

Volume 3, Day 25: Buoyancy and Pleasure in God

Let something very real come from inside you, the Fruit of the Spirit. It is your love for God that leads you to love others in a way that will make you and them more relaxed and gentle. And number eight, finally, you will experience **less frustration and futility**. Such are always evidence of the old creation work. We work hard, we do things. It just doesn't seem to be as fruitful as we thought it would be. Or we end up frustrated because it didn't turn out the way we hoped. Hopefully these eight ideas will help you craft a better relationship and greater trust for God. You can only relax when your trust is only in God's perfect purposes for you and the larger context of the whole of humanity.

Living in this journey with Christ leads to more buoyancy. I love that word. I heard it this summer from someone that said their life in Jesus made them feel more buoyant, lighter, not so exhausted, not so trying to figure out everything and then making it happen. It is living in the freedom and buoyancy of the Holy Spirit that draws us into the life that God has for us. Let those who have made progress in this pleasurable journey with God help you a little bit when you're trying to find that way that God wants you to live.

Our life is a constant adjustment. Things around us constantly change. There is the state of flux which leaves us with more challenges. So, how do we find peace in the middle of the chaos today? You can rest assured that tomorrow will be different from today. Tune in to the Holy Spirit's channel right now and only live in this moment as you listen to Him. You can find that signal! It comes in strong and clear and it lets us know how to live and how to follow him.

ENGAGING God -- Alan - Jacobsen

Volume 3, Day 26: Pruning My Vines

It's winter time, which means it's time to get after the Great Vines and prune them up for a new season. And that reminds me of some of the passages that have meant the most to me in this journey. I hope you find some of those as well for yours. The book of **Galatians**, moving away from a legalistic, performance based life to one inside, believing what you hear and being transformed by love. **Romans chapters 5 through 8** is a passage that talks about how we are so loved. We know that in our heart. And when we know that we know that nothing in this world can separate us from the father's affection. Then there is **1 John chapter 4**. Another favorite is **Hebrews 8, 9, 10, and 11**. Another good one that stirs us into having confidence to come before God, having our heart sprinkled clean.

But probably my favorite one is **John 13, 14, 15 & 16**. It's what we call the upper room discourse. It's Jesus with his disciples for the last time, explaining to them what this relationship is all about. He talks about love changing the whole world, talks about Father has a place in Him for us to dwell. I like the interpretation of that as **God wants to be at home in you and He wants you to be at home in Him**. And that's what it means to become part of the divine community. That's what it means to live deeply in all that God is. And Jesus said, the reason I'm telling you these things is so that My joy might be in you and that your joy might be full. That's bedrock to the work of Jesus in our lives. I think a lot of people think, and I used to think that we're basically disgusting human beings that God can barely tolerate and he wants to clean us all up so he'll be comfortable with us. But I know better now!

Volume 3, Day 27: Discarding Dead Branches

Jesus says the work of God in our lives is so that our joy might be full because His joy dwells in us. And there's that analogy of the vineyard, which brings us to this vine we're pondering today. Jesus says, "We're the branches and He's the vine, and if we remain in Him, we'll bear much fruit." Why does God want us to bear fruit? Well, I think He'd repeat, "...so that My joy might be in you and that your joy might be full." And then He says that to make us fruitful, one of the things He does is He prunes us.

I've pruned a few thousand grapevines in my life. And we're going to take this one on for just a little bit. The object of trying to prune a grape vine is to find the most fruitful branches to have for the next year. So you're cutting off everything that's not going to be part of the fruitfulness of the vine next year and getting it down to the five or six, hopefully good canes that will bear lots of fruit. We pull the rest of them away. So when Jesus talks about making us clean, this is what he's talking about. He says to the disciples, I've already made you clean. I've pruned away all the stuff that keeps us separate from each other so that you can live your life in Me and bear fruit.

It looks pretty severe on the vine. It looks like a lot of things are getting hurt here, but what we're really doing is getting it back to only the good canes that can bear fruit in the year to come. And when you're down to those last five canes, that's what will be fruitful. If you don't prune the vine, you get lots of leaves next year, but you won't get any grapes. So as the vinedresser, God cuts away the things that will sap our strength and diminish our fruit. It hurts, but it is necessary!

Volume 3, Day 28: Discipline IS NOT Punishment

I hear so many people when we talk about God's affection saying, "Yeah, I believe in God's affection. I believe He loves us. But what about that passage in Hebrews? It talks about Him disciplining those that He loves?" I know why you ask. But I grew up thinking discipline and punishment were the same thing. So if anything bad was happening in my life, well that must have been God's punishment because I didn't do good enough.

It's strange that we think of discipline as punishment because discipline isn't about punishment. Discipline is about shaping. It's about training. It's about ordering our lives in a way that we can be pleasing to God and live deeply in his life. So when God trains us, He's just pruning us up so we can be fruitful and it's that simple. And when He gets it down to the four or five canes that will be fruitful, then the other thing He does is wrap those up on a wire. When I get done with this later today, all these canes will be lying along this wire and this vine will be ready to bear fruit next year in the way it produces the greatest amount of fruit.

Well, discipline isn't God punishing you! It's God training you! Why? So that His joy might be in you, that your joy might be full. 1 Peter chapter 4 says it this way, and I'm quoting from the Message version, "Jesus gets the last word on everything." And I love the idea that Jesus is going to be the last person to go through my life, just like my dad was for his vineyard. Whoever picked grapes, pruned vines, and tied vines. My dad was the last one to walk through his vineyard just to make sure everything was arranged as he wanted it to be. Peter continues, "Jesus has been through everything you're going through and more."

Volume 3, Day 29: Whole and Fulfilled

If knowing that Jesus has experienced more hardship than us knows how to help us through ours doesn't encourage you, I don't know what else could. So He says, "Learn to think of your sufferings, whatever pain comes into your life as a weaning from the old sinful habit of always having to have your own way." That's how sin works. I want what I want. I want to get what I need. And when God is trying to put His joy in us that our joy might be full, that means we're not doing life the way we think best. **We know worst** what our own happiness and joy might be. **God knows best.** Then he says, "You'll be free to wake up every morning to do what God wants instead of being tyrannized." That's a good word to describe the flesh. It is being tyrannized by what we want.

The whole process of God training us is pruning us in this season. He is training us to be on the wire. When I move this cane onto the wire, I just can't move it quickly. It'll break. I've got to take it very slowly and let the vine bend because if I break this cane off I will lose all that fruit for this next year. On this one cane there will be 10 or 12 bunches. If I break it off, the fruit will be gone.

I love the analogy of the vineyard. I grew up in one. I wrote a book called *In Season*, which is all about how we embrace this process of fruitfulness. Check it out. I think it will help you understand that *God's training in us is not God trying to make us righteous*. It's God trying to make us whole and fulfilled. And when we're there, then we'll know that His idea of righteousness is to be at home in God, to let His love train us so that we can be His kids in the earth. That's what engaging Him is all about.

Volume 3, Day 30: TRY IT! Don't Give Up..

It's time for you now to find your own wings on this journey and not need someone else to tell you what to do. Maybe you have found your way to that beginning connection. If that's the case, then you're ready to fly. And maybe you don't have the connection yet that you want. Don't give up. This takes time. This is just an encouragement for you to find a way into it. If it hasn't happened yet, relax, you've got time.

This always takes time. All the things that Jesus has to untangle in our hearts, whether it's the lies of the world or the lies of religion that have us performing instead of relaxing into His reality. That's why Jesus told us to keep on asking, keep on knocking. Keep finding your way in, not because God makes it difficult. It's not that. It's because there's so much in us that's has to be settled before we can go on the kind of journey He wants for us. This is a journey of love (emotion) not of actions.

And if you've begun this journey, you know as well as I do that you've just begun. As Paul writes and prays for the Ephesians, "I pray that you would know the height and breadth and depth of this love God has for you. It's like an ocean." It's like that. If you look at God as this vast ocean, the Pacific Ocean, God wants you to mine this depth of His love every day, to just keep an eye out for Him. What insight is He giving you today? What does He drop into your life? Maybe through a song, maybe through a passing comment you hear, maybe something that just stirs deep in your own being. This is a lifetime adventure just to explore who He is in the reality of your life, in the challenges of it, in the hurts of it, in the joys of it. How is God making Himself known to you today?

Volume 3, Day 31: Let It Seep Into Your Soul

How does He love me? How does He make His Presence known in my life? What conversations do I have with other people? I love Paul's expression that you would know together with all the saints, the depth of this love. So these conversations and relationships God will give you going forward, they are going to open up His multifaceted greatness to you. We may be ankle deep into this reality. I might be after this part in my journey, and that may even be generous.

There's enough to explore here today, tomorrow and the rest of my life in this world. There's enough to explore here for eternity, to know God as He really is, to experience Him in His fullness. And Jesus said the purpose of all this for God was that He wanted His joy to be in us so that our joy could be full. This was about you coming to a sense of fullness in the reality of who He is and how much He loves you!

It's not circumstantial. It's not just going to work when life goes well and there's plenty of money in the bank, all is good. His joy being in us is what we need most when our child is sick, when we're unemployed, when we're suffering the rejection of good friends that used to care about us or betrayal. This is the joy that penetrates beyond the reality of our own pleasure or misery. There's so much to explore about God. Relax. Let it come to you in His time. Don't try to force it. Don't white knuckle your way into something. Learn to relax into a greater reality, and then you're going to find that this God has wanted to engage you more than you've ever wanted to engage Him. It takes time as it seeps into your life quite naturally. All we need to do is keep looking, keep seeking, and keep asking.

Volume 3, Day 32: Heart and Soul

The Apostle Paul encourages us to be imitators of Jesus Christ. Does this really make sense? Is it possible? We understand the concept, but we also know that we would be poor imitators of either one. So, can we comply?

We think of imitation as acting or talking like someone else. The theater is an example. We watch play actors imitate the characters of the play. We watch the story unfold as it were in real time in front of us. But the real story happened long ago. The better the imitations the greater the reviews are. Since the real players about which the play is written are imperfect, this works out just fine.

However, the real character in Paul's account is too perfect to be imitated. And since the objective is not achievable, we lay down the script. To be sure, there are plenty of scriptures to inform us that we cannot do a good job of imitating the perfect words and actions of Christ. So, instead of following the script in our hand, we grovel in the shadows of guilt and shame repeatedly repenting.

But, wait! We have an '**over study**' within us who can play the part flawlessly. The most important aspect of this dilemma is to consider that Jesus' clarified imitation in John 13 when He told His disciples the real objective. This is also the testimony of faith in Jesus. He said, "... Love each other as much as I love you!" The truth is that the best play acting is that which reflects the **heart and soul** of the original character!

So, **be the best understudy** of the living Christ's Holy Spirit within you and you will not only have the heart and soul that Loves Like Jesus Loves but also God's love will always be expresses itself powerfully in you like it did in Jesus!