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6. The Abiding Life

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6. The Abiding Life

This Bible study lesson is based on Chapter 7 of *The Abiding Room*, a book by Kevin Seacat.

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The purpose of this lesson is to explain the important connection between being filled with the Holy Spirit, which we explored in the previous lesson, and abiding in Jesus.

To find a significant portion of Jesus' teaching on the abiding, Spirit-filled life, we can look at the end of His ministry on the night before He went to the cross. This Bible passage includes what is commonly known as the Last Supper. The apostle John tells us about it in his gospel, the book of John, in chapters 13 through 17. For the first time, Jesus laid out both how the Holy Spirit was about to be given to His disciples, as well as a new way to live—abiding in Him.

As the evening begins, the disciples and Jesus are about to sit down for the Last Supper, and the disciples are talking among themselves. After three years of Jesus teaching them they should be humble, meek, and servant-hearted rather than promoting themselves, what are the disciples doing? Arguing about who among them is the greatest (“A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest” (Luke 22:24 NIV)).

Jesus starts their time together with a new command, “Love one another.” “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35 NIV).

He then shows them an example of what love looks like by washing their feet.

Maybe we should give the disciples a little credit. At least they believed Jesus was the Messiah sent by God the Father, and they knew they were onto something big. That's why they had left everything to follow Jesus—to be part of the next big thing. That's why they were arguing over who was going to be at the top of this movement they believed was about to take off—they were gripped by selfish ambition.

Actually, they were underestimating the impact Jesus was about to have on time, heaven, earth, and eternity. They were still thinking in terms of merely an earthly kingdom. They didn't understand they were part of the biggest events in human history—Jesus going to the cross to die for the sin of humanity, rising from the dead, and sending the Holy Spirit to indwell them. They didn't understand this was to be the birth of the church.

The Foreshadowing of the Abiding, Spirit-Filled Life

It is very likely Jesus didn't tell His guys about the abiding, Spirit-filled life until the last night at dinner because they wouldn't be able to grasp it until they experienced it. And that wouldn't happen for another fifty-three days, when the Holy Spirit came in fullness within them at Pentecost.

But even though the disciples were unable to comprehend what was coming, Jesus gave them a sneak peek at the Last Supper. Previewing the coming of the abiding, Spirit-filled life at Pentecost, Jesus said: "I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe" (John 14:29 NIV).

Both then and now, the abiding, Spirit-filled life must be experienced to be believed!

Love, Joy, and Peace

As we examine Jesus' last night before the cross, we'll see abiding in Jesus (remaining in constant fellowship with Him) is what also brings about the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Chapters 13 through 17 comprise only 25 percent of the book of John. But, 75 percent of the time John uses the words "love," "joy," and "peace" in his gospel is within these five chapters. Why are these chapters so packed with these three words? Because love, joy, and peace are fruit of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus began foreshadowing the abiding, Spirit-filled life to His guys on that last night, He naturally talked about part of its blessing—love, joy, and peace. These fruit of the Spirit are evidence of the presence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Jesus' followers, both then and today.

The Great 2 for 1

Two very important commands regarding the abiding, Spirit-filled life are wonderfully connected. These two commands are Jesus saying, “Abide in me” (John 15:4 NIV), and the apostle Paul instructing us to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18 NIV).

What is seldom understood is that when we are obedient to the first command to abide, Jesus completes our obedience to the second command to be filled as well. And He does this without any effort on our part! This means we are doubly blessed. The promise of the blessings of both abiding in Jesus and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit flows from simply remaining connected to Jesus. As we abide in Jesus, we are also being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In his book, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God’s Power in Your Life*, the late, world-famous evangelist Billy Graham wrote, “We are being filled as we abide in Christ.”

Abiding in Jesus and being filled with the Spirit are like different sides of the same coin. Just as a coin always has both “heads” and “tails,” when you abide in Jesus, you always get filled with the Spirit.

Therefore, abiding in Jesus and being filled with the Spirit are linked, essentially forming a two for one spiritual reality available to us at all times. We will call this “The Great 2 for 1.”

Let’s take a further look at the relationship between abiding in Jesus and being filled with the Spirit from two perspectives: (1) continuous nature, and (2) active versus passive nature.

Continuous Nature: Abiding in Jesus and being filled with the Spirit are similar in that both are continuous. Abiding means remaining in constant fellowship with Jesus. It is not permanent but rather an ongoing obedience.

Likewise, as we have already seen, being filled with the Spirit is not permanent, but also the result of ongoing obedience. So, both abiding in Jesus and being filled with the Spirit are to be maintained through our ongoing, moment-to-moment obedience.

Active versus Passive Nature: Abiding in Jesus and being filled with the Spirit are different in that abiding is active while being filled is passive. Abiding is the active part we do. When Jesus says, “Abide in me,” He’s instructing us to take action. It’s our choice to engage in ongoing fellowship with Jesus.

On the other hand, being filled with the Spirit is passive. It is done for us by God as a result of our obedience to abide in Jesus. Being filled with the Spirit occurs quietly and effortlessly as we abide in Jesus. As we abide in Him, the life of Jesus (the vine) flows into us (the branches) through His Holy Spirit.

The command, “Be filled,” gives us a hint of its passive nature by what it does not say. It does not say “Fill yourself with the Spirit.” The instructions to be filled with the Spirit imply you are to do something, but you do not directly fill yourself with the Spirit. Instead, you receive the filling from God. It is not accomplished by you. Similar to how Jesus told the disciples they would receive power when they received the Holy Spirit, you, too, receive the filling again and again from God, but not of your own independent works.

We know, however, that since we are instructed to be filled, some type of action on our part is required that both precedes and results in our receiving the filling of the Spirit.

Abiding is the continuous action we do, while the filling of the Holy Spirit is the resulting continuous action God does as we abide. As we continuously choose to remain in fellowship with Jesus, we are continuously being filled with the Spirit.

Again, this is “The Great 2 for 1.”

Internal Fruit of Abiding—Love, Joy, and Peace

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:9-11 NIV).

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 NIV).

Note the internal fruit and blessings of abiding are also the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, and peace. That’s why chapters 13 through 17 of the book of John, where Jesus introduces both abiding in Him and the Holy Spirit, are packed full of words such as “love,” “joy,” and “peace.” This again confirms “The Great 2 for 1.”

As we abide in Jesus, we are being filled with the Spirit, as evidenced by our love, joy, and peace. We’re living Level III lives. We’re in the Abiding Room.

ABIDING TRUTH: As you abide in Jesus, you are being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Reflection Question

How would you describe The Great 2 for 1 in your own words? What evidence is there that these two spiritual truths are linked? Why is this significant?

Write down your answer to the box below (“Your Response or Question”) and send it to us. It will appear in Messages.