did on my bad days."

How does abiding, how does remaining, how does staying help us with pride? Again, the writer says, "God deliberately designed the gospel in such a way as to strip me of my pride and leave me without any grounds for boasting in myself whatsoever and that is a wonderful mercy from God." That's right. "You see, preaching the gospel to myself each day mounts a powerful assault against my pride and serves to establish humility in its place." That's abiding. That's staying.

The text says, here's how we abide, here's how we remain, by constantly remembering, giving thanks for the expressions of love by Christ but also because we require the constant nourishment that comes from Jesus in order to love. Why is it that we would want to remain? Why is it that we want to stay? Because we're dependent on it. You see, the vine imagery that's given in this passage is Bible talk for the nation of Israel because a vine was often the imagery that was used for the nation. But when it is used for the nation of Israel on the heels of that come the ways in which she was unfruitful. In other words, Israel was a vine that failed to produce any fruit. She struggled with selfishness, with self-sufficiency. Having a form of godliness without the relationship with him whereas now, Jesus calls himself the true vine. The Father is the caretaker of that vine. You see, there is a new system in place, a new covenant has been inaugurated where the followers of Jesus have unique aspects of relationship with him.

So, that's a behind-the-scenes of a big theological drama that's taking place but in front of that is just something really simple: if you are going to love like Jesus loves, then you have to rely on the nourishment that comes from abiding in him. If you are going to love like Jesus loves, you are required, it is absolutely imperative that you rely on the nourishment that comes from abiding in him because Jesus makes it clear: apart from him, you can do, what's the word? Nothing. It's not like we pick ourselves up by our own bootstraps and get like 95% of the way there and all we need is just a little helping hand to get over the top. It's more like this: you can't do it. And that's why we have often been frustrated by the fact that we've woken up some days and said, "Alright, I'm gonna love this person. I'm gonna love 'em for sure." And you walk away without loving them because we were not tapping into the source of that love. It wasn't a matter of just pumping ourselves up, it wasn't a matter of just getting excited about it, it wasn't just a matter of determining to do it. We need to abide in Christ. That's constantly thinking about the cross. Thinking about his love for us. Thinking about the truths that they then imply. Because when I do that, I don't need to receive the love of others. It's nice, of course, but I don't need it because my love tank is already full. It's full of Jesus and that frees me up to love and to give and to serve others.

But when I'm not abiding in Christ, here's what happens: I begin to demand love from others, "You have to love me. You have to serve me. You have to give to me." So, rather than being a giver, a server or a lover, because of all that Jesus has done for us, we become a demander of those things instead. And what happens when the other person decides not to give it to us? They feel our wrath. Friends, this is the first step right here to a lousy marriage. This is the first step. You can get there other ways but this is the first step. Everything else is just fruit. If you're not abiding in Christ, welcome to demanding from other people and other people aren't always excited to give you what you demand. This is the way to ruin a friendship. This is the way to ensure that when your children move out, they're happy to do so. Just stop abiding in Christ and you'll figure it out how to make a mess by not abiding because you will become demanding.

You see, Christ offers satisfying peace. He offers satisfying love. He offers satisfying joy. But forms of joy and love and peace that we demand just leave us craving for more. "You gave me a little shot today, great. I want a bigger one tomorrow." It's the Lord's love, it's the Lord's peace, it's the Lord's joy that will satisfy us. So, I want to ask you: on a scale of 1-10, how are you doing in abiding in Christ? How are you doing at preaching the gospel to yourself? How are you doing at constantly reminding yourself of your new identity in Jesus? And if you're not very high on that scale, then what step are you going to take this week? Maybe you just need to download the sermon notes and start highlighting some stuff. Maybe you need to write out some 3x5 flashcards that will encourage you to begin focusing on the truths of Christ. Maybe you need to memorize a key text of Scripture; it just needs to be in your head all day, every day. Do something.

The second thing we find in this passage is not only to remain but also to bear fruit. That is, we are to produce lasting fruit through love. One of the clear themes in this passage is the notion of fruit. It's found seven times and you can't hardly read the text without fruit just popping up again and again and there are several issues that relate to fruit in this passage. The first one is: bearing fruit through love is the means by which we fulfill our purpose. John 15:8 says, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." You see, God designed us to glorify him. He designed us to enjoy him. He designed us to be in union with him. And when we fit in that way, then we are being used for the purpose that we were designed for. And when we miss it, we're kind of like being a hammer where a screwdriver is needed. It just doesn't work very well. We don't function very well. We don't accomplish the task very well. Because we weren't designed for that. God designed us to glorify him. Peter put it this way, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession so that you might proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." You see, we were designed for this. We were designed to bear fruit so that we would prove to be his disciples and so that he would receive glory.

Bearing fruit involves the results of effective prayer in Jesus' name. You see, fruit isn't just an entirely nebulous idea in this particular passage because it has a context to it. In verse 7 as well as in verse 16, notice the words: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." Verse 16, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that

your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.” You see, the first application of these promises were to the disciples themselves and the request that they were going to be making that included the miraculous. As the apostles were abiding in Christ and bearing the fruit of love like Christ and then asking requests consistent with the character of Christ for the establishment of the church, God was pleased to answer that.

So, that's why we read in Acts 2 of powerful working of God in the life of the disciples at the beginning of the church. It says in Acts 2, beginning in verse 46 that “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. 4 But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, 'Look at us!' And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, 'I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!' And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.” In other words, the very thing that Jesus had told his disciples would come true, came true.

But verses 7-16 also have some application to us. It's a promise that as you abide in knowing Christ's love and bearing the fruits of love, that your request will be conformed to the character of Christ's desires. That is, you will pray asking for the very thing that God already wants to give you and he'll happily do so. So, have you ever asked for wisdom, for example, in the midst of what seemed like a really confusing situation? And it just seemed to unfold before your eyes? In other words, the Lord made it clear, the Lord was giving wisdom in that moment? You were asking for that. You were asking for something that he was wanting to give you anyway and he was happy to give it to you. Have you ever been obedient to the Lord when tempted not to because you were abiding in Christ and asking for the Lord's help? Have you ever experienced joy and peace in the midst of hard circumstances because you were abiding in Christ and asking for his grace to meet you in that suffering? Have you experienced the privilege of seeing God open doors of witnessing opportunity as you were abiding in Christ and asking the Lord for those opportunities? You see, that's the kind of fruit that we're talking about in this passage. It's the kind of fruit where we're abiding in Christ and making requests consistent with his character that the Lord is pleased to grant.

Then we also see there is an expectation that the amount of fruit continues to increase. You see, John 15:2 put it this way, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. I am

the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit.” You see, there's a process here and that is he expects his disciples to be bearing this kind of fruit and then the Father comes along and prunes it for the purpose of more fruit. Now, that pruning process isn't always easy. Sometimes, the Lord brings a morning Bible reading, a sermon, an ABF lesson, a conflict or even a compliment to help us see our need to repent and grow but this pruning is so that we would be in a position to bear more fruit. It was designed for fruitfulness. Not just as a hindrance, it's designed for fruitfulness so we expect to see that in things like obedience where obedience is not legalism, obedience is simply the joy of reflecting God's love. Where we see witness. That is, that we are showing to the world, to prove to be his disciples or we are involved in service.

I'm so thankful that we are able to fill all the positions needed for the Passion Play and here we are ready to go because our efforts can be focused now on praying for and inviting those who need to hear the gospel. We were just singing we want to take it to the masses, right? Well, taking it to the masses looks like grabbing a bunch of those invitation cards and handing them out because we want it to go to the masses. But, you know, there's another area of service that we've been talking about and praise the Lord, that Serve 14 is almost filled. There are about 45 or so positions that remain. The vast majority are class assistants in the 9:30-11 hours both during the summer and in the school year as well as during Wednesday night. It may be, over the last month, that here's what's been happening: the Lord's been doing a little pruning. He's been doing a little convicting. And he wants you to serve in one of those areas because he wants you to bear more fruit. Yes, there is some fruit already but it's not that we just stop bearing fruit, he says, “Well, I need to prune that a little more. Prune that a little more because I want to see more fruit.” I would encourage you, if that's been one of those things in your mind over the past several weeks, it would be a true blessing to the ministry team around here if you would take care of that so that we are able to just simply say, “You know, we're all full. We're all ready. We're all ready for the summer. We're ready for Wednesday night. We're ready for the school year.”

The text also reminds us that there is a grave concern for those who are not bearing fruit. John 15:6 puts it this way, “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” In the gospel literature, there is a very interesting dynamic that occurs. That is, John writes about events that happened 40-50 years prior to the writing of the events and so it is true that while all of these things were actually occurring, the people thought, the disciples thought that Judas was off giving something to the poor. But we're reading the text and we know better. John, when he was writing the text, knows better and in reality, the branch that is being discussed most clearly right here is Judas Iscariot. I've always found this passage particularly powerful. After all, Judas followed Jesus directly. He was there when Jesus did the miracles. He was there when Jesus taught publicly as well as privately. He was there in moments of celebration and he was there in moments of tension too. Through it all, Judas was a person who talked about Jesus. He wasn't someone who actually possessed eternal life.

I think you know it's entirely possible that there is someone here this morning that is in the same position. There have been some benefits to being around a group of believers. There have been some things that have been nice but that doesn't mean that you have ever come to the place where you repented of your sin and trusted Christ as your Lord and Savior. And I would rather this morning that John 15:6 serve as a tension for you right now, meant for you to live your life thinking that you're a Christian when you're not. There's no doubt that on the other side of the equation, the Bible says that these things I write to you so that you may know that you have eternal life. That's where Pastor Viars gets his phrase, "You know that you know that you know." On the other hand, the Bible is also very clear that there are some who like to hang out in the church, they like to pretend like they know something about the Lord but in reality, they don't know him as their Lord and Savior.

Thankfully, that can be fixed today. It can be fixed if you will repent of your sin, see it as a really big deal before God and trust in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for your salvation. You can settle that today and I want to encourage you, if there is some pruning going on in your heart right now, the Lord may be communicating to you that that's exactly what you need to do sooner rather than later.

The final point and I'd like to highlight it in the passage is not just that we are to produce fruit, not just that we are to abide or stay but when we do that, we experience complete joy. You know, in last week's passage in John 14, Jesus told his disciples, "Look, you don't have to let your heart be troubled." Verse 1, 27, it doesn't have to be that way because I have a real peace for you. I have a genuine peace for you. And in verse 11 of our passage this time in chapter 15, it says, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." In other words, he's offering complete joy as well. So, it's not just peace, it's also joy and so I hope that you are making the connection between the reality that the Lord is providing complete joy, complete peace and complete love with the gift of the Spirit whose fruit is love, joy, peace.

You know, friends, the reasons we have a difficult time loving at some time is because we're not well connected to the source. We're trying to do it on our own and it just doesn't work. We're not staying. That is the key to receiving all that we need for both fruit bearing as well as for joy.