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**VCL International**  
**VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING CONFERENCE**

***REST, ABIDE, WALK***

**Lesson Transcript by David Ritzenthaler**

This lesson is entitled “Rest, Abide, Walk.” That is resting while you are abiding in Christ walking after the Spirit. This is one of the most popular lessons that we share because there are many people as Christians who find themselves burned-out, stressed-out, and worn-out. This lesson is designed to teach you how to have all the energy every day that you need to live an effective, abundant, dynamic Christian life. So, if you find yourself anxious, depressed, or frustrated with life or people, this is a session that you want to hear.

All of us at times have problems with someone or circumstances. These maladies usually are a result of an issue of godship where we’re trying to control life, and it just doesn’t work. As you turn to this lesson, “Rest, Abide, Walk,” I want you to listen to a letter that I received from the wife of a pastor. This couple had been really going through it while trying to pastor a church. They themselves were having difficulty in their relationship. But even more, she personally was at a point in her life that the pastor was deciding this particular day when he called whether or not to institutionalize her in a mental institution. The church had asked him if he would, one more time, try to help her before institutionalizing her. So he called our center in Illinois and that center called Phoenix. We agreed that they could come for a week and I would spend a week with them, helping them salvage the situation in their marriage and in their lives so that she wouldn’t have to go to an institution.

Well this letter that I’m going to read, that she has agreed for me to share, is six months after they were here for a week. During that week’s time I shared with her this session. I want you

to hear what she has to say. She says: “My husband is still struggling with living the Christian life or appropriating Christ as life. Only God can make it make sense to him. I can model it, explain it, but I can’t make him understand. For now, I am content to let God make the changes in both of us. What a relief not to have to do it. What a relief to have God in charge, showing us where the next change has to come and then accepting it and allowing God the freedom to make the changes. What a relief to no longer have to meet standards—my husband’s standards, the church’s standards, the Bible’s standards, or my own standards—only to let God make the changes.

“How restful to lean on Him and to praise Him all day long for the love and care. Such an unbounding joy I’m experiencing. Whenever I slip and try to do it myself again, I quickly fly back to God’s hiding place to be hidden in Christ. I am a totally different person than I was six months ago. How I praise Him for the terrible trials and suffering that I went through. I have learned so much and don’t ever want to forget it or go back to being that old me.

“Not only am I different, but I have so much compassion for the hurting and wounded and struggling, especially the Christians who can’t seem to live this abundant life. I love them and pray for them and can support them with understanding. I have a whole Sunday school class full of them who are struggling. How God loves them and how I love them too. It’s fantastic.”

What happened with this woman who was going to be institutionalized, to six months later write

REST

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**REST, ABIDE, WALK TRANSCRIPT, Page 1**

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a letter like this about what is happening in her life, and, interestingly enough, talking about her husband not knowing this yet? This was the husband that was going to institutionalize her. In fact, I have to tell you that that's not the end of that story. A few months after she wrote me this letter, I got a call to find out that he had had an affair and that the church had released him from his responsibilities at the church. She, in the phone conversation, continued to say, "I want you to know it's wonderful to be able to be at peace, to be able to walk through this, to be able to love him, to be able to let God do the work that needs to be done in him." Here she was, at peace in the midst of this terrible circumstance—resting, abiding in Christ, walking after the Spirit.

### **REST, ABIDE, WALK (Diagram 190-A)**

Turn to your outline, Diagram 190-A. You will notice the first word is "rest." In fact, you'll notice the outline is simply made up of the word "rest," the word "abide," and the word "walk." I want you to take each one of those words and what I want you to see is that each one of these things, though they're different words and different ways of communicating an idea, they are the same idea scripturally. They're just three different ways that God shows us how to enjoy the abundant life. As this gal began to enjoy that abundant life, she found herself resting while she was abiding in Christ walking after the Spirit. These are all the same thing, just three different ways to say it.

I want to begin to develop this concept of resting. How do you actually rest as a believer? How do you get to the place where anxiety and depression and frustration and all these things are removed from your life? Not the people, not the circumstances, they may be the same, but you and I are able to enjoy in the midst of these things being at peace, being at rest, abiding in Christ, and walking after His Spirit even in the most difficult of circumstances. I would like for us to read Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to

Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." To be able to appreciate what's being said, we need to realize who the speaker is, who is saying this "come to Me." If you have a red letter Bible, you will notice it is in red letters because it's the Lord Jesus saying this. When you and I are depressed, discouraged, frustrated, anxious, burned-out, or worn-out, it is because we are not in the presence of and enjoying the empowering of the Spirit of God. We have walked away. That's why the Lord Jesus says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden." If those are our life experiences, it's not because God isn't supplying, it isn't because God isn't sufficient, it's because you and I have walked away.

In verse 29, He tells us how to practically, specifically, actually come back into His presence to enjoy resting, to be able to be at a place of abiding, and to actually effectively walk after the Spirit. I want us to look at these verses for a few minutes, so we can begin to grasp the idea of how do you rest, how do you come to this place where Jesus truly is empowering you and you are filled with energy today? The Bible says, "In Thy presence [the Lord's] is the fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11). Another verse of the Bible says, ". . . the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). So if you want strength, you want joy that is more than you need for yourself. It is in the presence of the Lord, it is enjoying His presence that makes that possible. Let's see what He says here as to how we can make that possible.

You will notice verse 30 says His yoke is easy and His load is light. Now I want you to listen carefully, so that you don't misunderstand what I am saying. What I am saying is this, the Christian life is easy, the Christian life is light. If you've been a Christian for years as many tell me, they say, "Man, for twenty years I've been

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living the Christian life and it's hard." Well, I have to point out to them that they're not living the Christian life.

The Christian life is not hard. In fact, let me quote what the Bible says, "the way of transgressors is hard" (Proverbs 13:15 KJV). When we transgress, when we walk away from, when we're not coming unto and into the presence of Christ, we've walked away—that is a hard life. Now, it doesn't say that life will be a bed of roses. No. In fact as you watch Paul, he was in the midst of all kinds of difficulties and distresses and problems and beatings and jailings and being lost at sea, I mean floating in the ocean for a day or two. I'm not talking about circumstances all being wonderful and, therefore, everything is wonderful. The reason I read you this letter from this pastor's wife is so you realize that the best place to experience the dynamic of the power of the supernatural life in Christ is in the worst of circumstances. You see, if life was really good and everything was perfect and wonderful around you, would you know if you have the supernatural life? No, you couldn't really know that for sure. The best place to know it is in the worst of circumstances. If you can experience the fullness of joy and be completely thankful in the worst of things, it's probably because you have learned this life of the Christ, the Eternal One living through you and making it possible to live supernaturally.

In verse 29, He tells us two things that actually make that possible, so let's look at these two things and see how you actually come to the place of resting. He has said first in verse 28, "Come to Me" and then in the next verse He says is "Take My yoke upon you." So the first command is to come to Him and the second one is to take His yoke. Notice in verse 30, that His yoke He is asking you to take is light and it is easy. This life of Christ is light, it's easy, so when He says, "Take my yoke," it isn't to take upon yourself a burden. In fact, if you are

carrying a burden, what are you going to probably have to do before you can take His yoke upon you? You are going to have to give your burden or your yoke up and that's no "yoke." How many of you have ever seen somebody carrying a yoke across their shoulders with a couple of buckets carrying water and such? Well, if you are carrying a yoke like that with all that weight, the first thing you have to do is to take that yoke off of you in order to take His yoke on you. He describes here two things that are what you have to do to take His yoke which is light and easy. I want us to see those. Notice the first one. He says, "Take my yoke . . . and learn from Me," and then He tells us two things we need to learn. The first one is, He says, "I am gentle." The word is also translated "meek." The second thing He says is that He is humble in heart. Okay, I've got to learn that He is meek or gentle. What significance does that have to me?

I believe if you will join me, in a few minutes you will see what it actually means to learn of Him and become meek. I'll show you that. In fact, if you just keep something in the place there in Matthew, turn with me to Philippians, the Second chapter. I want to show you what He actually gives as an illustration scripturally to what meekness is. In Philippians, Chapter 2, starting at verse 5, He gives a specific detailed idea of what the thoughts in Jesus were that made him meek. What was it that caused Him to be meek? Look with me starting in verse 5. It is interesting that He actually says that you and I, this is talking to the Philippians here, but also written to every believer, He's telling us in verse 5, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." In other words, you and I are to have this attitude or this thinking in us. What was this attitude or thinking?

Verse 6 says, "who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." Let's stop here for a minute. Let's understand this. Here's Jesus who knew He was God. Now let me ask you a

REST

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question. Would you view that as a fairly good self-worth, a pretty good view of one's self—viewing yourself as God? Well, that is a pretty high self-worth, but it's more than a high self-worth, it's an appropriate, it's an accurate self-worth because that's actually who He is so there is nothing wrong with it. The Bible doesn't want us to have a low self-worth and it doesn't want us to have a high self-worth, it wants us to have an **accurate** self-worth. He had an accurate one and that was that He was God. Knowing He was God, he made a decision not to hold onto His Godhead.

Notice four things in the next verses. He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” What I want you to see here is a person who has a very good, accurate view of His self-worth. He wants us to have an accurate self-worth view of who we actually are. He doesn't want us to have a low or a high self-worth. He wants us to be able to face all the positives about ourselves and all the negatives about ourselves. He wants us to be able to accept those totally—recognize and admit this is who we are. I am going to give you four things out of these verses that will show you what it meant when He said, “Have this attitude [thinking] in yourselves,” and that thinking was “learn of Me for I am meek.” Look at what made Him meek in His thinking.

First, go to verse 7. In verse 7, it says He “emptied Himself.” This is point number one of these four things in these verses. When it says He “emptied Himself” it's also translated in other translations He “made Himself of no reputation.” Let me ask you a question. How many of you find that something you really look forward to everyday is to be of no reputation? How many of you have found that you have no need to protect your reputation when somebody is maligning you and gossiping about you?

Now remember, in verse 5 it says, “Have this attitude [thinking] in yourselves.” I want you to see what would happen when you and I let this thinking become our thinking. When we let the thinking of Christ become our thinking what will happen to us in terms of rest or peace or abiding or walking after the Spirit? Notice what happens. If you truly let this thinking be in you, this meek thinking of being willing to be of no reputation—notice it wasn't that somebody wrecked His reputation—He decided to be of no reputation. When you and I make a decision to become joined with the thinking of Christ and we decide to be of no reputation anymore, can anybody do anything with regard to trying to wreck our reputation that would bug us or upset us or make us depressed or discouraged or frustrated or anxious or whatever? No! If we had no need to protect our reputation anymore, nobody could upset us or make us anxious. Nobody could depress us by the kinds of terrible things that they would say about us, because we don't think that way anymore, we don't think in terms of protecting our reputation.

Notice the second thing He says. Not only are we to have this thinking in us and that is to decide to be of no reputation, but the next thing in that same verse 7, He took upon Himself “the form of a bond-servant.” Now let me ask you a question. If you or I decided to be a slave, to be a bond-servant, would there be anything anybody could ask us to do as an employer that would upset us and demean us because it was too lowly a thing to do? Would we have any complaints if someone asked us to do things, if we had decided—now notice it doesn't say someone made Him a servant, it says He decided to be one—to be a servant? Let me ask you a question. Do you think that churches would function more effectively if believers began to be servants to each other? Do you think there would be divisions anymore if they decided to be of no reputation and didn't worry about what somebody's gossip was? In fact, they didn't concern themselves as to what they

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were requested to do. They were just willing to do whatever because they were living as unto Christ, doing whatever it was as long as it was, of course, moral and legal. I mean we wouldn't have the thinking of Christ and agree to do something that is immoral or illegal. But as long as it isn't, if we decided to become a servant no one could enslave or cause us to feel obligated to do something we didn't want to do, if we had already decided to be a servant.

Notice the third thing. Verse 8 says, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Does it say that anybody humiliated Him? No. Come with me for a minute in your imagination when He was taken by the Roman Army before the king and He was being maligned by the things that people were saying about Him. They're punching Him in the face, spitting on Him, crowning Him with thorns, and He says what to them in response? What does He say? He says absolutely nothing. Do you know why He had no need to protect His reputation, no need to respond? Now remember something, here is God. The Bible says that He could call down legions of angels, ten thousands of angels; He could wipe every one of those people out that were spitting on Him, judging Him as the king. He was God, but He said nothing. And the reason is you can't humiliate somebody if they have already decided to humble themselves. Would you be at peace in your life if you had already decided when you got up today to let the thinking that is in Christ Jesus be your thinking—letting the Holy Spirit empower Himself through you with the thinking of Christ which is that you make yourself of no reputation? You are willing to be a servant, you are willing to humble yourself. Do you think it would be possible for marriages to function effectively if more people were willing to humble themselves? So when someone tells you something about yourself that needs to be straightened out, instead of resisting and argu-

ing and fighting, you'd say, "Well, you know, I appreciate your sharing that. In fact, let me tell you a couple other of my flaws so that maybe you could make note of those, too, and help me with them." Because you already decided to be of no reputation. You already decided to humble yourself so nobody can humiliate you. You see, what we're talking about is a very significant self-worth isn't it? Not a low self-worth. No, a person who you can't humiliate, a person who you can not demean, is a person who has a very strong self-worth.

When I was growing up and I thought of the word "meekness," I thought of the word "meek" and I immediately thought of the word "weak." I thought weak people were meek people. Why would I ever want to be meek? Then I began to realize that meek is actually a person who knows who he is, like Jesus did, but decides not to hold on to it. You see, in a society like ours where our whole commitment is to our personal self-rights, this flies in the face of that. What we're talking about here is giving up our rights and our reputation. Giving up our rights and becoming a servant to another. This is totally different. I realize now, a meek person is one of the most powerful you've ever met, because a meek person is a person who has a good self-worth. Meek people are people who know who they are, but they have chosen to give up their rights. As they give up their self-rights, you no longer can upset them, you no longer can humiliate them, you no longer can enslave them, or cause them to feel a situation of servitude because they have already decided to be a bond-servant.

But there is a fourth thing. Notice in verse 8, He not only made Himself of no reputation, He not only decided to be a servant, he not only humbled Himself, but the last part of that verse 8 he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Well, what does that mean? What that means is this: when He was in the garden and He was thinking about the consequences of

REST

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going to the cross and shedding His blood, He said to His Father, “I don’t want to shed My blood, but not My self-will be done, but Your will be done.” What He was saying was “I’m giving up My rights. I’m willing to be of no rights and do whatever You want, including to die. Something I can’t imagine, because I have lived forever. I’m willing to die. I’m willing to become obedient to You. I’m willing to give up My rights.”

Do you realize that if you and I had the thinking in us that was in Christ Jesus which was meekness, there is nothing that could upset us? Meekness is a willingness to be of no reputation. Meekness is a willingness to be a servant. Meekness is a willingness to humble ourselves, admit our wrongs. Meekness is a willingness to give up our rights. Then we would be at peace. There is nothing that could enslave us, nothing that we would have to control because we were the servant. We could actually enjoy rest as we take His yoke which is light and easy, because we had learned of Him, which is to be meek, to let the thinking of meekness be our thinking.

But in Matthew 11:29, you’ll notice that there is a second thing He says. He says not only let this thinking be in us of meekness, but He says, “I am humble in heart.” What does it mean to be humble in heart? We realize now what meekness is. Meekness is those four things we looked at in Philippians. But what is humble in heart? Well, actually back in Philippians 2:3 you have a description of the second thing as well. Let me read that to you. Philippians 2:3 says, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.” That’s what it means to be humble in heart, not to have a lowly opinion of ourselves, but a high opinion of the other person, to consider the other person more important than yourself.

Do you think there is any marriage that would

fail if both parties had meekness and humbleness of heart as their attitudes? I’ve been counseling for 30 - plus years, and I have never seen a marriage to this day that couldn’t be healed and transformed and made beautiful if at least just one person was willing to let Matthew 11:29 and Philippians 2:5–8 become his/her living experience. Because even in the midst of the worst of marriages, married to the most terrible person doing terrible things there can be peace. Like in the letter I read in the beginning. This gal was able to be at peace because she was allowing the thinking of Christ Jesus to be her thinking everyday. She was enjoying resting in the midst of her husband having had an affair. Does that mean that she didn’t care? No, that was very hurtful and very painful. Does that mean it isn’t important to the integrity of a marriage? No, it’s absolutely important to her. But what she had was a supernatural ability beyond human capability of forgiveness. She was able to forgive supernaturally. She was not only able to forgive, but she was able to be free to love him and to pray for him and to live with him and to begin to encourage him and to help him discover this life that she had, because it was greater and more than she needed for herself.

That’s the supernatural life of resting in Christ Jesus and that’s exactly what God wants. It’s not an issue of resting with the idea that you’re sitting sleeping or doing nothing. In fact, some of you may have read the new translation called *The Message*. I’ll read you Matthew 11:28–30, I want you to read it with me here. It’s very interesting the way this man writes this. Here’s what he says starting in verse 28, “Are you tired, worn-out, burned-out on religion, come to Me. Get away with Me and you will recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn how to live freely and lightly.” You see, we’re not talking

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about hiding in the corner and, therefore resting, or laying in your bed. We're talking about living in the midst of the real life circumstances you and I are in, living a dynamic supernatural life. God desires this for each one of His children. This isn't something special for people that are in the pulpit or people that are teachers or people that are pastoring or people that are missionaries or evangelists—this is for every single saint. This is why God wrote these things so that we could understand them.

Look with me in Hebrews as we look at this word “rest.” Look in Hebrews 4:9-11. Here's what it says starting in verse 9, “There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” This is not for just leadership, this is for all the people of God this Sabbath rest that we're talking about in Hebrews. In verse 10 it says, “For the one who has entered His [Christ's] rest has himself [that's a small 'h' that means you and I] also rested from his works, as God did from His.” If we're going to come to the place of enjoying this rest, we're going to have to cease from our own works. In fact, I have to tell you one of the worst works that you and I could become involved with is “religious” work.

When I was in high school I began to have a real desire to have this abundant life Jesus said He came to give. “I came to give life and give it to you abundantly.” I wanted it. So while I was in high school I was the president of the Youth for Christ Club and I was leading people to Christ and I was just totally committed to doing everything and anything necessary to live this supernatural life.

From there, I went to a Bible school and I took everything I could take on the studying of the Bible. I went to every conference I could go to. I went to the bookstore and I bought every single book I could read and added them to my library. It's part of why I have such an enormous library today, because I read everything I could read to have this life. In fact, I worked so

hard at having this Christian life that I started getting so exhausted that I started sleeping 16 to 18 hours per day. My grandmother, concerned about that, came to the school where I was and took me to a doctor. They put me through all kinds of tests. When I met with the doctor a couple of weeks later, he said, you know, we have thoroughly examined you and he said, “I want you to understand you are in perfect physical condition, you don't have mono, you don't have any of the things that people would think you have. You are in perfect physical condition. There's not a thing wrong with you.” He said, “Dave, I've known your family for years [Dr. Blumenthal is the name, a Jewish doctor gifted far beyond his medical training].” He said, “I want to tell you something. You come from a very strong-willed German family. If you keep going the way you are going, sleeping 16 to 18 hours a day, Dave, my conclusion after all my evaluation is, you just don't want to live any longer.”

Well this was wild. I was now on probation at the school, because, obviously, it's a little hard to do well in school when you're sleeping 16 to 18 hours a day. The only thing I would get up for is to go to the cafeteria to eat lunch and dinner. Now here is somebody who wants life like you can't imagine, was leading people to Christ by the score, was totally committed to living a supernatural Christian life and he is telling me that I don't want to live. In fact, do you know what my response was? At about 20 years of age, kind of a smart aleck that I was, I looked around the room and I said, “Well, now two of us know.” Because, you see, he was absolutely correct. I had come to the place I was so frustrated trying to live the Christian life, doing everything I could do to be this supernatural Christian, that I was totally burned-out, exhausted, and fed up with the Christian life.

In fact, after my time with him, I quit school. I said scrap Christianity—it doesn't work. You see, that's what He is saying here. In Hebrews

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4:9–10 it says, “There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.” The Lord allowed me to go home and sleep in the basement of my folks home for another 3 to 4 months for 16, 17, or 18 hours a day and get up to eat. One day I said, “This is stupid, this is a waste of time, I can’t seem to die, can’t seem to accomplish what Dr. Blumenthal said, I guess I’m not as strong-willed as I thought, because he said, ‘if you keep this up you’ll be a vegetable.’” I couldn’t get to the vegetable state so I decided to go and get a job and go on with living.

God, in His grace, decided just a couple of months later to introduce me to what we’re talking about here right now. This is how to come to the place of resting in the Sabbath rest, allowing the Spirit of God to lead and abiding in Him became my living experience, so I didn’t have to work at being a Christian anymore. Because I found out God had already done all the work. He’d already accomplished everything and all I had to do was begin to appropriate and enjoy it. In fact, let me read you a quote out of Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*. It says: “‘And I will give you rest. That is I will sustain you, causing you to stand firm.’ He’s not saying I’ll put you to bed, hold your hand, or sing you to sleep. In essence He’s saying I will get you out of bed, out of your listlessness and exhaustion, and out of your condition of being half-dead while you’re still alive. I will penetrate you with the Spirit of life and you will be sustained by the perfection of vital activity.” God wanted to produce a supernatural life in me, He didn’t want my puny self-accomplished Christian life. He didn’t want religion, which is what that is all about, trying to live by laws of the Scriptures. That’s why the woman wrote in her letter, “I’m so glad I don’t have to meet the standards of my husband, the standards of the Bible, the standards of myself, I don’t have to meet any

standards anymore.” All she had to do was just let this supernatural life of Jesus Christ live in her and through her. That makes it possible for us to go to the next word, the word “abide.”

In John Chapter 15, if you’d turn to that, you’re probably very familiar with it, it’s a familiar passage about the vineyard. In this passage of the vineyard, there are 3 specific people mentioned. The first verse, Jesus again speaking [in red letters], says, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” So here we have the first two. In verse 5 we have the third person. Jesus says again, “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.” Here we have God the Father, He runs the vineyard. He comes in and waters it and muddies things up. He comes in and prunes away, cuts away on the branches, that’s you and I. The only thing we are asked to do is to stay connected to the vine which, by the way, is Jesus. It says He is the vine. God gave us the vineyard to teach us the dimension of supernatural living, of how to abide. You can rest when you are abiding in Christ, when you’re simply connected. When we’re allowing the flow of the sap of the Holy Spirit through the vine to you and me, the branches, then something wonderful happens.

I’m going to ask you two questions. When I ask you these questions, they are not trick questions, I’m going to ask them both so that you’ll realize I’m not trying to trick you, so here they are. Here’s the first one. In a vineyard, who produces the grapes or the fruit? Now don’t answer it because I want you to think about it, who *produces* it. Here’s the second question. Don’t answer it. Just think about it. Who *bears* the fruit? You see, you and I are the branches. Where do the grapes come out? They come out on the branch. The fruit, and, by the way, notice that the fruit is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). How many of you like me tried to be loving? I tried all the fruit of the



Spirit. I tried to do them all when I was in my twenties. I was so exhausted trying to do the fruit of the Holy Spirit, it just wore me out. Those are the fruit not of Dave, those are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. So, all you and I have to do, like the grapes on the branches on the vine, the grapes or the fruit of the Holy Spirit comes out of the branches just because the branches are connected to the vine. And the one who is at work producing that is the vine, of course, because the vine has the branches connected, the vine has the sap coming through it that is producing the grapes. But the other one is the Father. He owns the vineyard. He runs it. He comes in. He pours the water into our lives and muddies them up, and He comes in with the shears and He prunes away on us, the branches. Isn't that exciting? You see, He does that because He wants us to bear more fruit. But who is doing the work here by the way? Is the branch doing the work? I don't know if any of you have ever done this, I took a really sensitive microphone out to my fruit trees and I set it up there. I just wanted to see what kind of sounds fruit trees made. So when I set it up there it was just amazing to listen to the groans and the moanings of the fruit as it was bearing itself. I know you're looking at me like I am weird. Well, if I had done that, let me tell you, probably it would be weird. There probably is somebody who has done that. No, I didn't do that. The point is, it's not the fruit that is working, it is the Father who is working, pouring the water on, pruning the branches. The branches are doing nothing except staying connected or abiding in the vine. That's all they're doing. The fruit that is coming out of them is something the Father and the vine are producing. If you will look in those verses it says that if you don't stay connected to the vine what will happen is you will wither up and die.

Are you withered up and dying like I was? It was because I wasn't staying connected. I was trying to produce fruit by my own ability. It's an absolutely miserable experience as a Chris-

tian. I think there is nothing worse. I think that a Christian trying to live the Christian life is more miserable than a person who isn't a Christian. People who aren't Christians are just caught up with satisfying their flesh, they're having a good time. Sin is pleasant for a season. But a person who has become a Christian and knows all these things that he or she is supposed to do or be and is trying to be all these and is trying to produce them in his/her own effort, is a miserable person. The most exciting life is the one that we live when we are connected to the vine and we aren't doing anything except enjoying the fruit that is coming from the Spirit through our life. And you're standing back and going "wow, gee," because you know it isn't you. You wouldn't love that person God gives you the power to love. You wouldn't let the person in line because you would rather get through the traffic first yourself, but you go, "Wow, man, I can't believe I let that person in." Because you're just enjoying the Spirit at work because He's doing something you and I humanly wouldn't do.

### **PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE** (Diagram 190-B)

Look at diagram 190-B. You'll notice there are three categories, three boxes, three things. One says "past," one says "present," and one says "future" at the top. In each of these rectangles, there are words at the bottom under the dotted lines. You can look up all those verses below. Many people, who for the 30 years that I have been counseling, have come for help and they live their lives in the past. When you live your life in the past, what you do is you drag all your baggage with you. What that causes you to be is a very depressed person, because it's a lot of work dragging all your baggage. Or, the other people come in and they're trying to handle and solve and fix all the problems that are going to happen next month, next year, many of which, in fact, most of which, never happen. Those people are filled with anxiety. They're so anxious about what is going to happen that

REST

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hasn't happened yet and probably isn't going to happen, because most things that we think are going to happen don't. So here you have a person living in the past, depressed, and here you have a person living in the future filled with anxiety and stress. Well, the only place you can live this supernatural life of resting or abiding is in the present. That's the only place you can live it. Because the life of Christ is now, it's not tomorrow, it's not yesterday, it is now. He is an ever-present "I am" now. So the only thing you and I can do with regard to the past is to repent of things that are not right, any relationships that we are continuing to drag along that are not reconciled through unforgiveness, we need to repent. We need to get reconciled. Or, we need to thank God. "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIV). In the future, the only thing we can do about the future is trust ourselves to the Lord. If you read Matthew 6:34, He simply says, "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Why worry about tomorrow's troubles when you have some today? And of course in Jeremiah 29:11, He says, "'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'" They're for our best interest, so why waste our time trying to solve them and fix them. They haven't happened yet. The only place you can live this life of resting and abiding is in the present.

### **REST, ABIDE, WALK (Diagram 190-A)**

Look at that last word, the word "walk." This is just one more way of describing the same thing. You see, we're resting, abiding in Christ when we are walking after the Spirit. Walking after the Spirit is the same thing as abiding in Christ, it is the same thing as resting. They're all the same idea three different ways that God shows it to us. But I want us to take the word walk for a minute because, you see, everyone here is familiar with walking. The reason God gives us

certain words like He gave us the vineyard, He gave us a physical illustration of the vineyard to teach us about supernatural, spiritual things. He gave us physical walking the same way. He gave us physical breathing the same way. They're all designed to teach us about life. Let me illustrate it to you. Walking has left, right, left, right, etc., it has a twofold dimension. You step with your left then your right, left, right and that moves you—it's a process. Resting is a process. Abiding is a process. Walking is a process. They're all the same.

Well, I'm going to show you in very simple terms how you can start walking after the Spirit or abiding in Christ or resting. Down at the bottom of your page, Diagram 190-A, you'll notice you have four words across the bottom of the page and you have some blanks there. What I want you to see is that walking is twofold. As a baby, when you first started to learn how to walk, you got right up and walked away, right? No, you probably got up, fell on your face, while you were still bawling that wonderful loving parent of yours couldn't wait to stand you up again so you'd fall again. No, they stood you up again because they wanted to see you walk again, they were so excited about your walking. Do you know that eventually, what happened by them continuing to put you up to walk, what did you learn to do? You learned to walk. Falling is a part of getting started oftentimes in walking or abiding, because you don't really know how to do it yet. As a baby, you took one step and then another one and eventually you were walking. Physical breathing is just like physical walking, it's twofold. You exhale, you inhale. What do you exhale for, what is the purpose of exhaling? It's to exhaust the poisonous gases, the used up good quality air that you took in. What do you inhale for? It's to get oxygen in. Where does oxygen go? It goes into the blood. And the blood is the life source of the human being. Well, that's just like spiritual walking. You see, exhaling is just like this. First John 1:9 (paraphrased) says, "If we admit where we're not

walking, we're not resting, we're not abiding, He says if we admit that, He will forgive us and cleanse us just like exhaling is a cleansing process, admitting we're not walking in the cleansing process. [You don't have to ask God to forgive you.] He says if we admit we aren't, He will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The baby steps are, first, **admit**. The second step, if I am not resting is to **ask** God to take charge of my life. So I ask Him to empower me with His Holy Spirit. So when you first get started it's a conscious thing, it's kind of like when you are driving, when you first started driving you did it consciously. Were you any good at it? No. Now when you're driving you enjoy beautiful music, sit and talk to a good friend, look at the beautiful scenery all while driving. You get to the intersection, you stop at the light, you go through the intersection, you get to the other side and you go "Oh my goodness, was that a red light, did I stop?" You aren't even thinking about it. Now I know that with some of the drivers out there it does seem that way, but the point is it's an unconscious thing. It's just automatic. Well, when you mature in your resting or your abiding or your walking in the Christian life, it's the same way, it's unconscious.

There are two more words down there. I'm not resting, as the Spirit reveals it to me I thank Him for revealing it to me again, and once again, first of all, I simply **acknowledge** that I'm not resting. So when I am a mature believer I don't dig around trying to look for anything wrong. I wait for the Holy Spirit to convict and convince me of sin, of judgment, of unrighteousness, and when He does I say, "Thank you Lord. Thank you for showing me." And then secondly, I simply **appropriate** what is already mine. When I was made a brand new person in Christ Jesus, I was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, God gave me everything necessary. I just needed to say thank you and begin to once again stand up instead of laying there on the ground bawling,

get up, start walking again and what happens, I'm eventually resting. I'm eventually consistently giving up my rights. I'm consistently letting the thinking be in me which is in Christ Jesus, being willing to be of no reputation, being willing to humble myself, being willing to be a servant, those things begin to become my automatic normal everyday living experience.

### **SELF-CENTERED/GOD-CENTERED (Diagram 190-C)**

Turn to your last diagram, 190-C. This is just one more summary for us to see how this works. In the first diagram, notice a person who is focused on the problems or circumstances or feelings. If that is the person's focus, it's hard to see God. It's hard to come to Him because you can't see Him, because all you can see are the problems or circumstances or your feelings, everything is so big that God is small. Notice in the bottom of the diagram Hebrews 12:2. It says, "looking unto Jesus . . . ." Consider what happens when we start coming to the Lord Jesus, we start looking to Him for our life everyday, we let His thinking become our thinking. What happens is the problems and the circumstances become small, they become insignificant, they don't rule anymore, they're not overwhelming to us anymore, we're actually at peace, we're at rest, we're not burned-out, we're not distressed; in fact, we're filled with energy of the Spirit because of the joy of the Lord. Joy is very energizing by the way, and when we're walking in the presence of the Lord, the joy of the Lord is overflowing on us. Life is exciting no matter what the circumstances are, no matter how terrible the people are in our life, we're filled with peace because we're at rest. The life of Christ is abiding in us because we're walking after the Spirit; we're living in a state of rest, and that's what God designed for every one of His children.

### **REVIEW**

Look at the summary there in our review. See what we've said, "God provides a never-failing rest that is constant, a present inheritance of

REST

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every single child of God.” Secondly, we said, “Self-focus is the first step in the forfeiture of God’s rest.” When we start becoming focused on our rights, we forfeit this rest that God has planned. Third, “Jesus calls all who are weary and beaten down to receive His rest and give Him their burdens.” He wants all of us to come back to Him, dump our burdens on Him and let Him once again empower our lives. Next one, “Abiding in Christ and remaining in intimate contact with Him is the only way to a fulfilling, fruitful [Christian] life.” The only way to enjoy the strength that comes

from joy is to be in the presence of the One who is joy. In His presence, in this fullness of joy, is all the energy, all the power to be able to live in the midst of the worst of circumstances with the worst of people. Lastly, “Walking after the Spirit is a one-step-at-a-time process. Steps are small, manageable movements of progress that both train and prepare for greater strength and ability.”

Would you pray silently with me? As you do I want you to ask yourself a question. Who is the person, what’s the circumstance, what is it that’s keeping you from enjoying the supernatural abundant rest, abiding in Christ, walking after His Spirit?