

**MESSAGE OUTLINE—WEEK OF MAY 9, 2021**  
**THIS IS THE LIFE: REMAIN IN MY LOVE**

**John 15:9-17 (NIV)**

<sup>9</sup> “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.

**Life in Jesus (joy) is found by remaining in love...**

**1. From the Father. (v.9-11)**

*I am the true vine; you are the branches.*

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **1 John 3:1 (NIV)**

**2. As modeled by Jesus. (v.12-15)**

*...to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

**Ephesians 3:16–19 (NIV)**

**3. For each other. (v.16-17)**

*This is my command: Love each other.*

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. **1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV)**

“I’m a lifelong Christian, but the challenges of this year, particularly the constraints of COVID 19 and joblessness, have led to the stark realization that on most days, I wake up not believing the Gospel on a functional level. I wake up believing it is all up to me to make life work. I am my own god. I have to earn my salvation. Since this realization, time with God includes intentionally remembering and connecting to the deep love of God, the completeness of the work of Jesus, who I am, and who God is... My call is to come near to God so I can be transformed by His love, and in doing so be enabled to move forward with good works in God’s time. Finding complete love and rest in Christ has characterized my time with God this year... I have been trying to expand my time alone with God by being aware of God’s ever-present love. Ever-present. Always with me.”

**NOTES:**

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### *THIS IS THE LIFE: REMAIN IN MY LOVE*

#### CONNECT

- Do you feel more like Jesus' servant or his friend? What is the underlying feeling or belief that causes you to lean toward one or the other?

**SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:** Prayer of Recollection (learning to collect the fragmented pieces of our identity, to find our one identity in Christ). The Prayer of Recollection helps us focus on what God says is true of us and what false beliefs about ourselves we need to let go of to live more authentically. As we grow in our ability to trust God's love to define our foundational identity, we are free to live out our secondary roles and responsibilities from a place of confidence, loving others sacrificially. The goal is for our soul to find rest in God's love, where no pretending or achieving is needed, so we are free to be our true selves as God's beloved children. Journal your responses to the following prompts.

**Silence:** Begin by sitting quietly. Relax in the presence of God. Focus on the joy you receive in knowing God loves you and chooses you as his own.

1. **Admit my limitations:** I acknowledge I am not God, but a finite creation of God— "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1)  
**Reflect:** Imagine yourself as a little child with Jesus. What does it feel like to freely be yourself? As a child, what does it feel like to live within the limitations of a trusted caregiver?
2. **Embrace my true identity:** I belong to Christ alone—"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15: 9, 11)  
**Reflect:** How have you found true joy by keeping the commands of Christ? What has prevented you from experiencing this joy?
3. **Rest in God's love:** I believe God loves me and will never let me go—"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16)  
**Practice:** Now imagine yourself resting with Jesus, safe, secure, and at peace. How does it feel to simply receive your true identity as God's beloved child?

**Prayer:** Which of the three statements is easiest for you to embrace as true? Which do you struggle with? Write a short prayer, expressing your desire to deepen your dependence on Jesus' love to form your identity.

**Group Debrief:** What did you discover about yourself through this practice? What are your overall feelings about God's love for you? How do you feel about your love for Jesus?

#### SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

- Read John 15:9-17 aloud. What did you find unexpected or surprising this week?
- What is Jesus referring to with the word "command" in this passage? What makes it possible for us to follow his commands? What makes it difficult?
- What are the promises in this passage? What assurance do these promises give to you?
- How is living a life of love costly? What does it require? What are the results or outcome of the kind of love Jesus is talking about?
- How would you describe your experience of Jesus' love for you this year? How would you describe your love for Jesus? What holds you back from experiencing this love?
- What does it mean for us to be Christ's friends today? How does our culture support or squelch that from happening?
- What role does rest play in your understanding of spiritual growth? What struggles do you experience when it appears you are in a dormant season?
- How does this passage encourage you to balance productivity with rest? What daily, weekly or annual rhythms do you have that keep you "in Christ" (remaining, abiding, connecting, growing, resting, and producing fruit)?
- What, from the personal testimony printed in the outline, resonates with you? Why?

#### PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

**Prayer Requests:** Considering the week ahead, how can we pray for you?

**Closing Benediction:** *Please Lord, fill us with the desire to receive your love, rest in your love, and offer your love to others, as you guide us. Thank you for giving us the assurance that we are free to love others without worrying that we are not good enough for you. May we find our true rest in you this week, Amen.*

**DAILY PRACTICE:** Continue to spend time with God daily in Solitude, Scripture, and Prayer (see Reading Plan & Playlist). Reflect on your relationship with Jesus and his love for you. Ask God to deepen your understanding of what it means for you to remain "in Christ" today.