

ND2-010: The indwelling of Christ – Abiding in Christ

Outline:

The theme for the second stage of New Man Discipleship is "new life." "The newly created life" refers to "Christ" — "Christ is our life." This is foundational for our salvation. Moreover, to live out Christ in our life, that is the purpose of God's salvation, whether as individuals or as a congregation. We will focus on four aspects to understand what is the newly created life, and its foundation and core values. This will not only impact our daily life, our ministry and its quality but also determine if our life and ministry have eternal value.

- 1) The indwelling of Christ – united with Christ: "Treasure in earthen vessels"**
- 2) The formation of Christ - experiencing Christ: "To be molded into the image of the Son of God"**
- 3) The substitution of Christ - to gain Christ: "It is no longer me, but Christ"**
- 4) The manifestation of Christ - live out Christ: "Become a witness of Christ in the flesh"**

A. Knowing the "Indwelling of Christ"

"The indwelling of Christ" is the greatest difference between the saints in the New Testament and the Old Testament. Because of Christ's indwelling, we become a new creation. Therefore, because of the indwelling of Christ, we not only need to know the truth, but also need the Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth by experiencing it. The blessings brought by Christ's indwelling are beyond words, and include at least the following three aspects:

1. Christ is our life

- *"Christ who is our life." (Colossians 3:4a) "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;" (Galatians 2:20) Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death; For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Galatians 1:20-21)*
- *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." (2 Corinthians 4:7-10)*
- *"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." (1 Corinthians 12:27)*

2. Christ is our all in all

- *"Christ is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11)*

- *" But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30) Christ also is my peace, my joy, my power, my satisfaction.*
- *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3)*
- *"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." (Colossians 2:9,10)*

3. Christ is with us always

- *"They shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us.""* (Matthew 1:23)
- *"Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)*
- *Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:16)*

B. United with the "Christ indwelled"

1. Knowing the fact of being united with the Lord

- *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser..." "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:1,5)*
- *17 " But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (2 Corinthian 6:17,19)*

2. Entering the experience of being united with the Lord

a) Respond in faith

- [The Lord's Command] 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. ...[The Lord's Promise] 5... He who abides in Me, and I in him ...[Unbelieving response] 6 " If anyone does not abide in Me...[Believing response] 7 If you abide in Me... (John 15:4-7)
- "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.: (Hebrews 11:6)

b) Help of the Holy Spirit

- *" However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; (original text: enter in all truths)." (John 16:13)*
- *" But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things..." (John 14:26)*

c) Experience Personally

We all need to experience these precious promises personally, so that we know we can't live or serve without Christ. Abiding in Christ vs. on your own will inevitably bring about completely different experiences and results.

i. Withered, incapability, useless, unable to bear fruit

- John 15 says: "*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "... for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*" (John 15:4-6)

ii. Full of Christ and be fruitful

- "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him....If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." (John 15:5,7)
- "...grow up in all things into Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)

d) Challenge of constantly abiding

In the parable of the true vine, the Lord Jesus repeatedly used "be always [sic: abide] in me", and the verb "abide" is in the present tense, indicating that it is a continuous, lively, and united life. This kind of union fills both the individual and the church with the life of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what the enemy was afraid of and wanted to destroy with all his might. Therefore, how to be able to connect to the indwelling Christ (constantly abiding), freshly and continuously and embracing all the abundance of Christ, is indeed a challenge for every Christian and the churches.

- *Abide in Me, and I in you. ...5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. ...7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you[b] will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you* (John 15:4-7)
- "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him....If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John" 14:21-23)

3. Live the testimony of a life united with the Lord

This will be for the next three sessions of the new discipleship.

Meditation, Practice, Discussion

☐ Content Review: Based on the theme verse and content of this lesson, what are some questions you may have?

1. The theme of the second stage of “New Man discipleship” is “newly created life,” this is Christ. Please share what you have learned or experienced from the 4 aspects of the “newly created life.” Share the Bible passages which explain each of the corresponding aspects?

2. From the sermon messages, please share the abundant blessings from “knowing the indwelling of Christ.”

3. What should we know and experience regarding “entering the experience of being united with the Lord”?

☐ Further Reflection: The impact of this lesson on me, the revelation of the Holy Spirit, and additional thoughts

1. Did the message help you gain insight in knowing the “indwelling of Christ?” How does it inspire or encourage you to live out the testimony of being a “newly created life?”

2. “United with the indwelling Christ” is a challenge to each person and the church. Please reflect on the specific challenge for you, and see how you can have the breakthrough and grow in abiding in Christ?

❑ The Path to Implementation:

1. Please spend time examining the real status of your spiritual life, and share with your group members. Do you feel withered, incapable, useless, unable to bear fruit or unfruitful? Describe each of the situations.

2. In the next two weeks, please meditate on one passage listed in the outline each day, focusing on the true knowledge and experience of the indwelling of Christ. Please record your insights and application below.

Week One

Day	Insights or practice
M	
T	
W	
Th	
F	

Week Two

Day	Insights or practice
M	
T	
W	
Th	
F	

Pastor Yu's Message Transcript

Brothers and sisters. Peace be to you!

Today, we are entering the second stage of New Man Discipleship and the theme is "new life." "The newly created life" refers to "Christ" — "Christ becomes our life." This is the foundation of our salvation. Moreover, to live out Christ in our life, that is the purpose of God's salvation, whether in individuals or as a congregation. We will focus on four aspects to understand what is the newly created life, and its foundation and core values. If we truly comprehend this, it will not only impact our daily life, our ministry and its quality but also determine if our life and ministry have eternal value. This is a very, very important subject.

The four aspects (or four angles) of the "new life":

1) The indwelling of Christ – united with Christ: "treasure in earthen vessels"

2) The formation of Christ - experiencing Christ: "to be molded into the image of the Son of God"

He is formed in us, just like Paul's prayer: "*My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.*" (Galatians 4:19)

3) The substitution of Christ - to gain Christ: "It is no longer me, but Christ"

Christ lives in us, in our life, service, and all experiences.

4) The manifestation of Christ - live out Christ: "Become a witness of Christ in the flesh"

The indwelling, formation, substitution, and manifestation of Christ, is best described by emphasizing our experience: by the indwelling of Christ, we are united with Christ; through our experience, Christ is formed in us; similarly, because of the substitution of Christ, our lives can grow continuously and gain Christ; in the end, we can live out and manifest Christ. These four aspects are really the foundation of our salvation, and all experiences that follow are built on these.

The leader of the Salvation Army once said: "A big crisis in Christianity today is Christianity without Christ (that we don't talk about Christ in our Christianity)." Or we may talk about Christ, but not about Christ is our life. This is a very, very regrettable thing, and it is also a crisis in the church today! Therefore, I hope that by talking about the "newly created life" this time, we can truly see that Christ is our life, and can step on this great foundation; it can become real in us, and we can truly experience it.

The four aspects mentioned above, from a macro point of view, seems like climbing a ladder, it's an upward experience, step by step. Starting from the foundation: first "Christ indwells" then "Christ is formed" then "Christ substituted" and finally "Christ manifested." This is an ascending process. However, as far as experience concerned, these four aspects are all intertwined in our lives and our experiences. They are not distinctly divided into sections. They are a process of upward progress, overlapping, repetitive, or intertwined as a whole. At any moment, a Christian may experience all four at the same time.

Today, we focus on the first topic: "The Indwelling of Christ." I will talk about this from two key points: "Knowing the indwelling Christ" and "united with the indwelling Christ." You may notice that the two points are literally different. One is "indwelling Christ" and the other is the "Christ indwelling." "The indwelling of Christ" emphasizes the objective truths and facts. Christ has lived in my heart, and I want to know the indwelling of Christ. The "Christ indwelling" focuses on the subjective experience. Christ is already in me today, how can I have a true union with Him?

"I am in Christ" and "Christ in me" are two sides of the coin, but there are still some differences. We are in Christ, especially talking about our position in Christ today, emphasized on objective facts. 1 Corinthians says: "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, ..." (1 Corinthians 1:30) God allows us who repented, to be born again, and received Christ, to be placed in Christ. In Christ we become a new creation; in Christ we become children of God; in Christ we are placed in the body of Christ; in Christ we are justified; in Christ I can have the hope of glory... All these are about the status we received and the salvation we are going to inherit in Christ... These are all objective. Christ in me is after I have objectively obtained such a status, identity, and salvation, I can now experience Him subjectively.

A. Knowing the "Indwelling of Christ"

"The indwelling of Christ" is the greatest difference between the saints in the New Testament and the Old Testament. Because of Christ's indwelling, we become a new creation. Therefore, for the indwelling of Christ, we not only need to know the truth, but also need the Holy Spirit to lead us into the truth by experiencing it. The blessings brought by Christ's indwelling are beyond words, and include at least the following three aspects:

1. Christ is our life

I deliberately separated the first point from the second point below, "Christ is our all in all" because I don't want the children of God to take this first point lightly. Christ lives in me, and He becomes our life. This is very important! When it comes to "Christ is our all in all" we often focus on Christ becoming our blessing, our peace, our joy, and our... Therefore, we regard "Christ is our life" as part of all the blessings God has given us in Christ. But in fact, this is the source of all blessings and the foundation of the entire salvation. Therefore, it is necessary to separate the two key points. Speaking of "Christ is our life" there are three very important verses. I hope that brothers and sisters can memorize them because this is the foundation of our Christian faith and experience. Apart from this, there is no need to talk about Christianity at all.

1. "*Christ who is our life.*" (Colossians 3:4a) This simple verse is our **foundation**,
2. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;" (Galatians 2:20) This is talking about how we **apply** this in life.
3. Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death; For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Galatians 1:20-21) This is speaking about the **testimony** and the **fruit**, just like Paul magnified the indwelling Christ.

These three verses are so precious! Once when I was very depressed, I remember that I was involved in a car crash, I didn't want to pray or attend church gatherings. I really couldn't help myself. When I was driving that day, I still remember that it was from 280 toward 880, and the

Lord moved me to start praising the indwelling of Christ. When I praised Christ's indwelling, I was lifted up, from the bottom of the valley to the heavenly realm. It's not like climbing up slowly, nor does it need warming up. When I was there praising Christ's indwelling, it changed me in a blink of an eye, Christ substituted me, gave me blessings, and released me... It was really incredible! We must not ignore the point that "Christ is my life." We can forget many other things, but we must not lose the foundation and the experience of our salvation.

Many churches today do not talk about Christ, or they do, but not about "Christ is our life." Often it is out of negligence, and it is a problem that the church often encounters. We talk about behaviors that Christians should have, the blessings that Christ brings us, and what should be done in one way or another..... However, we left out that "Christ is our life." Apart from "Christ is our life" all the rest may become just talk; any plan or method are in the realm of carnal, in the realm of the "old self."

Another verse is in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10: " But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." It says: " treasure in earthen vessels," which means "the indwelling of Christ." Here listed four consecutive "but not," all because of "Christ's indwelling," so that no matter what situations we are in today, because of "Christ's indwelling," we can have a completely different perspective. Paul only talked about four here, and these four have actually included most of our experiences. Even if our current experience is not in the four mentioned by Paul, but because the treasure is in the earthly vessel, we can also have a turn around. "... this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." (2 Corinthians 4:7) The power is in this life; we don't need to seek elsewhere for the power. "Christ is our life," this is our power. He can lead us to break through any predicament, so that we can spread our wings and soar. We were tired and weary, and we had fallen completely. "But those who wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31), so when we reconnect to Christ, we shall mount up with wings and soar like eagles, and "... shall run and not be weary...shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31), these are all ours because we are "in Christ." "Christ is my life"!!

We are bound to encounter all kinds of difficulties and challenges in our lives. We often say, "What kind of inner life will live out what kind of outward life." Today, in my "old self," no matter how capable, smart, and experienced I am, sooner or later, we will know my finiteness and my incompetence. " Even the youths shall faint and be weary; And the young men shall utterly fall." (Isaiah 40:30) The new coronavirus alone can defeat all the advanced countries, advanced medical systems and technology. Vaccines that have been barely developed today are still facing various challenges. We should humble ourselves before the great God and confess our inability. On the other hand, because children of God have "treasure in earthen vessels," we can testify here that " He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world " (1 John 4:4), and " in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:37)

There is also a verse that says: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." (1 Corinthians 12:27) The body and many members are all in one life! You wouldn't say that my hands have one life, and my feet have one life. It is all of the same life because it is of the same body. When talking about "Christ is our life" today, I not only emphasized that Christ is my life,

but also emphasized that Christ is also the life of the church—the new man. Therefore, the "New Man Discipleship" is to remind us: Not only do I live in a new creation, a new man, but I am also placed in this group of new men by God. I and Christ are one, and I and the church are one. We are not having the same life, we are simply the very same life, and these two are different. If you have a 25-cent coin, and I also have a 25-cent coin, they are both made in the United States in 1969. This at best means that we have the same coin, but not the very same coin. Today, God gave us Christ as our life. Christ has only one life. The church is His body and has the same life as Christ. We are members of the body, and we have the same life. Therefore, if we see this clearly, we would not dare to hurt each other casually, because it would cause harm to the body of Christ. I want to list this verse in order to let brothers and sisters know that "the New Man Discipleship" is based on the foundation of "equipping the body of Christ". All our pursuits and all our growth are for Christ and for the church. " Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

2. Christ is our all in all

Christ is all. If you were asked to fill in the blank, "Christ is my _____," what would you write? You can write down your deepest experience of Him and thank Him; you can also write down your most hopeful goal and draw from Him.... This is not a "bounced check," this is a "blank check!" Although they sound similar, it means the total opposite. This "blank check" was signed by Christ, as stated in 2 Corinthians 1:20: " For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us..." , all the promises in the Bible we can ask God in Christ, because Christ is our all in all!

1 Corinthians 1:30 says: " But of Him you are in Christ Jesus..." God allows us to be in Christ. Then he said: "...who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." None of these are our own. Paul only wrote the four most important things here. We can also find many other promises from the scriptures, such as: Christ is my peace, Christ is my joy, Christ is my power, Christ is my satisfaction.... Brother Darby has a book called "Christ Is Our Satisfaction." The title alone attracts us. Thinking of "Christ is our satisfaction" brings us joy! In the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: " Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13-14) Christ is our deepest satisfaction!

Reading the context before and after 2 Corinthians 1:20, we will find that not only "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen." It also says: "to the glory of God through us." Why not say, "Let God be glorified through Christ"? Because Christ had glorified God, and it is already a fact. Why is Paul specifically saying: "... to the glory of God through us"? It means if we can experience and testify that these words are true, then we can give glory to God. "In him are yes" (2 Corinthians 1:20) because Christ is always faithful to God and will never compromise God's words. However, we do discount God's word in our life and in faith. When things go well, we thank God, when things go wrong, we are unable to thank God, because we are living in our own limit and incompetence. However, Paul is calling us out and testifying that all of God's promises "are yes" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Some translations are: "All Amen," in order "... to the glory of God through us." (2 Corinthians 1:20) Today our prayers are answered, not only are you personally blessed, and not only just for yourself, we must be brave and pray that

God can be glorified through us. The motivation and attitude of this kind of prayer are different, and its realm is also different.

When Paul said in Ephesians 1:3 that we have received "every blessing" in Christ, he said: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." These blessings are "heavenly," not "earthly." The earthly blessings are very limited, will pass by in a blink of an eye, and unreliable. Some people are restless because they can't get what they want; some people are still restless because they are afraid of losing what they have. Only "all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places" is given to us by God, and what He has given us, He will keep for us. "All the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places" speaks of the blessings that are perfect in Christ. Colossians 2:9-10 say: "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." Here we talk about being in Christ. We have inherited this heavenly "abundant life", which is the essence of God. This is so precious! All the blessings of heaven have been given to us! "All the fullness of God" is also given to us in Christ, so what do we still lack? Why are you still sighing? Why are you still complaining? Therefore, seeing the "indwelling of Christ" is too important for us. Not only is it very important, but it also brings a world of difference in our spiritual experience! We ask the Lord to help us so that we can really see Christ. He is not only in me, he has become my life, Christ is everything to me!

3. Christ is with us always

When the Lord Jesus came, the angel told Joseph: This child, you will name him "Immanuel," because he comes to bring the presence of God. Not only did Jesus come to: ". save His people from their sins," his other name, "Immanuel," was to remind us: He also wanted to bring us into the presence of God. Therefore, "Exodus of leaving Egypt" is not the purpose, but "Entering into Canaan" is the purpose; "freed from sin" is not the purpose, leading into the "presence of God" and into Christ is the purpose of God's salvation.

When we were young in Taiwan, when brothers and sisters wrote letters to each other, we liked to write "Immanuel" at the end of the letter. I found that it is not the custom in the United States. In fact, writing "Immanuel" is a good reminder, a blessing, a declaration, and a testimony— "Immanuel" God is always with us, no matter where we are, God is with us.

I was in and out of the operating room many times: when I was 17 years old, when I was going to the operating room the third time, my family accompanied me and sent me off. However, as I was pushed into the operating room, I looked back and waved to my family. Suddenly, the iron door closed with a loud "bang!" At that moment, I had a deep realization that not only were people fragile and helpless in the hospital bed, but with the big "bang" of the closing door, I suddenly felt people are also very lonely. There would be many situations in life, some may result from our own failures, or the unknown future of years to come... we would need to face all these situations by ourselves. Although family members love us, care about us, and are willing to accompany us, they can only be kept outside of the door. Because their abilities and their love are limited. Only the presence and the love of God will always be with us. On that day, when the door was shut, I was in deep loneliness, and then suddenly in deep joy, it was my Lord who personally showed his presence to a teenage child. I deeply comprehended that he is always with me, I am embraced by Him and leaning in his arms. Brothers and sisters, this is called "Immanuel". He will always be with us, no matter where we are.

I attended a church in Redwood City more than 30 years ago. A pastor's wife, who passed away a few years ago, told us about her experience. Once, she was reading her Bible and had fellowship with the Lord. It was very sweet. Later, she needed to go downstairs to get some water. When she went downstairs, she felt that the Lord was still conversing with her; and when going upstairs, it was the same way that God was still with her in communion. This old sister said to the Lord, "Lord, why do you always follow me?" The phrase "Lord, why do you always follow me?" Although it is a very simple experience and fellowship, it is very real and moved us all. Our Lord is really like this, but we often ignore His presence. We don't speak with him at all from morning to night. Therefore, I encourage brothers and sisters to find a time at the end of each day, even for five or ten minutes, to sit quietly at the Lord's feet, and think seriously: What have I experienced in the Lord this day that changed my life? Has my relationship with the Lord changed? Today, have I talked to the Lord at all? Maybe you will say, I prayed already. However, many of our prayers are often just speaking insincerely with words only. Brothers and sisters, even if we merely sigh from the heart, pray by simply saying from the heart: "Lord, I love you!" or "Lord, I really need you!", "Lord, I adore You!"...These are what God desires, because it shows that we know and believe in the presence of God, and we cherish Him very much. After the Great Commission, the Lord said: "teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) Our focus is on "to the end of age", but we missed the word "always". The Chinese translation says: "I am with you often." All English translations, even translations of the original text, speak of "always" not just "often." "Often" makes us feel that it's intermittent, but what we are talking about here is "always" which is uninterrupted. There are also two other translations, Darby and Young's Literal Translation (YLT), which translates it as "all the days," that is, there is no day when He is not with us. In our experience, we may have so-called good days and bad days; there are days when we feel lucky, and days when we feel unhappy. We sometimes say: "not my day," because today is a bad day; or "you made my day," because you make me very happy. We may be different, but in front of God, He has not changed yesterday, today, and forever. He is always with us, and He is in us waiting for us to fellowship with Him. We really need to know Christ lives in me, to know the "indwelling Christ."

B. United with the "Christ indwelled"

To be united to the "Christ indwelled" is to continuously live in Christ, to be united to the Christ who has already lived in me. We must not only see the fact of being united with the Lord, but also plead to the Holy Spirit to lead us into this union so that we can live a testimony of being united with the Lord.

1. Knowing the fact of united with the Lord

The ancients said that "easy to know, but hard to do," but our founding father, Dr. Sun Yat-sen said that "doing is easy, but knowing is hard." No matter which one you believe, I want to emphasize here that we cannot ignore Paul's prayer for the church, which is the prayer for revelation. He said: "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know..." (Ephesians 1:17-18) Why did Paul say "that you may know?" The word "know" is the key, it means truly knowing. Many times, we think we know, but do we really know? Why are we weak, and can't get out of our predicaments? Because we

often just "know" in word but not "truly know." 1 Corinthians 8 reminds us specifically: "And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know..." (1 Corinthians 8:2)

I used to know a preacher when I was in Taiwan. He eagerly pursued the Lord as soon as he became a Christian. When he got his first Bible, he read it carefully. He had some knowledge of Christianity before, and he also knew the word Jews, but he only knew that there were "Jews" but did not know that there was "Judah." Therefore, whenever he read "Judah" in the Bible, he thought the Bible was misprinted. So, he took a pen and changed it to "Jews." It was not until later that he knew that there was another person named "Judah" and that there was a tribe called "Judah." He finally realized that he had made a preconceived mistake.

Once the speaker of our gospel meeting mentioned that he has a friend who was a professor of mathematics at Stanford University. One day the mathematics professor went to a friend's house, and the host's child said to him with an attitude: "I can count! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eighty-nine..." . The professor praised him and said, "You are great!" Then he said to the child, "But, do you know that there are things that cannot be counted?" The child said, "Impossible, all can be counted! Look, bananas, one, two, three, four, five; chopsticks, One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, all can be counted." Brothers and sisters, this is called: he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. In fact, we are often like this child before the Lord. We need to truly know who we believe, and we need to have true knowledge of the truth of the Bible.

Last time I mentioned Brother Spark, he preached the message of the cross very well. However, God opened his eyes, when he went to the Keswick Convention to listen to Ms. Ben Louise talk about the cross. God removed his prejudices that day, and he realized that the cross is so much greater than he knew. (Note: Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis is a vessel in which God rises up to preach the message of the cross). Later, when Brother Spark talked about the cross, it was very different, in a different realm. Therefore, the word "know" is too important, and is also a challenge for us. To see the fact of being united with the Lord is to let us "truly know."

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." (John 15:1), "I am the vine, you are the branches." (John 15:5) These are the facts of salvation that the Bible teaches us: Christ is the true vine, we are his branches, and the Father is vinedresser. James Hudson Taylor had one of his greatest spiritual turnarounds, which was brought to him by this passage in John 15. At that time, he was serving with great tiresome and weariness in mainland China. Many missionaries were killed, and the situation was hard pressed. Moreover, it was painful to discover that there were so many weaknesses and corruption in his life, and he faced many temptations and struggles. Outwardly, there was a difficult situation, inwardly he saw his own corruption and weakness. He was very depressed and discouraged. One day, he received a letter from a missionary in Hangzhou, quoting John 15. In such a familiar passage, God opened his eyes through a letter from his co-workers that day, and saw that the branch is connected to the vine. It is a fact that in God they are always connected. He said: "I don't need to work hard to do this, to achieve that, to be like this or that. All I have to do is to simply believe that I am connected and abiding in Christ, He is responsible for supplying all the needs." That day, his whole person was greatly released. Hudson Taylor later testified that he was forever changed, ever since that time. Although he is still busy with various ministries, he can be quiet and rest, full of the Lord's life, full of anointing and in the presence of God. Because he knew that he was in "one" with Christ, and all he had to do was "don't be apart from the vine!" All the grace, strength, holiness,

victory... that we need have been given to us in Christ. This is called "seeing" and this is called "truly knowing." Seeing that united with the Lord is a fact, this is really a very important enlightenment.

1 Corinthians 6:17: "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." (1 Corinthians 6:17) Then, in verse 19, Paul said, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19) Paul was so anxious that he used "Don't you know" to remind everyone: How can you not know such an important truth? Christ has indwelled in us in the Holy Spirit, and the great trinity God is indwelled in us by the Holy Spirit today. We are joined to the Lord and become one spirit with the Lord. This is a fact that will never change. This is something we should all come to experience.

So, first, we need to "see." If we feel that we are not seeing enough, we should pray to the Lord. God is the God who is willing "to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:16), and He is absolutely willing to reveal to us. Let us be humbler before the Lord, to willingly wholeheartedly pray to the Lord. We pray and ask God to give to us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, so that you may know, truly know. God is very willing to fulfill this.

2. Entering the experience of united with the Lord

Below, from four different angles to see, how can we live out the truth of united with the Lord through the subjective experience:

1) Respond in faith

Facing God's promises and requirements, and the facts of salvation, how should we respond to Him? First is to "respond in faith." "John 15:4" says: "*Abide in Me, and I in you...*" This is the command of the Lord. In the next verse 5, it says: "*He who abides in Me, and I in him.*" This is the promise of the Lord. Verse 6: "*If anyone does not abide in Me...*" The word "if" talks about the result of not being in the Lord. The key lies in how we respond to Him. Verse 7: "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*" What we talk about here is the "response in faith" and the result it brings. This is a precious passage. It includes the Lord's command, the Lord's promise, our response, and the different results brought about by different responses.

- [The Lord's Command] 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. ...
- [The Lord's Promise] 5... He who abides in Me, and I in him ...
- [Unbelieving response] 6 " If anyone does not abide in Me...
- [Believing response] 7 If you abide in Me.... (John 15:4-7)

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

No one who comes to the Lord by faith will go back empty-handed, nor would be unchanged. This is God's promise. " But without faith it is impossible to please Him." Therefore, the first thing to come to God is to have a simple faith. The simpler the faith, the greater the faith, the more effective faith, which is the faith that pleases God. We

don't need to be so complicated and speak much of the theology or doctrine. When we come to the Lord, we must be as simple as children, telling the Lord: "I need You; I am willing to believe in You; Lord, I will accept now, whatever you say, I will believe." This is called faith. " But without faith it is impossible to please Him," because those who come to God must believe in God. Some English translations say that " who comes to God must believe that He is," which means His presence. Another translator said that "you must believe in God." Whatever you are lacking, when you come to God, God is the supply that you need. These three phases, "Believe God," "Believe God's presence," and "Believe God is," are all about the results of a simple faith.

2) Help of the Holy Spirit

God cares about our response in faith, and when we respond to God in faith, you'll find that the Holy Spirit is also here to help us. The Lord Jesus said in John 16:13: " However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; (original text: enter in all truths)." Of course, the Holy Spirit is willing to teach such an important truth. He not only wants us to understand, but also wants to lead us in entering into it. This is the purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is already in us, and He always wants to do this, he not only teaches us one-on-one, but also with us anytime and anywhere. Grateful to God!

The Lord Jesus also said in John 14:26: " But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things..." Therefore, whether we are driving or washing dishes, whatever you do, whenever you think of the indwelling of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, you should say to the Lord: "Lord, thank you! Lord, continue to teach me and help me, let me really know, let me really enter into the truth!" "Knowing the truth" and "Entering the truth," both of them are too important, and greatly needed.

3) Experience Personally

We all need to experience these precious promises personally, so that we know we can't live or serve without Christ. Abiding in Christ vs. on your own will inevitably bring about completely different experiences and results.

"Experience personally" speaks about the need to experience it ourselves. Psalm 34:8 says: " Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." If you analyze a glass of orange juice or all the nutrients in a dish, but you did not eat a bite. It is still useless to you, and you have no way to understand what it is about. Not only does the Holy Spirit come to let us understand, He also calls us to enter and experience it ourselves. When we really experience it whole-heartedly, it is obvious that there will be two different results:

a) Withered, incapable, useless, unable to bear fruit

John 15 says: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "... for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and

they are burned.” (John 15:4-6) If we are unwilling to respond in faith, this would be our experience: withered, incapable, useless, and unable to bear fruit.

Having said this, I hope we pause and take a moment to review our own spiritual situation. If we were weighed on a scale by God, do we have more time rejoicing; or withering? Do you feel that you are victorious by the Lord, full of life, full of vitality; or do you feel weak and incapable? In fact, these answers clearly tell us something, but we often refuse to face it. Just like Brother Ernest once said: “When the dashboard of your car has a red light flashing, reminding you to check the engine, but you ignored it, and even felt it was annoying and covered it with a black tape, continuing to drive on, you will encounter problems sooner or later.” A sister from our previous church who is in a better financial situation, bought a brand-new Mercedes Benz. The engine of the car burned out in less than three months because she didn't expect a new car would have a problem but the engine oil in this car was leaking. She simply ignored the warning. It didn't take long until the oil leaked out completely, and the engine totally burned out.

Brothers and sisters, if our lives are dry and feel like we can't do anything, unable to bear fruit, feel no power, useless and worthless before the Lord, something is wrong, and must not be ignored. When we really live in Christ, we will feel that every day is full of value, and even little things are valuable and will help us grow. We can experience and gain the Lord in anything; any matter can change our lives and our relationship with God; our whole life is positive and full of power; and we no longer feel that we are useless. "Useless" is our understanding of who we are and the essence of our old life, but when we are in Christ, our whole life is too meaningful and valuable!

b) Full of Christ and be fruitful

When we are in Christ, John 15:5 says: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him.” Verse 7: If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” This is about a person who truly dwells in Christ and enjoys the indwelling Christ, this is the life should be. Not only should he be fruitful, but the word of the Lord is always in him. If you truly live in Christ, it will be as the scripture says: “My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

When I shared the gospel to Ms. Yu in college, she said: “You Christians often wait until things are over and then go back to explain it from the perspective of God. Everything is to beautify it and call it a testimony.” This indeed challenges us. However, our God can be experienced. Before things happen, we should also be able to know his heart; know what his will is; and know that he will listen to our prayers. This promise reminds us that we need to turn back to Christ and to know this great Lord. When we are really abiding in the vine, not only will we bear fruit, but also live in a lively, truly, and intimate fellowship with the indwelling Christ. He will speak to us often, and we can also pour out our hearts to Him at any time, pray to Him. He will accomplish everything. The “accomplishment” I said does not necessarily follow what we ask for, but He will

always respond. Even if his answer is no, we will know why he does not agree. This is a lively abiding; this is a lively relationship; this is a relationship we should all envy, and we should all have and enjoy. The branches and the vine are connected, and all his riches and the juices have become our blessings. It's not dry, useless, and burnt outside as I just said, but it's full of Christ and be fruitful!

Ephesians" 4:15 says: "...grow up in all things into Christ." Only with Christ, then we can grow into Christ; all who are of Christ can grow into Christ. When we are united with the Lord, our growth is to grow into Christ and grow into the body. Only this kind of growth has eternal value, and will not be destroyed. On the contrary, if we are only in our old selves, this growth cannot be attributed to Christ, because it is carnal. Therefore, we must taste the grace of the Lord and experience it for ourselves. If your experiences are mostly negative, weak, dry, failure, useless, incompetent... don't feel sad, this can also be grace, to let us see we are finite, just as the Lord said: "Apart from me, you can do nothing." (John 15:5) Without the Lord, we really can't do anything. Nothing is nothing, keep on trying is like kicking against the goads; we are torturing ourselves. But when I am in Christ, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:37) When I am truly connected to Christ, I grow up in all things into Christ. When I am truly in Christ, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." (Philippians 1:20) When I am truly in Christ, I can say "thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place." (2 Corinthians 2:14) All these promises in the Bible are all linked together, in the relationship with Christ. They become possible only in Christ and in life abiding in Him.

c) Challenge of constantly abiding

In the parable of the true vine, the Lord Jesus repeatedly used "be always [sic: abide] in me," and the verb "abide" is in the present tense, indicating that it is a continuous, lively, and united life. This kind of union fills both the individual and the church with the life of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what the enemy was afraid of, and wanted to destroy with all his might. Therefore, how to be able to connect to the indwelling Christ (constantly abiding), freshly and continuously and embracing all the abundance of Christ, is indeed a challenge for every Christian and the churches.

Brother Spock said: "The thing that the enemy fears most is the true connection between the earth and heaven." Reading this parable of the vine, we can also say: "What the enemy fears most is branches abiding in the vine." If I was truly abiding in Christ, all the nutrients, water, syrup, and blessings of the vine came to us. This is not something we can earn; it is He himself who is supplying us. Therefore, this is what the enemy fears most and does not want to see. But how can we stay abiding in the indwelling Christ freshly and continuously? There is a hymn called "Constantly Abiding" in the hymn book of "hymns of the Saints," which reminds us to be constantly abiding in Christ. Not just come to the meeting occasionally, or to prayer meetings, to shout out and connect a bit when in

suffering. We all need to see that the abiding is a fact and an objective truth, and we must subjectively, constantly return to this union to experience Him. As we often say: "You can make an U-Turn to God at any time." We can "return at any time, move forward by faith." These eight words are a short phrase written in the senior message board of the university student fellowship when I graduated from university. I will use this phrase for our topic. Regardless of many failures and regrets, all becomes past in Christ, because "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17) Then, we can "forget those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead" in Christ (Philippians 3:13), seize every day and every opportunity, and we can continue to grow and experience Him. Don't take "abide in Christ" as a graduate school course, or an incomprehensible, abstract realm. In fact, "the branches cannot leave the vine" is the same as "the fish cannot leave the water." It is a very simple truth. Today, if you see a fish leaving water, you will not comfort it by saying, "Don't worry, endure to the end you shall be saved" or "in all these things we are more than conquerors through the Lord!" On the contrary, you will throw it back into the water immediately, and it will be alive. The experience of Christians is similar today, it is as simple as that, return to abide in Christ, there is nothing too complex. "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15). But what a pity that the children of God often were "unwilling."

Once, an old sister taught young co-workers: "Nowadays God's servants don't know how to feed God's children. They seem to be doing all the work on the surface. Just like a little girl, when one day her mother was not at home. She reached out to the fish tank and took out the goldfish, imitating her mother's tone, said to the struggling goldfish: "Oh, baby, you have to be obedient, be a good girl!" The fish can't breathe and is struggling desperately, she said: "Don't cry, don't cry, don't make trouble, sleep obediently!" Later, it was really quiet. The little girl was very proud and said "Look, I put it to sleep!" The older sister went on to say: "If you don't lead everyone on the path of life, you will lead even the living to death!"

Brothers and sisters, this is what we have to learn before the Lord today. How should we lead a group Bible study? How should we lead worship? How should we preach? How should we share the gospel with our family? How can we be constantly abiding in Christ? If we go astray, I plead that the Lord would turn us back immediately, so that we could return into the Lord's presence. This is a basic discipline that is worthy of our practicing diligently, full efforts, continually. The enemy often wants us to ignore the important salvation and pay attention to other minor things.

John 15:4-7: "Abide in Me, and I in you..." (John 15:4) This is the Lord's command. "He who abides in Me, and I in him" is the promise of the Lord. Verse 7 "If you abide in Me...", this is the blessed ending. I hope we often remind each other of this.

John" 14:21-23, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." ...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." The plural "our" is especially useful here. The triune God wants us to be their home. The key lies in whether we hear the Lord's words and are willing to obey them. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us, step by step, not only to make us understand, but also to lead us into entering in. " He who has My commandments and keeps them," not only can he enjoy this blessing, but God and the Lord will both appear to him and make a dwelling place in him. This is a Christian life full of joy, peace, and vitality. Truly, it is very simple, that is, if we are determined to please the Lord in everything, all the promised blessings will come to us, and the Lord will teach us through the Holy Spirit.

3. Live the testimony of a life united with the Lord

Live the testimony of life united with the Lord

This is not what I want to talk about today. The next three New Man Discipleship sessions will cover this topic.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, your truth is so precious, not only it's from the love of God the Father, but also because Jesus Christ had shed his blood and died for us, so that these promises and blessings are given to us. Lord, open our eyes and let us really know You, really know the great salvations. The enemy uses all kinds of devices to mislead us, covering our eyes with a veil. Lord, let us learn to always turn to you in all circumstances, abide in you, and learn to retreat back to you. Lord, help each of us, help your churches, so we not only do not be ignorant of these precious truths, but also live in them. We pray and thank you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen!