

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Sermon Series: Vintage Faith
Title: Difference-Making Faith
Speaker: Matt Ewert
Text: John 15:1-17
Date: October 15, 2017



(The material below is a resource from which you can select what will be most appropriate, challenging and transforming for your Life Group. There is far more material below than you could possibly tackle in one session. As you sense the Holy Spirit guidance, you will be able select the right material for your group.)

DISCUSSION

CENTRAL FOCUS OF THE MESSAGE:

*"Our vocation, (our calling as individuals and as the community of Jesus) is to pray that God's Kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven. Out of that praying, we give ourselves to bear Kingdom-fruit—**out the abundance of our intimate relationship with the King** of the universe. Will you say yes to giving yourself to that vision?"*

WARM-UP

What a coincidence! We've been watching the devastating effects of wildfires in wine country in northern California. Our text is talking about the same two activities – bearing fruit (v.5) and burning withered branches that are not connected to the vine (v.6).

- ⇒ Which one of the California event has gotten the most press—the burning or the fruit?
- ⇒ Which one do we prefer to focus on in this text?
- What's a "friend"? Do you have any close friends? How do you describe your interactions with your "friend(s)"?
- Are females generally better at intimacy than men? Is this a hardwired, genetic thing?

STUDY OUTLINE: Reviewing the message

- **Read the passage.**
 - ⇒ Ask people to note key words or phrases that have caught their attention. Be ready to share with the group later. We will be enriched as each person contributes.
 - ⇒ Ask them to note some of the questions that have arisen in their reading.
- **Redefining the Intimate Relationship** between Jesus and his Disciples: vv. 12-15
 - ⇒ No longer "servants." "You are my friends." What are the differences?
 - ⇒ What do you treasure most in making a "friend"?
 - ⇒ Pastor Matt has contrasted between doing things *for* Jesus, but rather doing things *with* Jesus. What are the key differences between "doing things *for* Jesus" and "doing things *with* Jesus"?

Wrestle with some key questions as we talk about intimacy with Jesus:

- ⇒ Today the word "intimacy" has been equated with sex in our culture. What does the word mean to us?
- ⇒ How do we go about creating intimacy?
- ⇒ If I can "do nothing," do I just sit on my duff and do nothing until the Holy Spirit decides to give me a "sap zap"?
- ⇒ What are the biggest blockers from us becoming more intimate with God?
- ⇒ How could we move forward to encourage each other to grow more intimate with Jesus? What works

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for you?

⇒ Need some help in growing in intimacy? **See below** for a simple guide to get you going.

FROM INFORMATION TO TRANSFORMATION: From talking to acting

SAC's Dream Statements:

*"The church we dream of is a community of people so radically transformed by Jesus that goodness and love spill out of them and **create tangible, positive change** wherever they go. It is a people who make God's **kingdom visible in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools and places of recreation**. It is a community that experiences **unprecedented favor** with others and leads people to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."*

- Pastor Matt has claimed *"that one of the core purposes of man is to work and keep the earth, to care for and positively impact God's good creation...This is our divine vocation! It is our calling."*
 - ⇒ Does this water down the idea of evangelism?
 - ⇒ Do those who are not-yet-believers in this community hate Christians?
 - ⇒ Why did the early church experience "favor with people"? (Acts 2:42-47)
 - ⇒ What might "caring for and positively impacting" the community mean for your life group? For you personally?
- **Goals that serve as markers to fulfill our vocation:**
 - ⇒ *"We will be a community of people who have grown in our ability to have natural spiritual conversations with those who do not yet follow Jesus."*
 - * What are your fears as we talk about the possibilities of us getting into these kinds of conversations?
 - * Where might you see "a door for the Word" in your family, neighborhood, work place, in your recreation? (Col. 4:3-6)
 - * "Godspace" from Doug Pollock is a great resource for beginning spiritual conversations:
 - *"I care deeply about the people God misses the most – those who need a safe space to ask their questions, share their doubts, voice their concerns, and even vent their anger toward God and the church. They need space to bring their real selves into the light; to journey one step at a time toward the cross."*
 - * A definition of evangelism – Darrell Johnson: *"Evangelism is listening to the conversation between the Holy Spirit having with another human being, and we speak when one or the other invites us to speak."*
 - How might this statement redefine our thinking about evangelism?
 - ⇒ *"We will be a community who can share stories of tangible "Kingdom-come" moments in our community as a result of embracing our call to be Jesus' ambassadors."*
 - What does the Kingdom look like? A curtain pulled back where the world gets a glimpse of the New Creation of God.
 - * A restoration of things:
 - From brokenness to wholeness
 - From alienation to reconciliation
 - From sickness to health
 - From violence to peace
 - * Can you share a "Kingdom-come" moment you've experienced?
 - * *"Buried beneath the surface of all the dirt and noise and crime and poverty and pollution of that terrifying city (New York), I glimpsed the treasure that waits to make it a holy city - a city*

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where human beings dwell in love and peace with each other and with God and where the only tears there are tears of joy and reunion." Frederick Buechner.

- * Do we see Abbotsford with these kinds of eyes?

THE DESIRE TO GROW IN INTIMACY:

"Ready for Deeper Knowing of God" – from *'Gift of Yourself'* by David G. Benner. Pages 43-44

- Honest and prayerful reflection on the Gospels and daily experience will provide a rich opportunity to meet God in ways that will change you.
- Commit yourself to 15 minutes at the end of each day to do the following:
 - ⇒ First, take your journal and find a quiet place where you can sit undisturbed.
 - ⇒ Select a Gospel account of one event in the life of Christ. After a brief prayer inviting God to allow you to imaginatively enter this experience and encounter Jesus, spend five minutes dreaming on this passage. Record your thoughts.
 - ⇒ After thanking God for the gift of time spent with Jesus, ask for help in reflecting on your day in order to better discern God's divine presence during it. Record these prayers.
 - ⇒ Allow the events of the day to replay before you. Accept whatever comes into focus, no matter how trivial it initially appears to be, as a gift from God. Ask for help to discern God's divine presence in the experience. Record these replay moments.
 - ⇒ End your time by thanking God for gifts received during this process. Record your prayers.