

Are You Connected to the Source of Abundant Life?

In this series of articles on John 1:14, I've taken some time to point out reasons why the Word became flesh. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took to himself a full and complete human nature—only excepting sin. He lived the sinless life that we're required to live (Matt. 5:48) and yet, because all mankind is born of Adam, we sin daily in thought, word and deed. Our sin separates us from a Holy God. The perfectly righteous life of Jesus is credited to all who trust him by faith (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21): The sacrificial death of Jesus, on a 1st century Roman cross, pays this sin debt (Rom. 6:23). These are not dry points of doctrine, but rather, it's these and other important foundational doctrinal truths that ground us and give us a firm place to stand in our fight against the world, the flesh and the devil. In his humanity, Jesus identifies with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15).

Christians are intimately connected with the Vine which means that we have a continual supply of nourishment available to us in order for us to grow spiritually (Jn. 15:1-17).

To illustrate this biblical truth, I want to share a story that happened several years ago in a small town in Texas (Itasca). Just before World War II, a school fire took the lives of 263 children. There was scarcely a family in town that was not directly touched by this dreadful tragedy. When the war was over, the town built a new school which was equipped with what was called by many "the finest sprinkler system in the world." There was great pride in the town connected to their new school. Honor students were selected to guide visitors on tours of the new facility which included a look at the finest sprinkler system technology that money could buy. Never again would this town have to suffer another school tragedy like before the war.

In a short few years the town began to grow. Seven years after the war it became necessary to enlarge the school. When they were adding the new wing, it was discovered that the new sprinkler system that was installed years earlier when the new school was built *had never been connected to a water source!* If we use this illustration as an analogy of the Christian life, we can say that, in one sense, we know that a Christian is *never* completely disconnected from the Vine—that is to say, disconnected from the source of all our Christian life and growth. But in another sense, we can certainly get distracted and cultivate desires that can be self-centered rather than God-centered. The scriptures teach that there's a war that rages within each of us—the Spirit warring against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). Because this is true, we must be diligent in our fight against sin, "which clings so closely" (Hebrews 12:1).

Sadly, many Christians are going through their lives without being regularly connected to and growing in a deeper knowledge of God. It's not enough to have a sprinkler system if it's not connected to water. We need to be connected, *not merely for times of disaster*, but in our day to day lives. If not, we will languish spiritually and our lives will be much less than God's best according to scripture. We may even end up losing the joy of our Christian lives—at least in the moment. Sadly, our craving for that which is good (1 Peter 2:1) is often lacking, which leaves us settling for lesser things. C.S. Lewis, in his book entitled "The Weight of Glory" writes,

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday by the sea. We are far too easily pleased." In Jesus Christ we have *abundant life—fullness of life and joy* available to us. When the scripture speaks of *abundant life* (John 10:10), it's not promising a life without problems or challenges. We need to trust God's word, by grace, and believe that what his word teaches is always what's best for us. Bible teachers Owen Strachan and Doug Sweeny sum up this important point: "When one obeys God by loving His Son and following His Word, one glorifies the Lord and tastes the sweetest, richest happiness known to man. This and no other substitute is the good life. It is what God has always intended for mankind."

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