

## Choosing life

*John 17:3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

We have been learning about the eternal life that we received from the Lord when we believed in Christ. We have seen that we can live in eternal life, now, in this life.

/We can take hold of eternal life. And we can reap eternal life.\

But what about in between?

What is designed to happen in between the sowing of the seed and the reaping of the harvest? Between taking hold of this new life, and bearing the fruit of it?

Jesus answered this question for us in John 15.

He said that He is the Vine and we are the branches.

/Then He said, if you abide in Me, and let Me abide in you, you will bear fruit.\

/We learned the meaning of the word abide. It means to dwell, to remain, to take up residence, to make a life.\

/So, with respect to Christ, abiding means sharing His life.\ It means to make Christ our very life, day in and day out. So that living becomes Christ.

So today we pick things up in John 15:7-9.

Here we learn what Jesus meant when He said to abide in Him, and let Him abide in us.

*John 15:7 "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.*

/Jesus is saying that we are to let His words abide or dwell in us, and we are to abide or live in His love.\

If we do this, we will bear fruit. And that fruit will remain.

But now realize something: these are things we choose to do. Or not do.

/We choose whether or not we will abide in Him and let Him abide in us.\

/Each and every day, we can choose to let His word dwell richly in our hearts – or not.\

/Each and every day, we can decide to live our lives in His love – or not.\

And that means that we get to choose whether or not this will be a day of life or a day of death for us.

And of course that's challenging. It's a bit daunting.

Jesus is asking us to let His words abide in us deeply, on a day in and day out basis. this means not only learning the word but also obeying it. But we decide.

His word is life itself! Jesus has the words of eternal life.  
/The word of God is a living thing.\

*Heb 4:12*

*12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

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/When His words pour through us, life pours through us: eternal life.\

*1 Peter 1:22-23*

*22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*

/But here's the thing: we decide what we let into our heart.\ We choose, on a daily basis whether or not to let Christ's words dwell in our hearts.

The Scriptures tell us to guard our heart. Garbage in, garbage out.

/Will they be words of life, or words of death? We decide.\

What do I mean by that?

/Simple: every word that comes out of the mouth of God is a word of life.\

*Matt 4:1-4*

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"*

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We are designed to LIVE on the word of God!

/The word of God is as necessary as our daily food.\

The prophet Jeremiah realized this:

*Jer 15:16*

*16 Your words were found and I ate them,  
And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart;  
For I have been called by Your name,  
O Lord God of hosts.*

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/For the young believer, the word of God is like milk for a baby:\

*1 Peter 2:1-3*

*Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.*

/For the mature believer, the word of God is meat, solid food:\

*Heb 5:12-14*

*12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*

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/And the Psalmist said that the precepts of the Lord are sweeter than honey.\

*Ps 19:8-10*

*8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.  
9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;  
The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.  
10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.*

This the way to life.

/ We choose life when we choose to let the word of God dwell deeply in us.\

But it IS a choice.

Just like Moses reminded the nation of Israel when they were poised to enter the promised land:

*Deut 30:19-20*

*19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20 by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."*

/They had a choice. Life or death, blessing or curse.\ And isn't it remarkable – the way to life was the same for them as it is for us.

We are to abide in Christ's love, and hold fast to His word.

Their path to life was by loving the Lord, obeying His voice, and holding fast to Him.

Because you see, there are two paths. Two choices.

/One path leads to life. The other path leads to death.\

There is that other way. It seems right to the natural mind. But it is a way of death.

/There are words that give life, and words that lead to death.\

*1 Tim 4:1-2*

*4 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,*

/Jesus is telling us: don't think the way My enemies think.\ They hate you and want to devour you. Their words are dripping with falsehoods. They are blasphemers, gossips, haters of good. They oppose the truth, and we are told to avoid them.

*Rom 12:2*

*2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

/Instead, we are to seek the mind of Christ.\

*Eph 4:14-16*

*14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*

And then there's that second decision we make every day:

/Are we going to love like Christ loves, or are we going to go the way of the world, loving the things of the world, and end up hating one another?\

*1 John 2:15-16*

*15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

That's the choice that leads to death. /But we can choose life instead.  
How? By loving one another the way that Jesus has loved us.\

*1 John 3:14-18*

*14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

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/So we are to let the word of Christ dwell richly in our hearts. And we are to abide in Christ's love.\

And Jesus gives us more guidance about how we are to abide in His love.

*John 15:10 "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.*

/We are to keep His commandments. That's how we abide in His love. \  
We take in His love for us, and we pass His love on by keeping His commandments.

If you wish to reap eternal life, keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

*John 15:12 "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.*

And there it is: he appointed us so we would go and bear fruit, and that our fruit would remain.

/What is God's will for us in between the planting of eternal life and the reaping of eternal life?\

/He wants us to abide in the love of Christ by keeping His commandments, and let the word of Christ dwell deeply in us.\

And there you have it in its utter simplicity.

Paul asked for this in his soaring prayer for the church that ends Ephesians 3:

*Eph 3:14-19*

*14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what*

*is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*

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Here is what living in eternal life looks like:

*Col 1:9-12*

*9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*  
*11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.*

I want to end this study with a passage I think will inspire you to serve one another without getting weary:

*Eph 3:14-21*

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what*

*is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*

*20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

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Next up: John 17:6-19

In Christ was life, and the life was the Light of men.

That they may know You,

Knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. This IS eternal life.

TO know Him is to be living this new, eternal life.

*Col 1:9-12*

*9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might,*

*for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.*

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And yet it is extremely practical.

In fact, Jesus describes several of its characteristics in His prayer in chapter 17.

*John 17:13*

*13 "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.*

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One characteristic of eternal life is complete joy.

*John 17:19*

*19 "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.*

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Another characteristic of eternal life is pure truth.

*John 17:20-21*

*"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

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Perfect unity is a quality of eternal life.

*John 17:22-26*

*22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*

The love of God is another aspect of eternal life.

Seeing Christ in His glory is the ultimate expression of eternal life.

*24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

*25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*

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To know Him fully is the same thing as being glorified with Him.

He desires us to be with Him where He is so that we might see His glory.

*Col 3:1-4*

*3 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is*

*hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

That is our destiny. That is our future.

So what?

Eternal life is like a secret garden. We possess it, but that is not the same as living in it.

For far too many Christians, eternal life remains a secret. They don't even know that they have it.

Consider the alternative to eternal life.

What life do people live who cannot live this eternal life because they do not know the one true God, since they have no relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ?

An alienated life.

A meaningless existence.

A life of slavery.

A life of fear.

A life of corruption.