

John chapter 15 verse 4:

Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine; so neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I think the vine analogy is brilliant because it's actually about God's DNA. Within the vine...I am fortunate to live out in California close to Napa Valley which satisfies the European in me, deep, deeply. So I travel around all the vineyards just encouraging people; just talking to these guys. And the thing I love about just traveling around, just talking to these guys, is that they all have stories ... all of the long established vineyards have stories of way back. Their family members coming across from the east coast to the west coast and the Conestoga's and carrying vines. And they've all got stories like about coming through the dessert and water is short and taking mouthfuls of water and just swirling it around in their mouths and spitting it out on the root balls of the vines. Doing everything they can to keep this thing alive. They've got stories like that. Some of them have like the original wagons right there. And I just love that whole kind of thing. You get talking to these guys and just the way they talk about the vine and their relationship with it, the vine sap rises to the highest point without any problem.

2:10

I love the fact that God is the vine, and His agape love flows from Him, as our primary source. One of the prime things we simply must believe is that God is incredibly passionate about us; He loves us deeply and understands us so well. Nobody understands you like God understands you. Nobody sees you like God sees you. It is so important for us to understand the depths of Gods affection for us and the lengths that He has gone to, to bring us into fellowship and the lengths that He will go to, to maintain that fellowship with us. The grace of God is utterly astonishing for us and to be able to live in that place day after day is to come to totally come to depend on the goodness of God. To make it a lifestyle choice to make yourself vulnerable to the goodness of God.

Whether I am strong or weak is immaterial to God. He is the same. So, as I told you last night, when you are having a bad day with God He is not having a bad day with you. He is just totally the same. So whatever you are going through, however you are handling it, whether you are handling it well, badly, or you could improve He is still the same. Whether you are having a rebellious day, He is still the same. He never changes; you always know exactly where you are with Him. And if you are having a stupid rebellious day grace abounds towards you. Cause He knows on days that we are going to be idiots and He has kind of like budged for it. "Graham's having a bad day. The boy needs some help right now".

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Everything in God's heart is about laughter. He is the most joyful person I've ever met. God loves to laugh; He likes laughing with us, but I think mostly He laughs at us. It's like, "Can you believe what Graham just said? I don't know, what is wrong with that boy? Good job I put him into Christ cause I might slap him right now." I like the fact that the grace of God is like such a dependable life source. So you can relax you are always accepted, you are always acceptable because of Who God is. I

love the fact that my relationship with God doesn't depend upon my performance as a Christian. I love that especially. God isn't really interested in my performance He's interested in me knowing Who He is for me. I love that fact that when we get to heaven there won't be any judgment for us because Christ has been judged. When we come before the Lord, He is going to have a few questions for us and they will be mostly around what we were able to receive. So He will just come and say, "John, I had all this to give you but you only let me give you this. I had so much that I wanted you to see in life and get, but you only saw this. You had such a narrow concept of Who I was and you never saw me in all my immensity. I could never get your heart to stretch so that you could receive the bigness of Who I was in life."

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You know the thing that grieves the Holy Spirit is not sin because He's dealt with that; what grieves Him is when we don't see God as He really, really is. We don't become like absolutely wrapped and astonished. (Killing bug here) God has so much to give us and what grieves Him is not sin it's that we just don't get the bigness of Who He is that we just don't lay hold of the immensity of God. One of the last things said in the book of Acts is a warning about dullness and astonishment. A warning about dullness and a plea for astonishment. I think sometimes you look around the Western Church and it is incredibly dull and boring. And you look at the Western Church and you think. "My gosh is God like that?" God is incredibly creative amazingly so and He is consistent but He is unpredictable. You always know where you are with Him; you seldom know what He is going to do next. And He is never going to do it the way you think it ought to be done. Which is why He is God and frankly you are not.

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God was not content to make a few species of bug. He made millions. You look at creation and see the incredible variety; what an amazing imagination went into creation. And then you look at the Church and you think it is one dimensional; it's boring, its mind numbingly boring on days. We do the same thing every week; all of our meetings are exactly the same. It's a Hymn-prayer sandwich. Hymn, prayer; Hymn, prayer; Hymn prayer, talk; ministry and home. I was at a church the other week and I came in and they gave me this typed sheet of the meeting. 17 minutes of worship, 4 minutes for the offering, 3 minutes for announcements, 21 minutes for a talk (I know I laughed as well) and they want to be out of there like in an hour and 10 minutes. So the Pastor gives me this and I look at it and I look at him and I say, "Do you know if we're quick we can get to the hotel, I can pack my bags and there's a 10 o'clock flight that I can get out of here, cause I'm so not doing this." And then I ripped it up into tiny little pieces and I put it in the top pocket of his jacket and I patted it and I said "Why don't you all keep that, cause Prophets don't keep to a time table and neither does the Holy Spirit. So I am so not doing that. So now what do you want to do? Do you want me to go home or what do you want to do?" He looks at me like a rabbit caught in the headlights. "Well the people won't stay." And I said, "Trust me! God shows up. Everyone stays." The problem is, when you have something like this, it's just you that's gonna show up. So this is about you.

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So I stood up in the meeting and just said, "Look, I know you guys are use to coming here and staying an hour and 10 minutes, this is so not happening today. So this is the deal, I won't get mad if you leave, if you don't get mad if some people stay". Nobody left hey. An hour and 10 minutes, we were still there 3 hours later. It's not about time, it is about Who the Holy Spirit is and what He wants to do. So we have this God Who's wonderfully creative, consistent, but He is unpredictable. He is consistent in Who He is, but He is unpredictable in His actions. So unpredictable that there is absolutely no security in what God is doing. There is only security in Who He is.

12:35

So He wants to rescue over a million people from bondage. You and I would send an army with tanks, and guns and planes. He sends one old boy with a stick and a stutter. Like what's that about? He got Moses on the backside in the dessert. How many times do you think he's seen a bush spontaneously combust? Yet on this particular Tuesday, he looks at this bush. And he is thinking, "Well it's burning, but it is not like being consumed". There's nothing else to do in the dessert. It's like sheep, goats, sun, scorpions, nothing else to do. So he like wanders over and suddenly finds himself deep in conversation with a shrub. I mean like what is that? That's kind of bizarre, eh? Monte Python couldn't have written a better story than that. This shrub says "Take your shoes off cause you're on holy ground." It's hot today and I'm talking to a shrub. And then suddenly this shrub wants him to go to Egypt.

... edit from here ...

So Mo, what cha all doing for the weekend? Well nothing. Well just skip down to Egypt and bringing back a million people with you? Uh, No. How do you explain that one to your Father in law? So Moses at supper that evening.. "So how was your day today?" It was interesting! ... Interesting word interesting hey? Oh interesting. so what do ya mean? .. I saw this bush kind of like burst into flames. Well yea been there seen that like a million times...Yeah but this one didn't like burn up. ... What?..... It didn't burn up! . So I wandered across there..uhhh. Anyway we had a chat... Excuse me?.... I had a conversation with a shrub... You talked to a bush? .. Yeah and it wasn't George .. (had to slip that one in there) Did you take your hat today? . Well, yeah . but so I'm standing there like in my bare feet..You were in your bare feet?....Yeah well it told me to take my shoes off ..apparently all the ground around the bush, this shrub, was like holy... Ok, so do you want to make a doctors appointment? .. How do you tell your father in law... Can I have some time off?" Well are you going on vacation? . Well not really, I have to go down to Egypt and give a message to Pharaoh. And then I have to bring a million people back with me. How do you explain all of that hey? It's kind of weird...half the things that God does are just like..don't expect God to be logical because He's not. He's intuitive. The only time God will speak to your reason is when you've sinned, then He says Come now let's reason together though your sin's be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. That's the only time He speaks to your reason. The rest of the time He just says don't lean on your own understanding..Trust Me. What are you trusting? Well you're not trusting Gods actions. You're trusting His nature-----because His actions are unpredictable.

Ok guys, Jericho.. biggest most fortified city on earth, you don't have to build ramps and shield

towers..why don't you all just walk around it for a week and say nothing then on the last day just shout as loud as you can and the walls will come down..right? Try to get evangelicals to do that..it's gonna be messy. Imagine all the women saying ..you want my husband to walk around that for a week and say nothing?..you want my husband to walk for a week? And say nothing? You really expect my husband to walk around that for a week and say nothing; are you mad? And then he has to shout and the wall s will fall flat. It's not in anyone's manual for like taking a city. No army on earth has like copied that stunt. Oh yea, well you know we're going to just walk around Baghdad for a week and say nothing. That's unpredictable hey..

How about getting across Jordan into the promised land. When you are surrounded by the enemy and they've got better weapons than you, ... they've got chariots and more people, ... and the first thing God wants to do is circumcise everybody. So they're all walking around like John Wayne for three weeks totally incapable of fighting .. Like. why now? Excuse me Josh, (committee forms) you know elder board comes up, deacons arrive, shouldn't we do this on the other side of the Jordan? .. Wouldn't it be more sensible, logical? Yeah, but God isn't logical. He's intuitive. And apart from that He has a really bazaar sense of humor. So they are all walking around like John Wayne for three weeks. incapable of fighting and God is just killing Himself laughing. What is He on?

So you're out numbered 4 to 1 and Gideon is thinking.. "If everyone fights to the best of his ability, we might just have a chance." All the Sergeants are going around to all the guys, "Kill four and you can have a coffee." So all the soldiers are going ... Kill how many?----Kill four! Starbucks! Ok, just kill four and we'll all be cool. Gideon is praying something like...Dear God please be with us. Let everyone fight to the best of their ability...God's nudging one of the angels mean while thinking, I think Gideon's got too many men. I know these boys, if by some fluke they do win this battle, they'll be impossible to live with for the rest of their lives. They'll be "high fiving" each other forever. .. "We're bad!" So He sends out a word that says, "If anyone is scared right now they can go home hey...and 22,000 guys can't believe their luck. If this was a contemporary story all you would smell was burning rubber in the parking lot. So Gideon is now down to 10,000 guys, he's outnumbered 16 to 1 and he's saying.. "Don't help me Lord, hey!" Meanwhile God is still kind of like..umm bit iffy about the numbers. They're only out numbered 16 to 1 and they've got Me...so He chooses your army based on whether He likes the way you drink your water...What is that? Let's send all the guys down to the river and get them to drink and we'll just choose the ones that drink only in a certain way. It's Wednesday and He's probably bored, I don't know. What's the deal? So Gideon ends up with 300 less than 1% now He's outnumbered 400 to 1, but God's happy hey! So God grins at him and says now you can go out and surround the enemy..Gideon's thinking . math is not your strong point hey? I couldn't have surrounded them with 32,000, how the heck do I surround them with 300? But the agony is not over. Because then God sends out a message tell the guys I want all their shields. So he's got all the guys lined up hey..Like, what have I done wrong? I pay my tithe..I always get to the meeting before time..I've been involved in the children's work, I've even run the PA, What have I done wrong? ----- My mom said don't leave the Baptist, geese this is what

a Charismatic church feels like outnumbered..all kind of guys all lined up ya know...and God wants your shield. What does He want it for? I mean I need this shield..this is the only thing between me and certain death; push off you ain't having my shield! He wants my shield? Eventually there is a big pile of shields. And there is a contemporary story where the truck pulls up and they start handing out a vase. Can you imagine a sergeant coming up and saying..Here's a vase. What?.... You've gotta hold this...Ok..your vase is bigger than mine..so they're holding this vase..soon the guys are all holding a pot..oh great, thanks. Another truck pulls up and they start handing out trumpets. Here's your trumpet..Ok... Gideon I can't play the trumpet. I mean, he's totally weird hey...and by this time Gideon is pulling his hair out. It's like bazaar...And then God says..So Gideon how ya doin? . Well I was doin ok until You started messin' around. Well would you like a prophecy? Yeah, OK.

Well go down into the camp of the enemy and I'll give you one. .. Can I not have one here? God's thinking yeah but it wouldn't be half as much fun. So here he is like the enemy has about 160,000 guys. So here he is in the middle of the night trippin' over guy ropes, thinking to himself, I hate my life. And I want to be a plumber and somewhere in the middle of that huge camp he ends up on the outside of the one tent where the guy on the inside is having a bazaar dream. Huge round loaf of bread, come rolling down the hill crashing through the camp and his friend inside the tent says, Ah that's the sword of Gideon. Gideon's outside going . round loaf of bread, sword, sword.. I don't get it. Except God's prophesying through the mouth of the enemy their own destruction and so he kneels down in the camp of the enemy and worships, you know like you do, and he's in awe of that all day it's strange. It's God being unpredictable. So there can never be any security in ministry in what God is doing...there's only security in Who He is. God is consistent but He is unpredictable.

The church on the other hand is inconsistent in relationships but boringly predictable in how we do church. Somehow we are in the move of the Spirit right now in North America we are turning that whole thing around and we are moving away from functional Christianity to a relational spirituality that carries at the heart of it a hunger for the presence of God. We are going to set our stall out for the presence of God and nothing else. And in all of that we are going to have to become unpredictable in how we do things. We're gonna have to learn sensitivity to the Holy Spirit cause the wind blows where it will. You can't catch it, you can't tie it down, you can't maneuver it in anyway...God. and we're learning how to be relationally consistent but ministerially sensitive to God and unpredictable so our meetings will never be the same week in and week out something new, something different, something creative..Why?... cause it's in our DNA. We are returning to our Biblical roots in that context..

Remember that abiding is the ability to remain in unbroken and continuous communication no matter what is occurring. Some times abiding is simply living a quiet life in God...learning to live from the inside to the outside. Learning to come to a place of peace in God where stuff from the outside does not touch you, because life flows from the inside out. And so we are learning how to live at peace, how to live in a deep place of rest; so for me I practice my rest and my peace

everyday. My aim is to be the most tranquil person on the planet. I want to be a peaceful man. I know that rest is a weapon. And I expect to defeat the enemy, one through my rest and secondly through being fresh. The enemy wants us to be stale in our spirituality. The Bible says that everything is new every morning, so we are fresh everyday. So I intend to maintain my spirituality at a level of freshness because freshness defeats the enemy. New every morning is the blessing of God. My goal is to live fresh, stay fresh and stay fresher longer.

Some times abiding, being at rest, looks passive, looks like inactivity to some people. I can do more out of rest than other people can out of panic. Scripture says though that we have to labor at entering into rest. You have to work at it. It's a paradox. (Hebrews 4:11)...work at entering into rest. So for me being at peace means that the bottom line is I push away everything that causes dis-peace. Any sense of panic or fear, or worry or anxiety..I'm holding it out there. "No you're not coming in! You're so not welcome! You're not coming into my heart, you're not coming into my head. I resist you!

Peace is not God delivering us from circumstances that we don't have anxiety...peace is an equalizing pressure on the inside. Life is pressure. And life is stressful. But peace is an equalizing pressure within: If pressure from the outside is a 1000 pounds of pressure per square inch...peace is a 1000 pounds of pressure on the inside. Peace is an equalizing pressure within. I can live on sustained pressure happily for weeks and weeks on end because my peace runs at a very deep level, which makes it very difficult for the enemy to actually defeat me on anything, because I have patience and he doesn't. The enemy has no access to the fruit of the Spirit. So what's he looking for..he's looking for an easy victory. He's looking for a quick kill. He's hoping that you won't show up for the fight. He has no patience...so some times you just have to take your problems out into a deep place and drown them. What's that deep place? It's the deep place of God's affection.

So for me when the enemy comes calling I don't go out to meet him. I go in to meet God first. I make him wait. So waiting on the Lord, if you know how to wait on the Lord the enemy can't touch you. Cause the enemy can only come and generate in you who he is. He is impatient, so he generates impatience in you when he comes that's what he wants. America is probably the most impatient culture I've ever been in. Everything is fast in this country, every thing's about speed...I want it! I want it now!.....everything is about that, it's a really impatient culture. You guys don't know how to wait. So that's what we're learning, how to be still, how to be patient and how to wait. The great thing for me is that being patient is so cool, and waiting is so brilliant because you just get to get into the face of God and wait on Him and that's like a treat. Meanwhile the enemy is on the outside thinking..You all gonna come out and fight or what? Na, later dude, later..Much later!

Some times waiting on the Lord, means when we come out and are ready to fight, the enemy has disappeared anyway. Some times it is not necessary to fight him, it's just necessary to get into the presence of God. The enemy hates you with a malignancy..a malignancy that is like awful, truly awful. He is after you, he is pursuing you, he'll do anything to stop you from abiding in Christ. His

intention is to pull you out of the place of abiding into a place where he can get a hold of you. So he is after you, he is pursuing you but he is not stupid, he won't chase you into the Holy of Holies. Cause when he knocks on that door it won't be you that opens it. Our goal, really is to run into the presence of God. The Name of the Lord is a high tower, the righteous run in and they are so safe.

So you have to know God as your refuge and your fortress, which is brilliant. This is the way it works. The enemy comes calling. You step back into your refuge that place of defense and you get into God... And then in some mysterious way, when you come out you come out through your fortress. You come out strong and powerful and kind of like ready to duke it out and often he's a no show. Or when you come out, suddenly he realizes you're a heck of a lot bigger than the guy you went in. I like that. Being in the presence of God always makes you bigger. Presence is so important. So the practice of Abiding is work at first. You have to work at it. You have to labor to enter into it; have to give yourself to it. But He gives you incredible grace to enable you to do so.

Many years ago in my devotional time, I got so frustrated with myself. My mind would wander all over the place, and I'd be coming down and I'd have all my great intentions for a brilliant time today. I'm gonna so astonish you today... And I get there and suddenly my mind is making lists. I mean, lists of things that I need to do; lists of stuff that I really have to do; and like grocery shopping! I'm thinking I'm a guy and I'm making lists about, yeah I need to buy coffee.. What the heck is wrong with me? Or I'm sitting there figuring out 14 ways of making jam...I mean anything..my mind is wandering all over the place. I'm so frustrated, I'm saying to the Lord, "I hate this." .. I'm always making list. My mind wanders all over the place. And the Lord just says, "Well, that's ok. Just wander after it and bring it back." I said, "No Lord. You don't understand. I could spend my whole quiet time wandering after my mind and bringing it back." And He said, "That's ok. I'll go with you." .. "What?" .. "I'll go with you. Son, this is a great discipline to establish. I don't mind going with you. When your mind wanders off, just go after it, bring it back, get on with stuff."

So, that was it. My mind wandered away. I got a hold of it by the scruff of the neck, brought it back. And so, there'll be a day though when your mind will learn that it can't wander off. The thing is, that before we came to Christ that's what our minds did. We wandered off. We had our own life. ----- So we have to have the discipline of bringing our mind under the rule of the Spirit. It's a simple discipline Graham. If you practice it, there'll come a day when your mind won't wander. And that'll be great. And that's exactly what happened. Took me three months though. Three months, my gosh. And now I can tell my mind to think something. .. Now my mind is an asset. .. Now my mind is fixed. , It's focused. And it's under the rule of the Spirit. And I haven't had that problem for years. And it's just a simple discipline!

And that is what we are doing. The practice of abiding is the practice of simple disciplines to remain in the presence of God that we practice until they become intuitive and instinctive in our life. We have to unlearn all the reactive ways that we have in life. Something happens and we react. .. Someone says something and we blow up; Instinctive reactions. .. We have to unlearn all of those

because they're not helpful. And they are the flesh. And it's carnality going rampant. You have to know what all your reactions are. Sometimes we blame it on other people and say..well he presses my buttons. .. Yeah, well, Dude you've got the button. It's like some people saying, "Yeah, but he makes me angry." Ah get off it! Nobody makes you angry. You choose to get angry. It's a choice. You're in control. Get over your bad self! The thing is when you get angry, it is because anger is in you and it comes out. Some people may actually bring it out. But the anger is actually in you. It's not like they put it in you. .. It's there. Hello. It's there, and God allows this person to come into your life to show you, .. Graham you've got anger. .. When ever that person gets within three feet of you, .. you flare up. You've got anger son. .. It's in you. It's not in them. So I'm allowing this person to come because I'm trying to show you that you've got anger. So get over it. Let's get this thing dealt with.

There are certain things that happen around us and our first response is to get anxious. Well anxiety is in you. So God allows certain situations. Why?.. He's just trying to gently point out, "Do you know what? You're anxious. Why don't we deal with that?" Some things happen and our reaction is fearful...panic...those things are in you. .. So, God allows the circumstance to come around so that He can show you. You know Graham you're fearful. .. So, we need to deal with that. So what you need right now, you need the perfect love of God cause perfect love casts out fear. So when fear shows up in me, the Lord is standing there with a gift. .. He's standing there with what's missing. What's missing in your life right now Graham is love. So, I've allowed this situation to happen so that your normal reaction is fear. What I'm trying to point out to you, son, is that fear is your reaction when love should be your response. What's missing Graham is love. So let Me give you that love and you give me the fear and it's a divine exchange. The Gospel is a divine exchange.

So think about the situations in your life. If you really want to grow up in God, think of all the places in your life where you react, and that's where growth needs to occur. And if you are really sensible you will have friends, could be your husband, could be your wife, but you'll have friends around you, people around you who will help you in those areas. You've got to be honest with a bunch of people. "This is what I know about myself. .. When certain things happen, this is how I react. And I know if I'm ever gonna grow up in God I have to deal with those areas. .. And this is what they are. So I give you permission, that when you see me reacting, I want you to come up and say, "You're better than that. You're missing something." If you are really serious about your growth, the first thing you know is you can't do it by yourself. You can't do it by yourself. You have two relationships with God. You have a vertical relationship, one on one with God. And then you have a horizontal relationship with God through the friends and people that He has put around you. And that helps you to get a right angle on things. Little bit of math there. You impressed? Yeah, I know and it's Saturday morning too. Astonishing.

So we're learning these things, ya know, because otherwise it's always our patterns that defeat us. It is always our habits that defeat us. And yet you can go ahead and blame all kinds of people. ..

But the reality is those things are in you. That's why you react. It's not ... Oh well, he did this and this made me feel like this. No you always feel like that no matter what people are doing. So, let's be honest about that. Let's understand that is my pattern. I react! Always know what your reactions are and then you've got to figure out what is the response I need to make. And growth is moving from one to the other. (Insertion here from BoB: If you can't stop from expleting (exploding) before you can think about a "best" response, then your only other option is to fill your soul with love, so that what spits out is love rather than your anger.)

So abiding is about responding to God first as our primary action in any circumstances. It's about discovering His love, His joy, His peace and remaining in them no matter the emotional roller coaster of your circumstances. I don't live in my circumstances, I live in Jesus. That's my choice. So there are just days when I just have to tell my emotions .. "Shut up! Get off it!" The best way to control your emotions, the negative ones, is thanksgiving and rejoicing. Thanksgiving and rejoicing are two life savers. They not only guarantee the presence of God, they also guarantee that you won't do anything stupid.

In everything give thanks. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. .. It is worth repeating. If you will give yourself to rejoicing and thanksgiving you will be a completely different person in six months. When something happens your first instinctive, intuitive, response is "Thank You, Lord." Now you are not thanking the Lord because something terrible has happened. It's not like Christian masochism. You're thanking God because He is with you in the circumstances. It's not, "O bless you Lord I just crashed my car." No! .. It's, "Thank You, Lord, for being with me in all things. Thanksgiving is not casual, it's intentional. It's standing there and the deal is you give thanks until you become thanks. So you give yourself to thanksgiving until thanksgiving takes hold of you. Then it's almost like you become giddy with giving thanks. .. You get so into the giving thanks that you lose sight of all the circumstances and you gain sight of Who God is. You give thanks until you become thanks. It's not, "Well, thank You, Lord, that this has happened .. thank you, Lord, that you're with me. That's never going to cut it. .. You have to get out there .. Thank You, Lord, really thanking the Lord, getting right in His face, and thanking God and going hard after it.

The enemy hates that! He hates it! It throws him into consternation and he doesn't know what to do! And everything he throws at us only makes us better. Rejoicing .. just all through the day just lifting your heart. Always know what you're rejoicing at. .. Make sure the rejoicing is focused. What should you be rejoicing about right now? What's the season of life that you are in right now? What are you learning from God right now? What part of God's nature is He most trying to impress on you right now? For a long time with me it was the kindness of God. God has been relentlessly kind to me for many, many years. And so I've come to depend upon the kindness of God as a way of life. .. God wants to show you everything about His nature. But there are times and seasons when He wants to show you something particular about Who He is and what He wants to be.

So when God started to show me His kindness, what happens is, the kindness of God for me when I first started to think about it was like a little Rabbit trail that I just followed. And then it became a pathway; and then it became a street; then it became a road and then it became a highway and now it's a freeway into the presence of God. And it is so instinctive for me now, every day for the last 15 or 16 years, every single day, I can't remember a day when God did not say something or do something incredibly kind in my life. I mean, day in day out; week in week out; month in month out, God is relentless about everything. God is relentless about everything. He is relentlessly kind, relentlessly loving until this highway opens up and takes you right into the presence of God.

So kindness was one of the things and then it changed into peace. So, I keep the whole kindness thing going and now I'm adding peace and rest to it. That way I'm into this place of learning rest and peace as a lifestyle. I became peaceful. It is really difficult to make me anxious. I can't remember the last time I was anxious. Really difficult. And now I'm in this place, this season of joy right now, where I just hear heaven laughing. Everything in my life right now is about joy. It's about the laughter of God. I'm learning about God's happiness, I'm learning about God's joy, I'm learning about His bazaar sense of humor. So all my tests are about establishing joy right now.

You have to know what part of God's nature He is trying to bring into your life right now so you can come to a place of experiencing it and depending on it. And there are loads of things to choose from. So every year or every couple of years, God just wants you to know this is what I want to be for you. So Graham it is really important to Me that you understand My joy in this season. It is really important to Me that you hear Me laughing on the battlefield. It is really important to Me that you understand that I want you to live every day under My smile. It is really important to Me that you understand there is a whole realm of fellowship inside My grin. So when I grin at you there's a whole world opening up in your heart and My heart. I want you to know because Heaven is like full of laughter. The whole of Heaven laughs. Enter into the joy of your Lord. So, everyday I want to increase joy in terms of who you are. I want you to look at life joyfully. I want you to respond joyfully to things. When the enemy comes calling I want you to laugh at him. I'll teach you how to laugh. This is what I'm showing you right now. I want laughter to bubble up in your soul. I want everything to be a reason for you to laugh and enjoy life.

So that's what I want to teach you right now. That's the season I'm in right now. So what's your season right now? What aspect of God's nature are you learning right now? All your tests will be around establishing that! God is so cool the way He thinks through things. So if you just look at the fruit of the Spirit you know you've got at least nine years of fun, except when you do the patience thing. That's not always that fun. Hey, it takes a while for patience to get amusing.

I was doing this class in England and a friend of mine is like the most impatient person. So every year I said to the class, "So what aspect of the fruits of the Spirit is God gonna teach you this year? The class was praying for him that he would be patient. We had to wait four years. So I looked at him and I said, "So, Mark, what is it this year you want? .. And he went. .. sigh.. "Patience." And we

were all going "Yes!!" High fiving. Cause we had a plan. Cause this guy is like so impatient. But he's doing well for like a couple of months which really annoys all of us. .. Cause we had this plan. Then he kind of like slips back into like his old ways of doing things and we're thinking, "OK." So we choose a night when we know he's gonna be watching the ball game on TV. We all go around his house. And we walk into his living room and there he is. And he says, "Oh guys, good to see you!"

He stands up. We throw him on the floor. And we sat on him. We just sat on him, six of us, for two hours. "Mark, you need to learn patience." - "Get up!" - "No!" - "Get off me!" - "No!" We just sat on him - watched the game - he couldn't see it. We just watched the game. .. We told him what was going on; just watched the game. "Get off!" - "No! We want you to get patient." - "Ok, I'm patient." - "No, you're not!" - "No, I'm really patient." - "No, you're lying." And we just sat on him. And after two hours we let him up. We dusted him down and we gave him a hug. .. "See ya. And, by the way, this is what's gonna happen the next time you lose it." So much fun. Oh yes! It took three months for him to loose it again. And we so went round again .. three hours this time. We just sat on him. Great! That's what friends do.

Do you know what? .. He's a different guy. .. He's a different man. He's calmed down, settled down. There's a grace on him now that was never on him before. And you know he's easier to be around. We kind of miss the old days of slinging him on the ground and sitting on him. Yeah, we were doing it because we were kind. That was our excuse. .. We just didn't make it to the Lord, because He would never have believed it.

Abiding is guarantee of the indwelling continuous presence of God as we learn to live from the inside to the outside. So it feels like to me like there is a caffeine spirit that needs to be placated. So why don't we take a break. I will just shout when I want you all to come back in. - so standup, stretch your legs, and go and get some coffee or buy some water.

Ok - just on that whole thing about abiding about the presence of God - you know. I get so many requests from people to pray for them so that they'll have the presence of God. And my question always is either - Why did you stop abiding? or Have you ever been taught about abiding?.....because abiding guarantees the Presence of God. So often what happens is we come to ministries and say lay hands on me so I'll know the presence of God .. And that's really not what God is about. He's about teaching us about how to live, how to have a lifestyle of dwelling, staying and remaining in His presence through the discipline of abiding through just simple disciplines of knowing how to bring yourself to peace.

I reckon I can normally bring myself to peace inside ten seconds .. no matter what is occurring, cause it's just a discipline .. Now you form different patterns of behavior before God. So when things happen, I want rejoicing and thanksgiving to be my intuitive, instinctive response. So push me .. I want to give thanks! Something happens. I want to give thanks! I want something to come

up out of my spirit. "Out of your inner man flow the issues of life." So when something comes at you from outside, you respond from the inside. Jesus said, "It's not what goes into a man that defiles him. It's what comes out!"

So let's look at verse 5 - "I Am the Vine. You are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing!" You know the Lord wants you to be incredibly fruitful in life. And fruitfulness is totally guaranteed in abiding. It's unconscious. It's unforced. God wants you fruitful in your finances; in your health; in your job; in your ministry; in your calling; in your life; in your relationships. He wants you fruitful. He wants you fruitful in yourself.

His wisdom flows out of a heart that is settled. And for me I'm looking at a way of life that enables me, no matter what occurs, it enables me to have a fixed and focused heart on Who God is. You know David's testimony was, "My heart is fixed, oh God, my heart is fixed!" And the goal of the Holy Spirit is to fix your inner man, your attention, on Who God is and especially on Who God is for you NOW. So of all people on the face of the earth we are the most confident. Your confidence is not just a privilege - it's a right; it's who you are! Confidence is like the base line of faith. So we are confident in Who God is, we're confident in His name, and we're confident in His nature.

Consider this too, that when you are developing the art of abiding, you will never have a problem knowing the will of God. I can't remember the last time I ever had a problem..think it was maybe 20 years ago. I always know what God wants. And If I don't, .. you know what it's easy to find out..decent cup of coffee..Holy Spirit..it's a cinch. You're always going to know what the will of God is because it's not like He's hiding it or anything! God loves you to know stuff. So knowing the will of God is like the easiest thing in the world because God is so intent on showing you, and it comes easy to us by the practice of abiding! Cause when you abide in Jesus, it's like you are the will of God. Because Jesus said I only say what the Father is saying; I only do what the Father is doing. So abiding means that you are dwelling in the presence of God; you are staying there; you are continuing there; so you're right in the presence, you're right in the place for God to show you stuff. And for God to show you instinctively, intuitively what He's up to. Abiding, means living in sonship that's fixed on the Father; so all your free choices in that context are actually God's fore ordained decrees.

So when you abide God starts to get previous with you. That means He shows you things that are to come. That's what Jesus said was one of the impacts of the Holy Spirit..It's better for you if I go away cause then the Holy Spirit can come and He will take you and show you things to come. So God shows you stuff that is down the road. I know that in October for example, I've got a couple of events coming off where there's gonna be some real warfare. And I know one place in particular there's gonna be a pretty tough battle. I'm so looking forward to it! I've got intercessors praying. I'm just so gonna go down there and kick butt! I'm really looking forward to it! I know what I have to do in that time so we're all fasting and praying for that time...I know what I'm suppose to do. I know

what I'm there for. I know what the break through is I'm so gonna enjoy myself. But it's gonna be a tough fight - but it'll be a good fight! And a good fight is one that you don't loose! Cause that would be a bad fight. We always fight a good fight. You know we are condemned to victory. Alright I just want that to percolate for a minute. We are condemned to victory. God always leads us in triumph. People listen to something like that and say will you're being triumphalistic. And I'm thinking and why the heck not? Better to be triumphalistic than defeatist I think.

So God wants to show you things that are coming, and wants you to live in such a way so that you can take advantage of everything that's happening for the sake of the Kingdom. Even when other peoples' poor choices radically affect your life. As you abide and as you stay in that fixed state before God, "He makes everything work out together for good!" Romans 8:28

Let me show you this for a moment. .. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good" (2 conditions, though) .. 1- "to those who love God in the moment" and 2- "to those who are called according to His purpose." For everything to work together for good, you have to love God in the situation you are in. That verse is not come kind of, "O well, everything will work together for good somehow." It's not kind of like the Doris Day syndrome "Que Sera Sera -whatever will be will be." It's not like Christian fatalism.

There are two things that have to happen for everything to work for good in the situation you are in. You have to love God. That means you can't react. You have to respond. (Insertion by BoB: "If you autonomically do react, that reaction is saturated in the overflowing love of God within your soul which contains no malice.") So if you are going to love God it means you are going to have to trust Him. It means you have to stand. It means that you have to stay and not run. It's not like, I'm a Christian get me out of here! You have to stay and you have to love God **in** that situation. And then you have to be called in that situation according to the purpose of God. Then you have to ask, "What is the purpose of God in this circumstance?" And you have to be called to achieve that purpose. .. Then everything works together for good.

For a lot of us, we've been in situations that have not worked together for good; and that's usually the reason why. (Insertion by BoB: "It is ALWAYS the reason when you are so in touch with God that you define "good" in the same way that God does. He only, ever, always does good. It is His nature. The human definition of good only occasionally coincides with God's definition of good. Consider parent and child views of what is good in the moment.") We've reacted, our flesh has kind of like showed up and not been a man of the Spirit. So we haven't loved God in the circumstances. We haven't blessed Him. We haven't given thanks. We haven't rejoiced thoroughly. And we've not had any peace in the circumstances. We've been anxious. We're not doing anything that co-operates with the Personality of God.

So, in every situation you're in, you're called to love God right there right then; and the expression of loving God is "Lord I thank You. I trust You." I'm not sure how this is going to work out, but I trust You, and I give You thanks in Jesus' Name. Thanks Lord. Thanks that you are with me. Thanks

that you're for me. Thanks that you're on my side. Thank You that You can see what I can't see. Thank You that the power of the Holy Spirit is with me. Thank You that You are gonna show me how I need to stand; how I need to work this thing through: Giving thanks, rejoicing, practicing your peace; practicing your trust..expressions of trust, Loving God.

Then asking the questions. As I said last night, the "why" question never gets answered on earth. It's the wrong question. "What does this mean?" And "What must I do?" You need to find the purpose of God in the circumstances that you are in. Sometimes that purpose is about changing you! Sometimes that purpose is about teaching you faith; teaching you how to stand; teaching you how to face something! Sometimes it's just about learning how to stand. Having done everything to stand! Sometimes it may be about practicing; about doing some warfare. It might just be about putting the armor on! It is always something that we need to be doing in terms of the purpose of God!

Sometimes the Lord might want to be teaching you authority. So, you get into the situation and He wants to teach you authority. He wants to teach you about the power in the Name of Jesus! So He may want to give you a prayer. That means "In the Name of Jesus I take authority over that", and something happens. It might be about authority that's the purpose of God. He wants to teach you about the power in the Name. Other times he may want to teach you patience, and if God wants to teach you patience, the prayer of authority is not going to work. Dang! Shoot! Shoot the dog - I mean what's that? So if He is teaching you patience, He's teaching you just how to stand; How to be still; How to still in all the clamoring, all the noise on the inside. Bring yourself to peace. How to wait out the enemy by waiting on God. The prayer of authority is not going to work if God is teaching you something different. Does that make sense?

So, you have to know what is the purpose of God in this situation. For this thing to work together for good I need to love God and I need to know what the purpose is so that I can co-operate! So when I stand in those two things, oh my goodness, all heaven breaks loose! And the enemy has to learn for a season that he can't get one over on you..