

DENISE GLENN



FREEDOM FOR MOTHERS

Then you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.
JOHN 8:32



Freedom for Mothers

Published by Kardo International Ministries

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www.motherwise.org

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Printed in the United States of America



TO DAVID

I want to commemorate our journey in parenting by sharing with others the powerful way God has worked to teach us the truths contained in this book. You are my love, my mentor, my dearest friend, and my partner in ministry.

and

TO DANIELLE

You had the courage to do the will of God when no one understood.
Not even me.

• • •

TESTIMONIES

“Mothering is just about the hardest job around. Denise’s material puts powerful tools into the hands of mothers to navigate the journey victoriously.”

JOSH MCDOWELL

SPEAKER AND AUTHOR

“Are you a mom who needs encouragement, hope, energy? WISE up! Let Denise show you the way to life and freedom in Christ through her teaching and heart-warming stories.”

DR. KEVIN LEMAN

PARENTING EXPERT AND AUTHOR OF *THE BIRTH ORDER BOOK*, *BECOMING THE PARENT GOD WANTS YOU TO BE*, AND *MAKING CHILDREN MIND WITHOUT LOSING YOURS*

“This study treats motherhood as the divine calling God intends it to be. If your heart’s cry is to know Him and the power of His resurrection, read this book.”

JENNIFER KENNEDY DEAN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, *THE PRAYING LIFE FOUNDATION* AND AUTHOR OF *HE RESTORES MY SOUL*

“*Freedom for Mothers* leads us to the author and perfecter of motherhood, the person who can change us and our homes from the inside out. I appreciate Denise’s personal and practical approach, and the emphasis on a personal discovery of these truths. A must for mothers!”

BONNIE BARROWS THOMAS

SPEAKER, DAUGHTER OF CLIFF BARROWS, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW OF MAJORIAN THOMAS

“This book and these videos give us so much of God’s wisdom in parenting and provide us with His love and direction. What an awesome God! I think Denise Glenn has captured that very thing in this book!

MARGE CALDWELL

AUTHOR, NATIONAL CONFERENCE SPEAKER, COUNSELOR, WIFE, MOTHER OF THREE, GRANDMOTHER, AND GREAT GRANDMOTHER

...



WHAT IS MOTHERWISE?

INTRODUCTION

MotherWise is Bible study, but it is more than Biblical materials....it is a community of believers networking to embrace, educate, and encourage women with God's truth and love in the high calling of Biblical womanhood expressed in marriage, motherhood, and total commitment to Christ.

Ministering to women since 1981, MotherWise is an international family discipleship ministry that produces, distributes, teaches, and translates Bible study materials for the family. MotherWise groups provide a lifeline for women of all ages and stages providing the Biblical direction and practical help women need to thrive in today's chaotic, changing world. Denise Glenn's Bible study materials will take a woman deep into God's Word to find the answers she seeks to grow in Christ, to build a solid marriage, rear godly offspring, and to be used by God in ministry. In addition, Denise has written two of the studies for a general audience of women on topics suitable for all women of the church—married or single, young or old—to study together.

Our vision is to see women's lives transformed by Truth. Never in history have families been more in need of healthy and God-centered homes. Never have women been more desperate for answers. We seek to inspire women to profess faith in Jesus Christ, to pass on the blessing of effective communication about her faith to her family, and to provide her with Biblical and practical information about life skills that will give her tools to empower and not impair her relationships.

The most effective way to utilize these materials is to establish a core group of mentors for the program and to have them commit to several years of investing their lives into the lives of younger church members. As the program becomes part of the church's mission to reach families, young families are disciplined and trained in Biblical principles of family life in the loving and caring environment of wise and godly mentors. Under the authority of the local pastor, this ministry can help the church reach the families of the congregation first, then reach out to unchurched families in the community. Beyond that, several churches who have adopted the MotherWise program and materials into their overall church ministry now take MotherWise materials on mission trips around the world. By utilizing the training and knowledge the mentors have gained at home, they can lead and train MotherWise pastor's wives and leaders around the world. They can also leave the trained national leaders with materials in their own heart language, as MotherWise materials are now translated into 15 languages.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

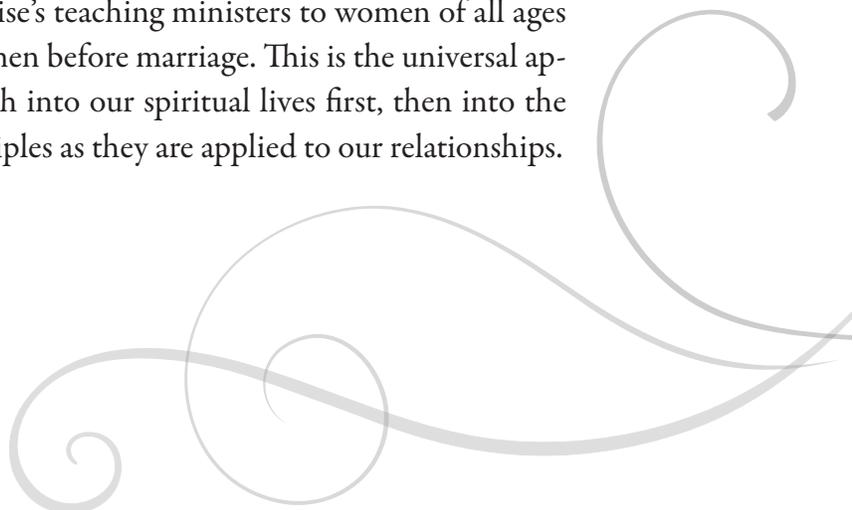
We believe the Bible is the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God. We believe in one true God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead, and that He will one day return to the earth. We believe by our faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved and that the Holy Spirit lives in us. MotherWise is distinctively Christian and scripture based but is not directly affiliated with any church or denomination. We minister to families from all denominations and backgrounds.

HOW DOES MOTHERWISE MINISTER TO MOMS?

MotherWise ministers to moms by providing Bible study material facilitated by mentors to embrace, educate, and encourage mothers. Although women can study the MotherWise materials individually, we believe the most effective way to benefit from our materials is in a group setting with godly mentors leading the group.

Freedom for Mothers is one of a series of MotherWise Bible studies. (More information about other MotherWise Bible studies can be found online at www.motherwise.org.) MotherWise groups meet in churches, at playgroups, in homes, apartments, or in the conference rooms of office buildings for study and support. MotherWise materials are designed for groups that meet weekly, but are flexible to adapt to the needs of almost any group format, including bi-weekly and/or monthly.

MotherWise groups have changed over the years. When the ministry began, years ago, it was primarily for mothers of young children. As the ministry grew and Denise's material was updated, MotherWise began to minister to mothers of older children and the ministry began attracting women with children of all ages. Today, Denise's teaching ministers to women of all ages and stages, including single women before marriage. This is the universal appeal of our materials. They reach into our spiritual lives first, then into the practical, living out of the principles as they are applied to our relationships.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND FOUNDER OF MOTHERWISE,
DENISE GLENN

Reared in the loving home of a Minister of Music and Education, Denise Glenn came to know Jesus Christ as Savior at the tender age of five. She met and married her husband David, a geophysicist, while attending Texas Tech University. David and Denise were married May 6, 1972.

Using her own experiences which range from infertility to multiple preschoolers, teenagers, to three daughter's weddings in three years, and on to the role of grandmother of eight grandchildren, Denise blends her vibrant personality with the ability to clearly define Biblical truths. Her warm, entertaining speaking style endears her to women, as she shares personal stories and uses creative visual aids to bring God's Word alive to women. Denise combines deep spiritual insight with the ability to relate practically to each woman in her audience.

Denise began MotherWise, a Bible teaching ministry for mothers, in 1981 when she had three preschoolers. From a prayer time with one other mom, this discipleship ministry has grown to include women from all around the world. Denise has been featured on many American radio broadcasts including Nancy Leigh DeMoss's *Revive Our Hearts*, Dennis Rainey and *Family Life Today*, and Josh McDowell's national radio program. She has trained MotherWise leaders around the world, including Russia, Korea, Indonesia, Kenya, Botswana, Ukraine, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Vietnam, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Austria, and Australia. She is sought out as a speaker for women's conferences, meetings, and retreats both nationally and internationally.



WEEK 1



THE PRINCIPLE OF THE VINE: THE LIFE



For a mother to give love, acceptance, and security to her children, she must have her own needs met. Many women try to get those needs met from relationships, achievements, and appearance. Is that the answer?

...





WEEK 1 BIBLE STUDY LISTENING GUIDE / OUTLINE

THIS WEEK

The Principle of the Vine: The Life

Overview of JOHN 15

Jesus came to do it _____ you and _____
you and _____ you.

JOHN 15: 1-5

You can do absolutely _____ without Jesus.

Jesus is our _____ source.

Jesus came to be your _____.

Blanket of _____ love

Gold medal of _____ and _____

Every human being has a need for _____.

JOHN 15:4

Stay _____ to the vine.

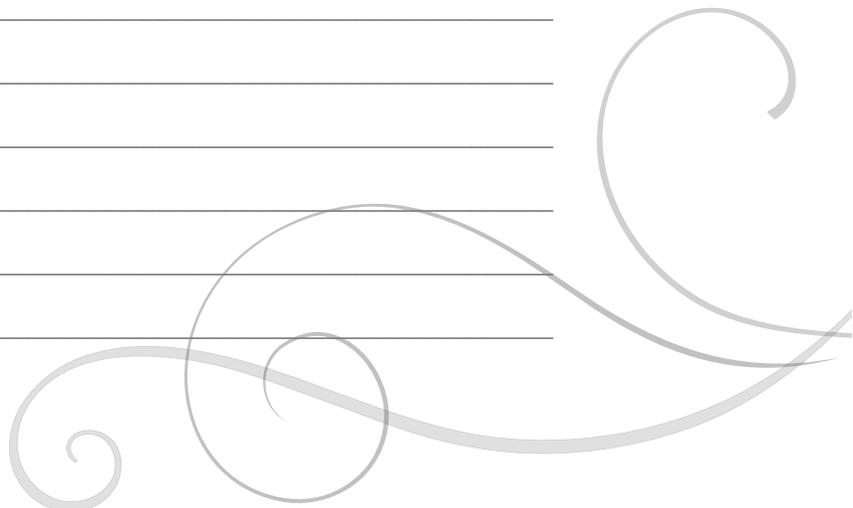
JOHN 15:1

True means the _____ of counterfeit.

EPHESIANS 3:17-19

MOTHERWISE GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____



DAY 1



LOVE BUCKET

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Ask Jesus to give you spiritual insight this week by flooding the eyes of your heart with light.



Almost every mother I know wants to be a good one. In fact, most of us want to be the kind of mom our children will want to write poetry and music about! But the truth is, mothering is sometimes a challenge! Whatever it is that you are facing right now as a woman, wife, and mother, I believe God has made a divine appointment with you. I have prayed that every woman who needs the message in this book will find it. And here you are.

The message of this book is that Jesus wants to set you free to be the mother He is calling you to be. You and I want to be loving, joyous, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled mothers. As we allow Christ full access to our hearts through Bible study and prayer, and as we respond in obedience, we'll begin to see emerging the godly, fulfilled mother we long to be.

To begin our study in how to become free as moms—free of past hurts, present stresses and fears of the future—let's go to the book of JOHN.

➤ LIFE IN THE VINE

Just before He was crucified, Jesus taught His disciples many important things. Starting in JOHN 13 and continuing through JOHN 17, He shared some of the most profound teachings of His ministry. When someone knows he is going to die, he doesn't waste words. Everything that person says becomes vital. The following were Jesus' last words to His disciples. Can you imagine how Jesus felt as He articulated these words?

READ JOHN 15:5

"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."



What plant is Jesus using for illustration? Which part of the plant does Jesus use to describe Himself?

APPLY

What part of the plant does Jesus use to describe you?

When are you able to bear fruit?

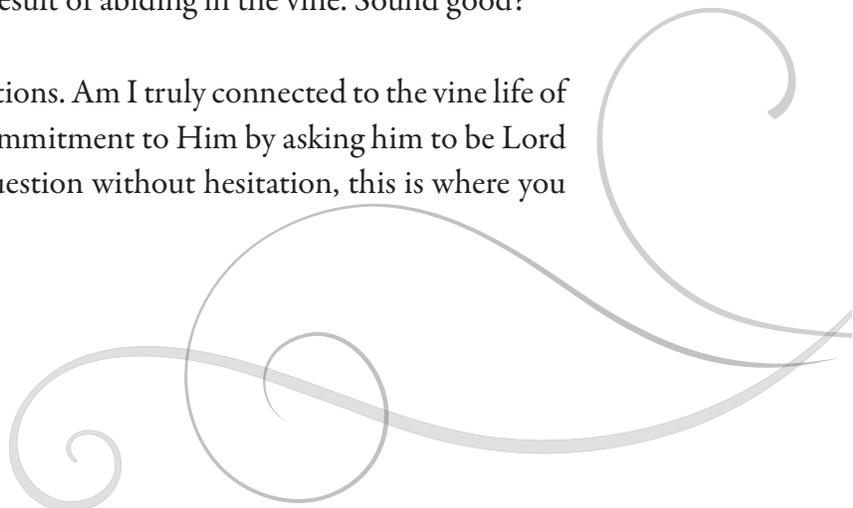
Finish the phrase, "... Apart from Me..."

_____."

"Apart from Him you can do nothing." As we say in Texas, "That's a zero with the rim knocked off." I cannot do my job as a mother, wife, or worker apart from His vine life in me. Jesus says He is the vine and we are His branches, and the only way to have life is to be attached to the vine. To bear fruit, we must have the vine life flowing through us.

The sap of the vine is where the life of the vine resides. Grapes that are formed are actually sap that so filled the vine, and so filled each branch, that it didn't have anywhere to go but to pour out through the branch in the form of fruit. That's how your life will be when you are fully attached to Christ. You will be so full of Jesus' vine life that the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control will come flowing out of your life. It won't require self-effort, but will happen naturally as a result of abiding in the vine. Sound good?

You may be asking yourself some questions. Am I truly connected to the vine life of Jesus? Have I ever made a personal commitment to Him by asking him to be Lord of my life? If you can't answer that question without hesitation, this is where you need to begin.



➤ CONNECTED TO THE VINE

If you want to connect yourself to Jesus for the first time in your life, start by **READING ACTS 16:31**.

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

To trust God fully you must trust Him through Jesus Christ, God's Son. In **JOHN 14:6**, Jesus says of Himself, *"I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."* Trusting Jesus with your life is the only way to have a relationship with God, the Heavenly Father. Ask God to speak to you as you explore this truth in the book of **ROMANS**.

➤ THE ROMAN ROAD TO SALVATION

ROMANS 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

ROMANS 5:8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 10:9,10

That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; ...for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

ROMANS 10:13

For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

To have a relationship with God—to become "born again"—you must:

- **Acknowledge** that you are a sinner and that you need a relationship with Jesus Christ to save you from everlasting hell.
- **Admit** and **Confess** your sins.
- **About Face**, turning from sin to God.
- **Ask** Jesus to save you by His grace.
- **Allow** Jesus Christ to rule your life.¹



IF YOU ARE READY, PRAY A PRAYER LIKE THIS

Lord Jesus, I am a sinner and I admit it. I am confessing this to You today. Forgive me of my sins. I want Your death on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. I turn now from my sin and I turn to You. Save me and have mercy on me. Be my master and my Lord. You alone are my God. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



If you prayed that prayer from your heart, the angels are rejoicing! You are now God's child! You've just been born into a new family! Now you have the power source to become the kind of mother your children can call "blessed!"



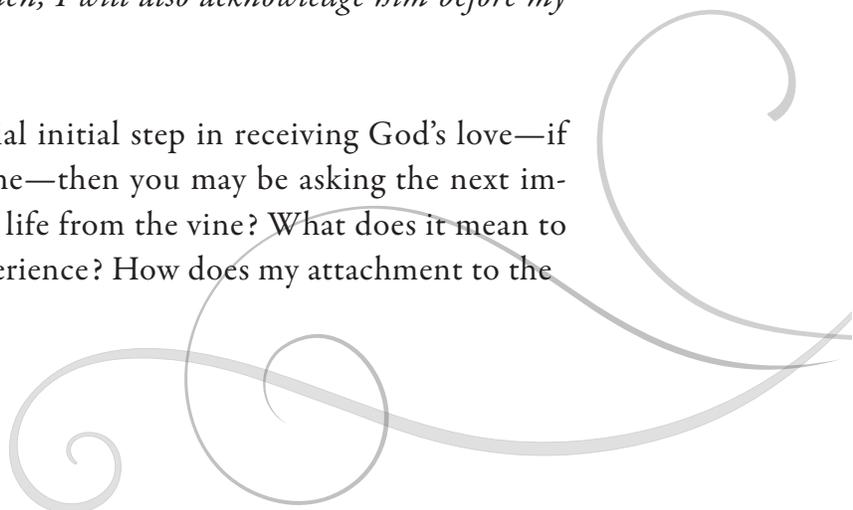
Write today's date or the date of your own experience of trusting God for the first time. _____ / _____ / _____

Call on your pastor, MotherWise group leader, or a Christian friend to share this important decision. You need to tell someone about your new faith!

READ MATTHEW 10:32

"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."

If you have already made this crucial initial step in receiving God's love—if you are already a branch on the vine—then you may be asking the next important question: "How do I draw life from the vine? What does it mean to abide in Christ in my everyday experience? How does my attachment to the



vine life of Jesus affect my mothering?” We’ll discover the answers to those questions in the weeks to follow by taking it step by step.

THE LOVE BUCKET

Imagine a large bucket we’re going to call your love bucket. It represents the place inside you and me that needs to be filled with love. Each of us was created with a big empty “love bucket” waiting to be filled. What would fill your love bucket?



What are the things that would make you feel satisfied and happy right now?

APPLY

In that empty place in our hearts, we need to have our basic needs met. Compare your list of desires with the following three illustrations.

BLANKET OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Inside our “love buckets,” we have a need for unconditional love. We need love, acceptance, and security and we want to be loved without having to change. We want to be loved unconditionally just as we are. We want acceptance among our peers and we want the security of knowing there is someone in our lives who will always be there for us. Imagine a big, warm, fuzzy blanket representing that kind of love.

GOLD MEDAL OF WORTH

We also need to know that we have value and worth. We need to receive a “gold medal” in some area that is important to us. We want to know that our lives count for something important and valuable.

LETTER JACKET

In the southern part of the U.S., there is a tradition. It’s not as popular as it was when I was growing up, but in many high schools, kids still participate in the ritual. When a couple is going together steadily and exclusively, the girl wears her boyfriend’s athletic jacket—one he receives for playing a sport. It represents his identity as a strong or successful male. When he gives it to his girl, it is very special. It says they belong to each other.

Every one of us has a need to belong. We need to have a relationship with someone we hold dear. We want to wear the “athletic jacket” of being in an identifiable relationship.

These needs are not optional. We don’t just want these needs to be met, we must have them met and we will find a way. One way or another, we will find a way to stop the aching emptiness. We will do anything to get our “love buckets” filled.

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:19

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.



Where should you go to get your needs met?

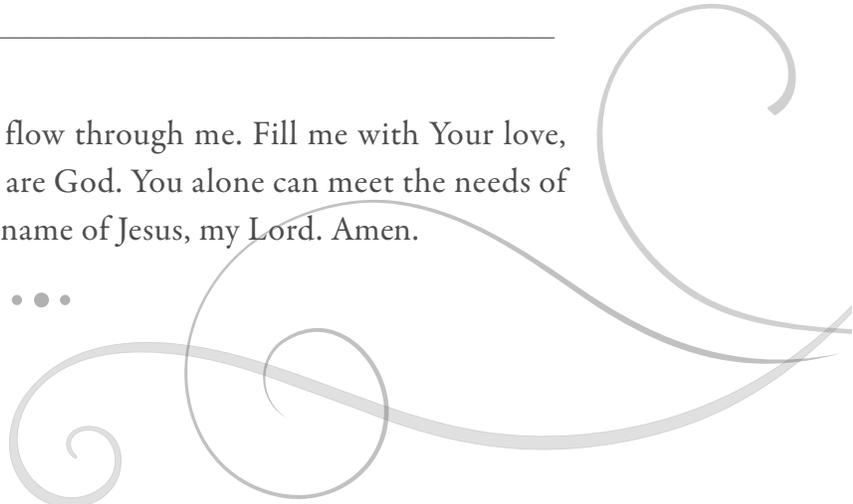
How many of your personal needs will be met if you go to this source? What does the verse say?

What resource is tapped to supply your needs?

Jesus is the vine. All life is in Him. We will find that the solution to our love needs, acceptance needs, security needs, significance needs, and identity needs are met in Him. Only He can meet the needs of our hearts. Only He will do so without ever letting us down and disappointing us.

REREAD JOHN 15:5 Copy it here.

Lord Jesus, I want Your vine life to flow through me. Fill me with Your love, Your joy, and Your peace. You alone are God. You alone can meet the needs of my heart. I acknowledge this in the name of Jesus, my Lord. Amen.



Purchase a small amount of flannel baby blanket fabric. Cut a small square with pinking shears and put it in your Bible at JOHN 15. You have just made a “receiving blanket” for yourself. Every time you read and re-read this passage, concentrate on receiving Jesus’ vine life. Ask Him to let His life flow through yours.

If you have older children, teens, or grandchildren, you might give them a square of the fabric and share what you learned today.



DAY 2



LOVE FOUNTAIN

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Ask Jesus to fill you with His vine life. Open your heart fully to Him. Put yourself in His hands today.



READ PSALM 81:8-10

8 *“Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you; O Israel, if you would listen to Me!*

9 *“Let there be no strange god among you; Nor shall you worship any foreign god.*

10 *“I, the LORD, am your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt;*

Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.”



Re-write VERSE 10 as a prayer. It might look something like: Lord, you are my God, who delivered me. I now open _____

_____.

APPLY

The word “fill” in VERSE 10 is the Hebrew word *mala*.² One of the meanings of that word is “to satisfy.” If we open our hearts to the Lord, He promises to satisfy our longings. As mothers, we may have big gaping holes in our love buckets.

You may have gotten married thinking your new husband would supply all your love needs. Surely here was a person who really understood you and loved you unconditionally. He made you feel accepted and secure. You felt valuable and significant. You finally belonged.

But in reality, no matter how wonderful (or horrible) the man you chose to marry turned out to be, he is not God. He cannot meet all the needs of your heart. He will eventually disappoint you and let you down.

Or maybe you thought having children would solve the ache in your heart. Don't kids love their moms? Maybe you envisioned your children "rising up to call you blessed." A reality check may have taught you that crying babies or defiant toddlers or stubborn grade schoolers or rebellious teens or prodigal young adults don't live to serve their mothers. They expect you to fill their "buckets." It's not the other way around.

 THE TRUE SOURCE

READ JOHN 15:1-5

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

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.

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."



How does Jesus describe Himself in VERSE 1?

How does He describe God?

What does Jesus do to branches that do not bear fruit at all?

What does He do to branches that do bear fruit?

What do you think "pruning" means?

When Jesus says to His disciples that they are already "clean," He is referring to a gardening term. That means those branches have already been pruned of extraneous twigs that take the sap away from the main branch. How does Jesus tell them He has accomplished this pruning?

APPLY

What is Jesus' command in VERSE 4?

How does the first part of JOHN 15:5 fly in the face of those who claim that man is god?

When have you recently tried to be the "vine" instead of the "branch?"

What was the result?

Apart from Jesus Christ we can do _____.

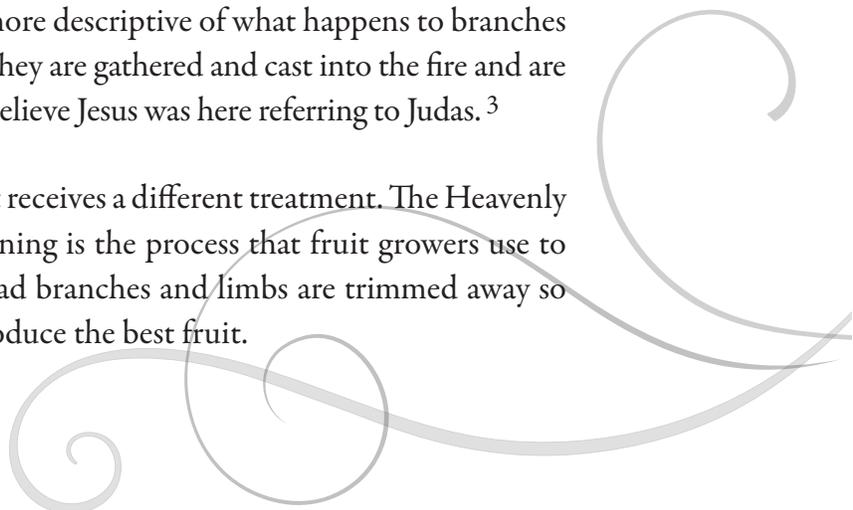
How does that statement affect your mothering?

Your marriage?

The first lesson to learn in becoming free is that He is the vine, I am not. He is God and I am not. Jesus did not come to help you with your life. He came to be your life. He did not just come to be your Savior. He did not just come to be your Lord. He came to be your life!

Jesus said, *"Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He [the Father] takes away."* In VERSE 6, He is even more descriptive of what happens to branches that don't abide and bear fruit. They are gathered and cast into the fire and are burned. Many Biblical scholars believe Jesus was here referring to Judas.³

But every branch that bears fruit receives a different treatment. The Heavenly Gardner lovingly prunes it. Pruning is the process that fruit growers use to keep the trees bearing fruit. Dead branches and limbs are trimmed away so the healthy strong limbs will produce the best fruit.



This principle applied to the Christian life can be a bit shocking. You might be thinking, “You mean God intentionally comes into my life and removes things—even things I love—so I will bear more fruit? Whatever happened to God as a God of love?”

We want spiritual fruit to flow unhindered out of our lives. GALATIANS 5:22-23 tells us what fruit is possible for moms to bear. Record the list here:

We want our mothering to be characterized by love, joy, peace, and patience but we often don’t want to endure the sometimes painful process to get there. “There is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” And sometimes that means trusting God when the plan includes pruning.

Jesus told us the secret to bearing fruit. We must abide in Him and He must abide in us. Think about the physical union between a man and wife. When they abide in each other the fruit of the womb is born. Bearing a child is only a shadowy picture of our spirit relationship with our Lord. To abide in Him is to be grafted into His vine life and to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

Grafting involves cutting both the rootstock and the stem so the graft can be made. Once cut, the life-giving centers of each, called the cambium, must be matched perfectly. When those centers are aligned so the flow of life can go from the root to the stem, they are tied together securely. The nutrients that the root takes up are sent up into the new branch producing new shoots and the new branch sends down energy gathered from the sun during photosynthesis into the rootstock. Life begins to flow and fruit is formed. The vine and the branch have become one. During that delicate process of growth, the plants must not be moved. They must remain firmly in place.⁴

The cambium of our hearts, our inmost being, must touch His heart so His vine life can flow into us. Nothing should separate us from our Lord. In the process of growth, we must remain very still in Him so that our roots can go deep into Him and He can abide deeply in us.

How does one abide? Begin with your prayer life. Your words to God are the way you reach up into Him to draw life down into yourself. His Word dwelling in you is the way He reaches down into you to pour out His life into your heart. As you begin to take in more of His Word, not just by reading and studying, but by obeying, you will begin to see His fruit born out in you.



You might want to take time to write out a prayer of commitment to Christ on the lines below. Let Him know that you recognize He is God and you are not. In your prayer, humbly submit yourself to Him.

Father, I offer my emptiness to You and ask You to fill it with Yourself. Lord, I truly desire to abide in You and I want You to abide in me. I open my heart today and ask You to pour Yourself inside me. Enable me to receive Your life in all its fullness. Lord, I admit I have used other things and people to try to get my needs met, but today I am turning to You. I love You. In Jesus' name. Amen.



TIPS FOR MOM

Let Jesus use your hands and feet to fill someone's love bucket today. For your husband, try a back rub after work or his favorite meal for dinner. Maybe a clean house would mean the most to him.

For adolescents, why don't you put a note on his/her bed or mirror reminding them how much you love them? Tell them you're praying for them today. Then go to their bed when they aren't home and kneel down and pray for them.

Most little children love a good rock in the rocking chair or going outside to swing.



DAY 3



LOVE LINE

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

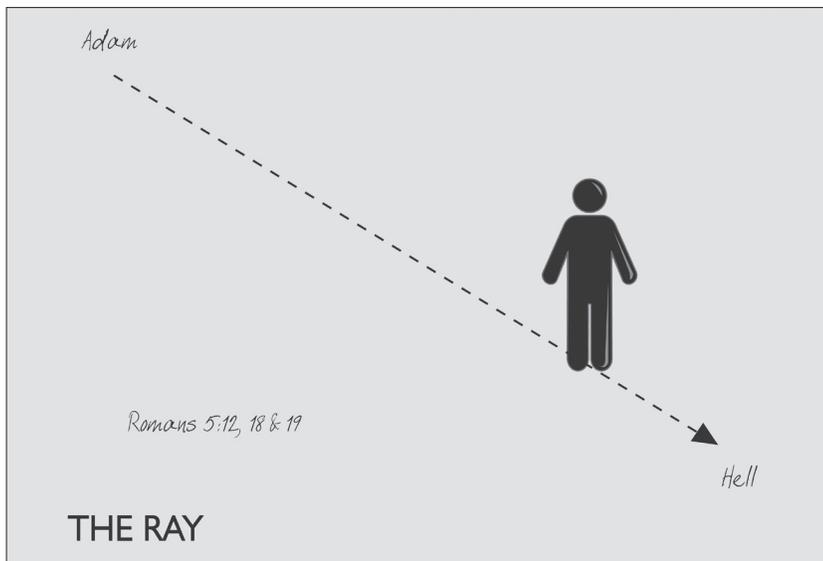
Enter into God's presence with thanksgiving. Thank Him for being in control of the universe and in control of your life. Acknowledge to Him that He alone is your source of life. Commit yourself to abiding in Him today by keeping His commandment of love.



I am terrible at math. I'm more right-brained than left and that means I love language but am not too thrilled with linear thinking in mathematics. However, in his book *Handbook to Happiness*, Dr. Charles Solomon designed a mathematical illustration that really made sense to me. It helped me understand something about Jesus' vine life in me. It enabled me to see how Jesus could undertake the mission of my marriage and mothering my children and live His life through me.⁴ I want to share it with you.

➤ A RAY

A ray in math starts with a fixed point and continues on a line in one direction stretching to infinity. In our illustration, the ray represents Adam's life.



God created Adam at a definite point in time. When Adam sinned, his life's "ray" was pointing down toward hell. All people born on the earth are born into his family, the family of man. Before I became a Christian, I was like a dot on that ray.

READ I CORINTHIANS 15:21-22

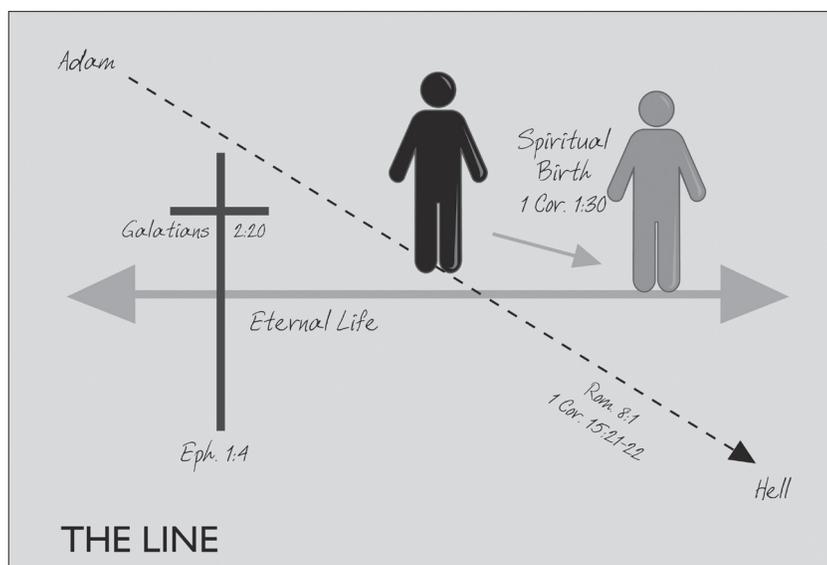
21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

As a member of Adam's family—the unredeemed human race—we are doomed to die and spend eternity in hell. But God intervened to save us, so there is good news.

➤ A LINE

In our next illustration, we'll consider a mathematical line. A line is a string of points along a plane that go infinitely in both directions. Our line represents the lifeline of Jesus Christ. His life exists forever in the past and forever in the future.



READ HEBREWS 1:6-12

6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." 7 In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

8 But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”

10 He also says, “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. 11 They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. 12 You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”



Which verse speaks of Jesus existing before the world was created?

APPLY

Copy that verse here:

Which verse speaks of Jesus living forever into the future?

Copy that verse here:

READ JOHN 17:24

24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”



Which phrase in this verse proves that Jesus lives in eternity past?

APPLY

The eternal lifeline of Jesus intersects the line of Adam. When we recognize that we are doomed because our sins deserve it, choose to repent of our sins, and ask Jesus Christ to be our indwelling Lord and Master, we “jump” from the line of Adam to the life line of the Lord Jesus. We have been rescued and set free from condemnation. We now share Christ’s glorious life. His life is our life.

READ EPHESIANS 1:3-13

How many times do you find the phrase “in Him” or “in Christ?”

What do you have as a result of being “in Him” according to VERSE 3?

VERSE 5?

VERSE 7?

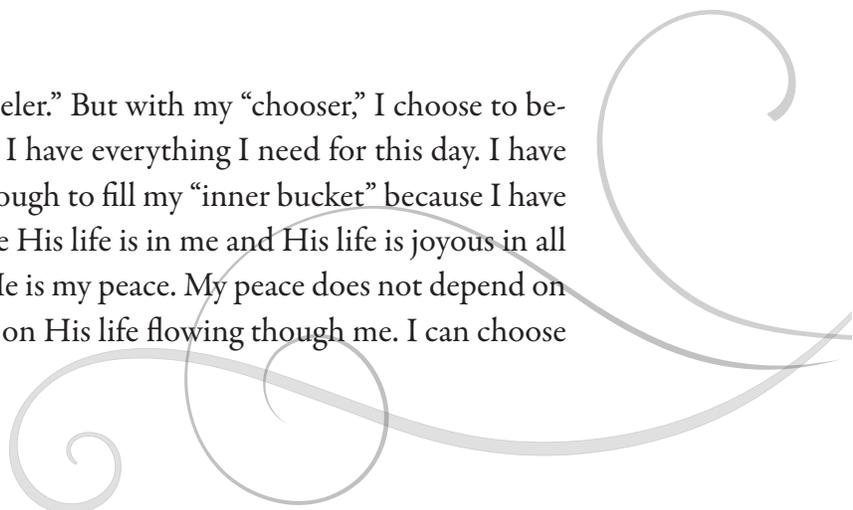
VERSE 9?

VERSE 11?

VERSE 13?

Do you see all the incredible riches that belong to you when you are “in Him” on that eternal life line? You share His life. You are in covenant relationship with Him, so all He has, He gives to you. He has given you every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, adoption as His child, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of your sins, has made known to you the mystery of His will, an inheritance to be the praise of His glory, and you’ve been sealed with the Holy Spirit. You receive all of this and more because your life is “in” Him. You have absolutely everything you need. This is the truth! It doesn’t depend on how you feel about it to be the truth. It is true because God said it.

I may feel empty or stressed in my “feeler.” But with my “chooser,” I choose to believe the truth from God’s Word that I have everything I need for this day. I have every spiritual blessing. I have love enough to fill my “inner bucket” because I have God and He is love. I have joy because His life is in me and His life is joyous in all circumstances. I have peace because He is my peace. My peace does not depend on my circumstances. My peace depends on His life flowing through me. I can choose



as an act of my will to live by His life operating in me, not by the swirling circumstances around me.

Your “feeler” takes input from the circumstances and panics. Your “thinker” takes input from the circumstances and begins to try to solve the problem—even if it’s unsolvable! Your “chooser” must decide whether life will be lived from the input of the “feeler” or the “thinker” or it may take the third option. It can choose to submit to the life of Jesus operating within. (COLOSSIANS 3:3-4)

 LIVING “IN” HIM

READ I JOHN 3:24

24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.



John explains what it means to abide in Christ in this I JOHN passage. How does one abide in Him?

APPLY

According to VERSE 23, what two commandments are we to keep?

Obedience is critical to abiding. We cannot go our own way and still abide in Christ. We cannot have it both ways. To have His glorious life flowing through us, we must connect to His vine life. To connect, we must obey Him. And what are we to obey? The law of love. We are to love the Lord with all our hearts and minds and souls and love our neighbors the same as we love ourselves.

READ II PETER 1:2, 3

2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.



What has Jesus' divine power granted to us?

APPLY

How do we obtain that?

Jesus has called us by His own glory and excellence to have everything we need that pertains to this life and to living it in a godly lifestyle. It is through the true knowledge of Him that we will have His life operating in us.

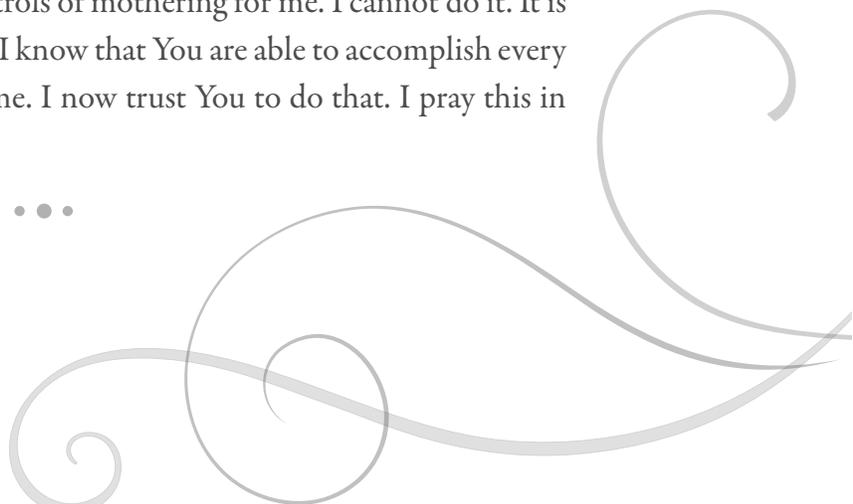
Now let's make this very practical. Could Jesus manage your children? Could he discipline them firmly and fairly with perfect consistency? Yes, of course He could. Can you do all those things all the time? No, of course you cannot.

If you are a believer, you have the life of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ operating on the inside of you. He is able to do whatever He has called you to do. He has not asked you to do it on your own. He knows you cannot. What He wants is to accomplish His purpose and His will in you and through you. That is very different from "helping" you do it.

The task of mothering is over your head. I don't care how many degrees in childhood development and certifications in teaching children you have. Mothering is bigger than any of us.

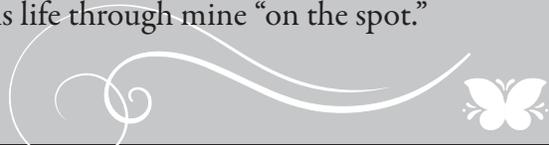
The only person who can accomplish the awesome task of mothering through you is Jesus Christ Himself. He can do it. He can do it all for you!

Lord, I want You to take over the controls of mothering for me. I cannot do it. It is too hard and too complicated for me. I know that You are able to accomplish every mothering task for me and through me. I now trust You to do that. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.



When our children get angry and frustrated and direct that anger at us, it's very easy as a mom to lash out and escalate the situation. Begin practicing what you learned today about Jesus being your life. When you find yourself in the middle of turmoil with your children, call a "time out." Let your children know you need to collect your thoughts and pray before you talk to them because you don't want to say something you will regret. Take a few moments to ask Jesus to be your wisdom and discernment in that circumstance. Ask Him to direct your attitudes and your actions toward your children.

If it's time to mete out firm discipline, you'll know it. If it's time to just sit on the couch and listen to your child express all that's on his mind, you'll know that, too. I have often been amazed at the insight the Lord gives me when I cry out to Him to pour His life through mine "on the spot."



DAY 4



LOVE MESSAGES

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

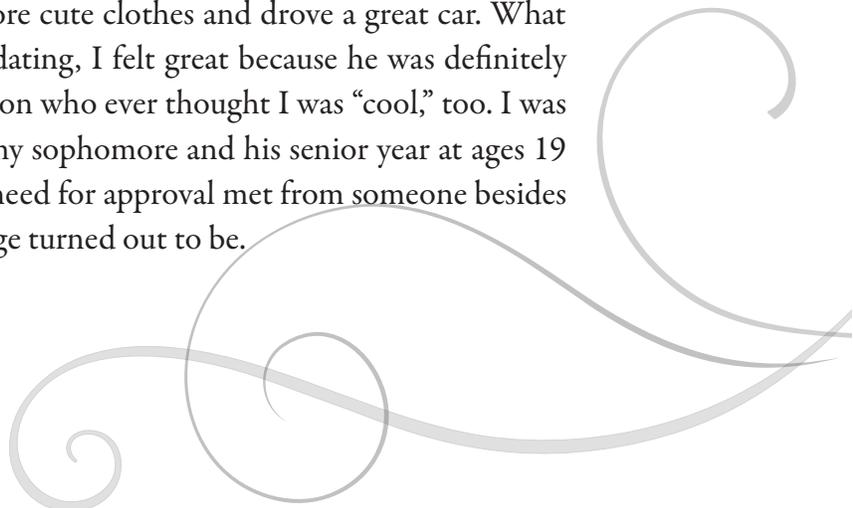
Ask the Father to speak clearly through His Word to you today. Ask Him to communicate with you in a way you can hear and understand. Tell Him how very much you love Him and trust Him with the control of your life.



When I was a young girl, my parents filled up my love bucket. They smothered me in love and acceptance and often told me how much they believed in me. I believed I was smart enough and cute enough to do anything I wanted to accomplish. I look back at the pictures of myself in Junior High and High school and I'm horrified at the ugly little string bean in the pictures. But Mom and Dad told me I was cute and smart and I believed them! So the first set of messages I received about myself were positive.

But when I went to school it was a different story. We moved often, so I was always the "new kid" and in most little towns where I lived, one had to be born there to really be in the "in" group. Since my dad was in the ministry, the combination of not much money and a lot of strict boundaries didn't help me enter the popular crowd. The set of messages my peers gave me meant I received plenty of rejection and negative feedback. Believing I was inferior socially became part of my thinking.

Then I met David. He was handsome, intelligent, and was president of a Christian organization at our university. He wore cute clothes and drove a great car. What more could I want? While we were dating, I felt great because he was definitely "cool" and he was the first "cool" person who ever thought I was "cool," too. I was swept off my feet. We married after my sophomore and his senior year at ages 19 and 22. I was finally going to get my need for approval met from someone besides Mom and Dad. What a shock marriage turned out to be.



When we'd been married three days, I cried myself to sleep. All of a sudden, my knight in shining armor fell off his horse. He didn't think everything I did was great. In fact, he began correcting and criticizing my every flaw. I thought marriage would be the way to get my love bucket filled on a continual basis. I thought David would reinforce those positive messages of my parents. Boy, was I wrong! David's messages made me feel like holes were being drilled in the bottom of my bucket.

Do you see how easy it is to form an image of ourselves based on others opinions? We believe the messages we hear are the truth. If our parents or peers tell us we're wonderful, we believe them. If they say we're awful, we believe them.

I had always wanted to be a mom, so the day after my graduation from the university I was ready to try to have a baby. The gnawing emptiness created by our unhappy marriage would surely be filled with a precious infant. Don't babies love their mothers? Doesn't every child look up dreamily at his mother letting her know how special she is? I'm sure you can see it coming....

We tried to have a baby, but no baby would come. I became really desperate because I had such aching needs in my heart for love, acceptance, and security. I really believed a child would solve those problems.

I was so anxious over our infertility, David sent me to a Christian counselor. She encouraged me to pray, "Lord, it's OK if I never have a child, what I want is you." I left her office thinking, "No problem. I can do any Christian assignment." But when I got to my car in the parking lot I thought, "No way! I'm not going to pray that prayer. If I tell God it's OK if I never have a child, He'll take me up on it. And it's not OK with me!"

For three days and nights I struggled, feeling the strong pressure of God's hand on my life. Finally, I got down on my shag carpet (this was 1975 and everyone, including me, had orange shag carpet). I prayed the prayer I had been encouraged to pray and released my children to God. For me, it was letting go of a possible source of approval and acceptance.

When I prayed that prayer, and confessed to God that I wanted Him and Him alone, He began to work a miracle. He did give me a child. Our little Danielle

was in my arms 16 months after that prayer. I was on top of the world. My heart was flooded with love. And I felt that way until we got home from the hospital!

Our sweet baby cried and screamed and threw up every meal and never slept and had diaper rash. Hummm... maybe babies don't fill your love bucket after all. When our first daughter was a year old I went to the doctor for my yearly check-up. "Mrs. Glenn, congratulations. You're pregnant!" I was incredulous! This wasn't supposed to happen to us. The earlier procedure had offered no guarantees, so we still considered ourselves infertile. However, our precious second daughter joined us when our first was only 21 months old. And when the second one was two, our adorable third-born was added to our family.

Now I was blessed with my babies, but at the same time overwhelmed with their care. Instead of meeting my needs, they were drilling holes in the bottom of my bucket. They didn't wake up in the morning and say, "Mom, how can I make you feel loved, accepted, and secure?" Their physical and emotional needs were dipping out of my bucket as fast as they could. I became desperate for help.

I reached out to a friend who wanted a prayer partner and needed mentoring in the practical aspects of new motherhood. I knew I needed prayer. I had been a Christian since the age of five, but had never been so desperate for Christ as I was now. My friend and I simply began to pray together and that was the beginning of MotherWise. We were the first MotherWise group—just two young moms searching for a source of love and security for ourselves and wisdom to rear our children. And we found the source for both in Christ.

We discovered we were created with these desperate needs for love, acceptance, and security for one purpose. Jesus created us with empty love buckets so He could fill us with Himself.

READ EPHESIANS 3:14-21

*14 For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father,
15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,
16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened
with power through His Spirit in the inner man;
17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted*

and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.



When referring to God in this passage, what name does Paul use for God? (See VERSE 14.)

APPLY

According to VERSE 16, what does Paul pray for the Ephesians so they can receive the love of Christ?

The first part of Paul's prayer establishes that before we can receive Christ's love, we have to be part of God's family. He is our Father and gives us His name. As my Father, God sends me true messages. What He communicates to me through His written Word and through His Spirit is accurate and true. I don't have to rely on my earthly parents' messages to know the truth about myself in my inner being. I don't have to get strokes from my peers, my spouse or my kids. I can rely on the source of truth that is absolutely always true—my heavenly Father.

What do I want to know in my inner being? What are the questions in my heart?

Am I loved?

Am I accepted?

Am I secure?

Am I worthy and significant?

Do I belong to someone?

We will continue studying God's Word to see how the Father communicates to us the answers to these important questions.

What does Christ provide for our "inner man" according to VERSE 16?

How does He provide it?

Jesus provides the strength I need in my inner man. He plugs the "holes" in my love bucket by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Why do we need to be "strengthened in our inner man" according to VERSE 17?

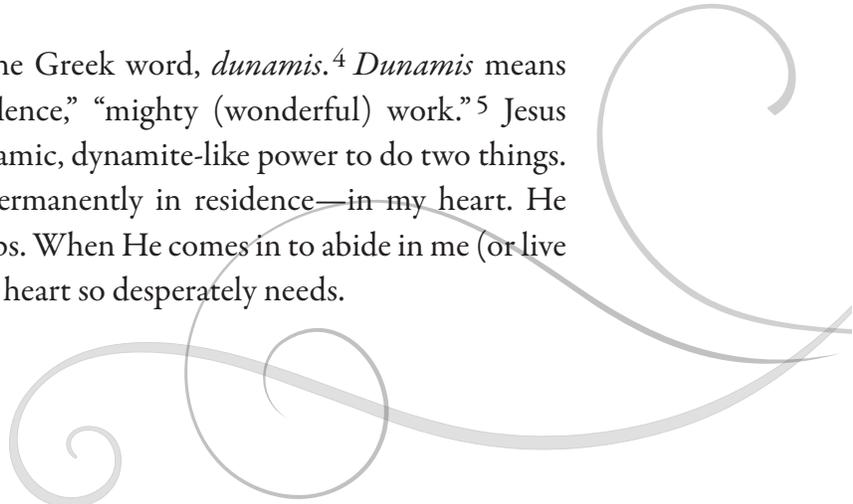
In the first part of VERSE 17, there is Christ's part and your part. Describe each.

Christ's Part: _____

My part: _____

My inner man may feel weak because of the messages I have received and believed. My love bucket may be so full of holes I couldn't contain Christ's love even if He poured it in. So, the first thing Jesus does is use His power to strengthen my inner man.

The word "power" in VERSE 16 is the Greek word, *dunamis*.⁴ *Dunamis* means "miraculous power," "strength," "violence," "mighty (wonderful) work."⁵ Jesus strengthens me with His mighty, dynamic, dynamite-like power to do two things. First, that He may dwell—or live permanently in residence—in my heart. He comes in to fill up all the holes and gaps. When He comes in to abide in me (or live in me), He brings with Him what my heart so desperately needs.





What does He provide according to the last half of VERSE 17?

APPLY

What two words—taken from gardening and building—does Paul use to describe what Christ’s love does for me?

What I need is “love sweet love.” I don’t just want it, I need it. Christ knows me so well he knows I must be both rooted and grounded in His love. These two words give us graphic pictures of the process.



ROOTED AND GROUNDED

We once had an incident in our house that helped me understand the concept of being “rooted” and being “grounded.” We discovered that our Houston home, like many other houses in our bayou city, needed foundation repair. The roots of some of our trees became an object of concern. For the foundation, it would have been best to cut some of the large exposed roots on the surface of the ground. However, if we did, the trees—even though they were large oaks—would topple over in the wind. The holding roots were holding the trees steady and firm in adversity. Both the holding roots and feeding roots were necessary for the survival of the tree.

The word “rooted” in VERSE 17 means “made stable.”⁶ Think back to JOHN 15:4. We are to abide in Him with our branches firmly rooted in His vine life. When Jesus said you need to be rooted in His love, He means that you need those abiding roots going deep into His love holding you steady in life’s circumstances and you need constant feeding from that same source of unending love.

The word “grounded” in the same verse means “to lay a foundation.”⁷ In Houston, Texas, the soil is so full of sticky clay that it expands and contracts according to the amount of moisture in the soil. That’s not good news for foundations under houses. When the soil begins to shift, so does the foundation and the homeowner begins to notice cracks in the walls and doors that stick.

The foundation of our house needed solid ground to support it. We hired men to put concrete pillars under our house that rested far beneath the surface on solid rock. This process is exactly what Jesus intends for your life. You are not only rooted in His love, but also founded on the solid, never-changing, never shifting rock of

His great love. It is the whole purpose for His “dwelling in your heart by faith.” He is there to provide what your empty heart needs. His message to you is LOVE.



How big is the love of Christ as explained in VERSES 18 and 19?

APPLY

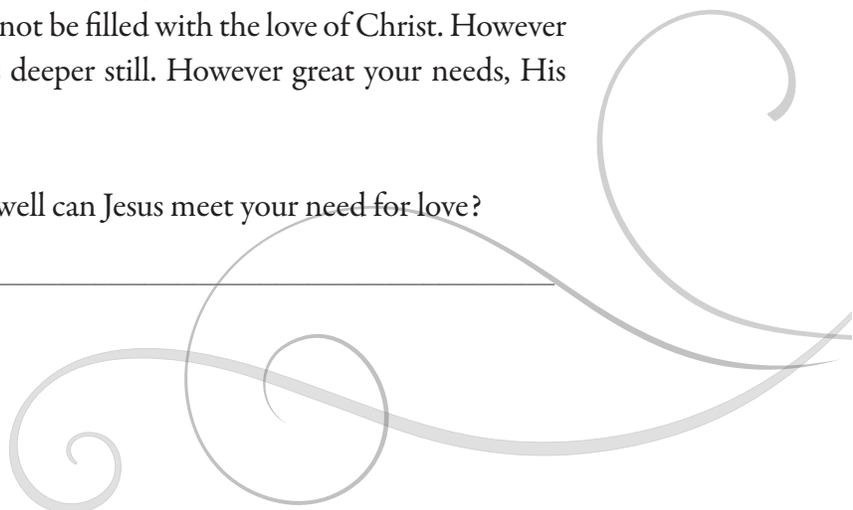
Jesus has come to dwell in your heart so you will be rooted and grounded in His love, and according to VERSES 18 and 19, that you will comprehend and know His love. “Comprehend” means “to take eagerly, seize and possess.”⁸ “Know” means “to be sure, to understand, to be resolved.”⁹ VERSES 18 and 19 could be rewritten, “[That you] may be able to eagerly grasp with all Christians what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know for sure in your ‘knower’ the love of Christ...” This is the love message Jesus is sending to you. You are deeply loved. You are completely accepted. You are safe and secure. You don’t have to wait for someone to tell you that. If you believe the Bible is true, then you also believe these messages God is sending to your heart are true. And it gets even better.

In VERSES 19 and 20, Paul has a hard time using language big and expansive enough to describe the love Christ has for us. He says it surpasses knowledge. We can’t even think that big. The love Jesus has for you is so big and vast your little brain just can’t take it all in. And if that weren’t enough, He tells us this big love of God has a purpose.

What is the reason for God’s love for you?

I love the definition of the Greek word for “filled up.” It means “crammed full, leveled off, satisfied.”¹⁰ Jesus’ love is designed to top off your love tank. There is enough love to fill every crack and crevice of your heart. You do not have a bottomless pit in your heart that cannot be filled with the love of Christ. However deep your despair, His love goes deeper still. However great your needs, His love is greater still.

Re-read EPHESIANS 3:20. How well can Jesus meet your need for love?



He will meet your love needs beyond your wildest imagination. VERSE 20 says He will do far and above all we could even ask Him to do.

Why does this issue of love matter to mothers? How does knowing that God loves you make you a better mom?

Here's how. You cannot give away what you do not possess. Your children need your unconditional love. If they don't get it, they will be emotionally damaged. But to give your children love, you must first receive love yourself. You must take it in all the way to the bottom of your heart. You need a full tank of love to be a good mom. And it is available to you.

Picture your love bucket. What did you learn today about the true source of love to fill it? Tell God how you feel about His true messages to you.

Lord, I have a lot to learn about the great depth of Your love for me. I want You to open my capacity to receive Your love. I want to know in my 'knower' that Your love is enough when my husband, my children, and my friends let me down. I'm ready to grow and I'm ready to learn. Teach me in my innermost being. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



Your role as a mother is defined by the name Adam gave his wife. "Eve" means "life-giver." You are to be a life-giver for your children and this goes beyond their physical life needs. Your children need three gifts from you. They need unconditional love, firm and fair discipline, and the "bread of life"—which is the blessing of being exposed to the gospel truth of Jesus Christ. Today, practice "receiving" love from Christ and giving love to your children. Let each of your children know, in a way they can receive, how deep your love is for them.



DAY 5



LOVE LIFE

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Ask the Lord Jesus to root and ground you in His love. Ask Him to allow you to comprehend and know His love that goes beyond what you can understand with your mind. Ask Him to reveal His love to your heart.



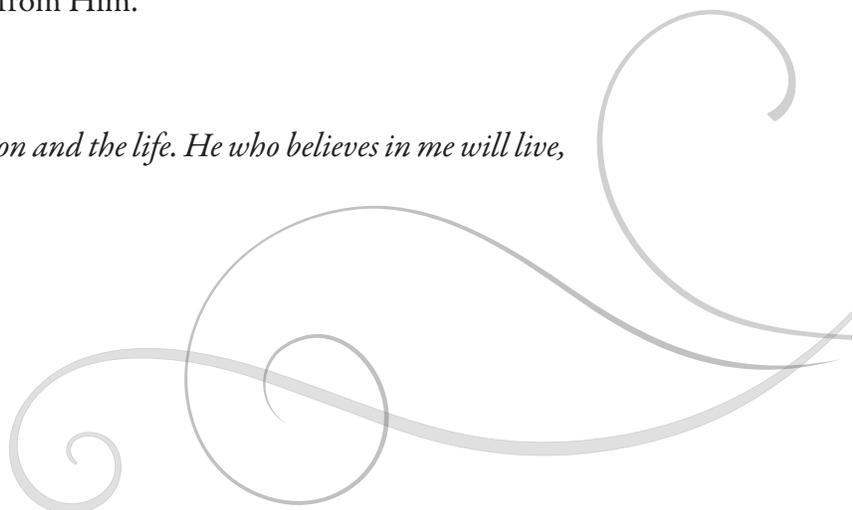
Imagine a scarecrow in a garden. He is full of straw and lifelessly stands in the garden day after day. But imagine now that the farmer takes down the scarecrow, removes all the straw and puts on the scarecrow's clothing. He walks out into the garden shooing away the birds before they can light.

Do you sometimes feel as lifeless and helpless as a scarecrow when you start to tackle your mothering tasks? When you try to discipline firmly, try to make sure each child feels loved, attend every school event, drive them to all their lessons, help with homework, cook, clean, wash, be a nurse, counselor, teacher, and drill sergeant, do you sometimes feel "full of straw?" Do you feel like the "birds of prey" are attacking your family and you can do nothing about it?

Jesus' purpose is to remove your dead "straw" and fill you with His life to accomplish the work of mothering through you. He longs to fill you with His life to satisfy your aching heart. He wants to fill you with Himself so that He will be mothering your children through you. You are not to gear up and try harder to accomplish these things independently from Him.

READ JOHN 11:25

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;"





How did Jesus describe Himself?

APPLY

READ COLOSSIANS 3:4

Who is our life according to this verse?

Jesus did not come to help me be a mom. He came to do it for me. I don't need a "mothering instruction manual," I need the One who has mastered parenting to do the job for me!



CHRIST IN ME

READ JOHN 14:20

20 "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in Me, and I in you."



Where is Jesus in relation to where you are?

APPLY

Draw a diagram of JOHN 14:20. Draw 4 concentric circles and label each one according to this verse. Label the largest circle "God," the next circle "Jesus," the next circle "me" and the smallest circle "Jesus."

Do you see that Jesus is "in" God, you are "in" Jesus (if you have received Jesus into your heart and have become His child) and Jesus is "in" you? Now answer that question. Do you see the liberating truth of this verse? You are not alone!

Miss Bertha Smith, a missionary to China in the 1950's used baskets to teach this illustration to new Chinese converts. Each basket nested inside the other. She would say, "Jesus is on the inside of you and He is on the outside of you and that's the only two sides you have!"

Jesus is filling the inside of us so He can handle our lives for us! Nothing can reach us that hasn't been filtered by His love. If He allows a circumstance to come to us, our job is to trust Him. His job is to take care of the problem. There is nothing He cannot do. *"For nothing will be impossible with God"* (LUKE 1:37).

Jesus said that He is in His father. His life here on earth and His life in heaven consists of abiding in His father. He says that we are in Him and He is in us. He's on the inside of us and the outside of us! Can you think of a better way to live your life?

READ I CORINTHIANS 1:30



This verse was written to believers. If you are a believer, where are you according to the first part of this verse?

APPLY

What four things does this verse state that you have from Jesus now that you are "in" Him?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Jesus supplies us with wisdom, with righteousness to cover our past sins, with sanctification for present cleansing and renewal, and with redemption for our eternal future in Him. He has provided for your past, your present and your future. That about covers it!

➤ THE RELIABLE SOURCE

Jesus is a reliable source for meeting our personal needs of love, acceptance, security, and identity. Our husbands cannot always meet them. Our children

cannot fill us. Our own appearance or achievements cannot satisfy us. The only reliable source for us is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not a heavenly “pie in the sky by and by” ditty. It is not for later, it is for now. The vine life of the Lord Jesus Christ is available to you on a continual basis.

He did not come to help you with your life. He came to be your life. Let that sink in. There is a radical difference between the two. According to His own Word in JOHN 15:5, without His indwelling life flowing through you, you are completely incapable of being the woman, wife, mother, or worker you know you should be. It is impossible. But with His life in you doing the work through you, nothing is impossible.

Have you noticed that you are incapable of keeping God’s laws all on your own? If you’re trying really hard, you might do well for a while, but you don’t have the staying power on your own to do what you know to do. God never intended for you to keep His commandments independent of His life in you. That was the whole point of Jesus coming to earth. You couldn’t keep His covenant, so He came and died and rose again to live in you to do it for you. That is why the New Testament is such good news.

Jesus didn’t come just to be your Savior. He didn’t come just to be your Lord. He came to be your life. Now that is good news!



Read the following verses and look for one word that is common to all three.

APPLY

JOHN 1:16

16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

EPHESIANS 1:22,23

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

EPHESIANS 3:19

19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

What key word is common to these verses?

Did the word “fullness” jump out at you? Jesus is the fullness that fills us up to all the fullness of God. He fills our all with His all. Are you picturing your love bucket now? Is it full or empty? Will you base that answer on your feelings or on the truth of God’s Word?

RE-READ JOHN 15:1-5

1 *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

2 *“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.*

3 *“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

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.*

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.”*

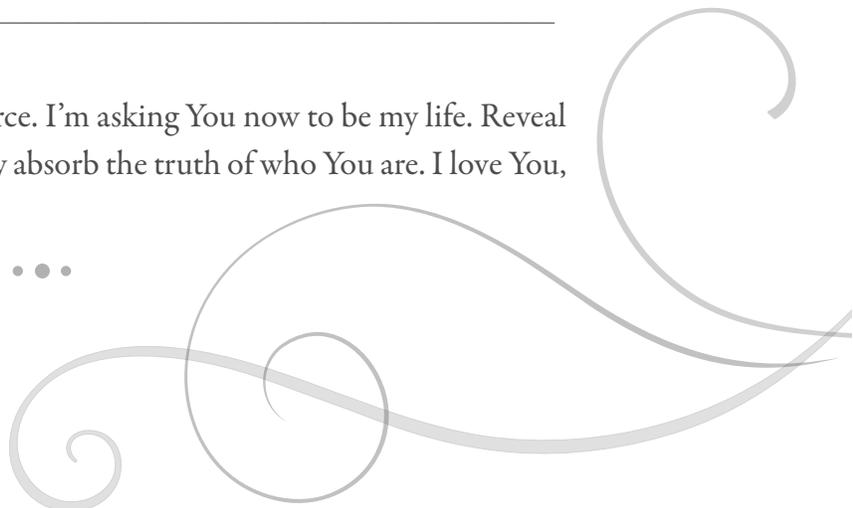


APPLY

Re-write these verses in the form of a prayer. You might begin, “Lord, You are the vine and our Father is the vinedresser. I release myself into Your hands for pruning so that I will bear more fruit...”

Lord, I want You to be my power source. I’m asking You now to be my life. Reveal Yourself to me day by day so I can fully absorb the truth of who You are. I love You, Lord. Amen.

...



If you are in a difficult mothering situation—for example, if your child has ADHD, other learning problems, or a physical disability, if possible, share it with your MotherWise group and find another mom as a prayer partner to walk through it with you. Don't try to manage alone. The worst thing you can do is to be isolated. Jesus meets our personal heart needs, but He has called the body of Christ to be His hands and feet. We all need someone with skin on when we are hurting and having difficulty.



NOTES

¹*Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby, (Nashville, Tenn: LifeWay Press, 1990), 8.

Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, Number

²*The Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1932), 33, Renewal 1960. *Matthew Henry's Unabridged Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers; 2nd edition, 1991).

³*World Book 1985*, Vol. G, 288-90.

⁴*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, Number 1411, 24.

⁵*Handbook to Happiness*, Dr. Charles Solomon, (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1983), 67, 69, 71.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Number 4492, p. 63.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Number 2311, p. 36

⁸ *Ibid.*, Number 4137, p. 58

⁹ *Ibid.*, Number 2638, p. 40

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Number 1097, p. 20

