

Session 7: Jesus’ “Training Manual” for Pressure and Success (Jn. 13-17)

I. FROM UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE TO UPPER ROOM OUTPOURING

- A. Initially, Jesus spoke John 13-17 to the leadership of His new Church to *prepare His disciples to thrive spiritually and emotionally* in the face of the pressures they would encounter as new leaders in the kingdom. Jesus understood what His death, resurrection, and ascension would mean regarding the pressures and promises that awaited His disciples in the future. As the Good Shepherd and the Chief Apostle, Jesus wisely built into their framework of understanding the necessary tools, perspectives, and truths that would equip them to withstand the complex dynamics that awaited them in the future. Before Jesus went to the Cross, He equipped His friends to bear the weight of the demonic attacks, human rage, notoriety, suffering, and success that would follow them into their next season of life and ministry.
- B. What was it to “follow the Cross”? Each “phase” of what was about to happen would be very costly and disruptive for the disciples who had fastened their names, reputations, livelihoods, and relationships to Jesus and His earthly ministry and future promises. Jesus understood that His “temporary defeat” would be followed by His surprising victory and resurrection. After this would come the subsequent empowering of His disciples in the Upper Room of Acts 1-2. In the process, the unfolding drama would embolden His enemies, then stoke their rage and resistance, ultimately leading to great persecution and pain. What would be the source of that persecution? It would come at the hands of the political and religious leaders who would seek to maintain the present power structures that enabled them to be influential and enriched by the present societal order.
- C. Jesus laid the “tracks” of the Upper Room Discourse strategically to prepare His friends for *everything* that they were about to experience. This included the complex spiritual, political, and social, and economic dynamics of the Cross, resurrection, and explosion of His new movement across the Roman Empire. This means that Jesus labored to equip them to withstand the pain of **suffering** and persecution as well as the disruption and difficulty of **success** and revival that was to follow the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Success, revival, growth, authority, and breakthrough involve dynamics as complex and as difficult to navigate with humility and lowliness of heart as persecution and suffering at the hands of those who would be impacted negatively by the success of the young movement.
- D. Jesus looked to establish His friends and the leaders of this young movement into sustained, profound peace, life, and joy necessary to overcome the **internal** threats as well as the **external**: fear, troubled hearts, disillusionment, disorientation, discouragement, offense, betrayal, failure, and shame. The desire of Jesus is that His joy *remain* in us **and** that our joy would be *full* (Jn. 15:11).
¹¹These things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full. ¹²This is my commandment, that you love one another... (Jn. 15:11-12)
- E. Forging a deep connection with sustained joy that grows through the “storms” of disappointment, persecution, and fulfilled promises is critical to endurance and longevity in our calling. How can we press on through the difficulties and pressures ahead and not lose our way?

II. THE CROSS: THE STORM OF DISAPPOINTMENT AND DISILLUSIONMENT

- A. The disciples of Jesus are our most pronounced picture of Jewish expectation of Messiah, the Messianic era, and what it might be like to live in the era of fulfilled promises and expectations of what Yahweh would do to establish Israel in her full destiny, restore the House of David, and bring forth the humiliation of the Gentiles and their constant oppression of the Jewish people and Jerusalem. The disciples give us a clear picture of the selective way we understand our own promises and destinies in God related to our future. We project our own unfulfillment, discontent, and ambition onto our promises, only to come face to face with the Cross of Christ and the way God brings forth His promises and our destiny. The future is not likely to unfold in the way that we think it will, and the complexities of the days ahead will challenge why we persist in our faith.
- B. Will we seek God if things do not work out the way that we thought that they would? Will we be His when we cannot feel His presence? **Will we love and trust Him when we are disappointed by circumstances?** We must work our “faith muscle” as the way to re-align our heart to grow in love through difficulty. **When we do not feel His presence or when circumstances are difficult, our first tendency is to be depressed or to complain.** As we engage in the “Trinitarian Conversation,” we ask the question, “Why do we feel this way?” In this, we re-align our hearts with the truth that we are His inheritance and are in it for love.
- C. This distorted, self-centered, and prideful lens by which we view our sovereign promises and potential destiny are not a point of *disqualification* to Jesus and His stewardship of our future in Him. In fact, He seeks to connect the disciples to the perspectives and themes that will re-align their hearts and lives towards joy in abiding in His love and affection *through* failure and disillusionment. Meaning, Jesus does not seek to spare them from the pain and disappointment to come when things do not turn out the way that they thought, or the promises are not fulfilled in the way that they assumed. Rather, Jesus equips them to abide in His love, giving them the means to cling to something ***stronger than the pain and disillusionment*** of the Cross and their own failures and betrayals.
- D. ***How*** does Jesus equip them to lay hold of abiding joy in the face of great disappointment?
1. **John 13:** He calls them to ***serve and to fight for one another*** (which they express for the sake of Peter in John 21:3 – “*We are going with you also.*”).
 2. **John 14:** He calls them to ***believe in Him and His promised outcome by continuing to keep His commands*** (rather than forsaking His truths in despair).
 3. **John 15:** He calls them to ***abide in and express His love***, laying down their lives for one another as they put His love on display to a world that will hate them.
 4. **John 16:** He calls them to ***engage with the Helper, the Holy Spirit***, who will speak, declare, and minister to them during great sorrow, pain, and judgments difficult to bear.

5. **John 17:** He *prays for them (and for us)* which is to be a source of profound comfort and security during disorienting attacks of the evil one (17:15) and the almost unbearable rejection and pressures of the world (17:16) unto profound unity, together enjoying the full measure of His fiery seal of divine love (17:26).

III. THE RESURRECTION AND OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT: THE STORM OF SUCCESS

- A. The beauty of Jesus’ “road map” to acquire a heart **“rooted and grounded”** in His fiery love and affection – a love that dramatically transforms our perspective, what we live for, and how we love one another – is that it has the corresponding ability to anchor our hearts during the profound disruption and disturbance of **fulfilled promises**.
- B. By engaging in the “Trinitarian Conversation” with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are laboring by grace to anchor our soul into the superior pleasures or *exhilaration* of engaging in the love of the Godhead. Our life goal becomes Song 1:5, “*Draw me away, and I will run*”, making the first commandment and the love of Jesus our highest ambition and dream. Jesus understands that a sustained pursuit of the superior pleasure of His love and affection will wash and transform us from within, shifting how we think, how we spend our time, what we value, honor, and cherish, and more.
- C. The Father’s desire is to set us on a journey that leads to us being lost in the vast ocean of His love and the deep pleasure and satisfaction He derives from His union with us. The promise of the “fiery seal of Divine love” and the pleasures we can experience in His transcendent affections put the promises and purposes of God into right priority and perspective. There is no fullness of joy to be experienced in ministry success, rather, ministry success and the disorientation that can follow become a test for our true devotion and loyalty. Are we truly grounded and fastened to the promise and glory of the gospel? Have we truly reckoned with the stunning implications of our union with Christ and the interior pleasures that are now ours to explore?
- D. There is deep pleasure and profound joy to be experienced in *union* and *communion*, or fellowship with the Spirit and with the brethren, that can awaken and satisfy our hearts in the deepest and most profound of ways. In our press to love and serve one another as we connect and abide in the love of the Godhead, we begin to scratch the surface of the enjoyment and pleasure we can find in Him and in one another as the layers of fear, our troubled hearts, our selfish ambitions, and our vain conceit (Phil. 2:3) begin to cease cluttering our emotions and weighing down our lives. The joy of a heart that is not weighed down but is truly free to see and enjoy with deep gratitude and humility makes for a delightfully simple and worry-free future.
- E. Philippians 2:1-4 is one of Paul’s glorious contributions to the “Trinitarian Conversation” and the means to “*forgetting the things which (were) behind him*” to press on towards the goal of knowing Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12-14), or the “*prize of the upward call*” of fellowship with Him and the fullness of His love. In this manner, Paul’s heart and soul were anchored in something stronger than both the seasons of *lack and persecution* as well as the seasons of *success and wealth*, or contentedness in any circumstance of life (Phil. 4:11).

- F. The movement that Jesus birthed, that would be carried forth by His disciples, was about to be very successful in a manner that would vindicate or justify their sacrifice and the scorn that they had borne by Jewish leadership and beyond. How would they respond in the day of breakthrough, vindication, anointing, and the power of the gospel on full display? The desire of Jesus in the Upper Room Discourse was to equip the hearts of His friends to abide in Him and serve and bless one another in the days of the “success of the movement” and not lose their way with themselves during that success.
- G. Success and fruitfulness can be a subtle enemy of intimacy with Christ. We engage now in abiding, speaking continually the things that the Father thinks, feels, and says as we walk with the Spirit who was sent to help us through these seasons. (John 14:13, 14; 15:7; 16:23-24) We talk to the Spirit now so that we can walk with the Spirit amid a multitude of opportunities, demands, expectations, and pressures that come with the season of “more” and great growth and powerful movements of the Spirit on regions and people.

IV. NOT ALONE – THE FATHER AS THE SOURCE OF PEACE AND JOY

³²Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. ³³These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you will have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (John 16:32-33)

- A. We labor to abide and engage in the “template of preparation” through the present disappointments and successes to grow in our interior stability and increase our sense of active connection to His presence and leadership over our lives. Are we equipped and prepared to endure and overcome with joy and peace? When pressure comes, what is our current “default” perspective and response? Pressure and success both expose our underlying areas of unbelief, serving to reveal our self-reliance and sense of self-sufficiency. We labor to abide to the measure that we are aware of our great dependency and need for divine supply in every endeavor and initiative.
- B. We “have enough” and “are enough” in a manner that deceives us into making life work without an increased activity of the Holy Spirit releasing wisdom, spiritual understanding, insight, clarity, transformed emotions, desires, and perspective. We settle for significantly less on a continual basis because we have rarely touched or acknowledged “how much more” there is to experience and enjoy in the divine resource that comes by abiding in our weakness in His boundless supply. In that regard, we have become “used to” engaging in our faith alone, unaware of how costly our barrenness will be during the storms and troubles that are just ahead.
- C. We want to build a life that refuses to be alone with our troubles or forced to sustain and maintain our own successes achieved apart from God’s will or grace operating in our lives. In the days of the “common and the mundane” before the days of promise and persecution, we want to labor now to build a life of abiding, connecting, and engaging in active conversation that touches our mind and awakens our heart. We can be settled and content today as we walk out the template that Jesus has given us, and in doing so we can be confident in trials that we are not alone. **We will carry our history in God with us** into our next trial or point of pressure and difficulty.