

Dead Church Podcast Notes

Acts Initiative

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Ep. 22 – Spiritual Milk, Solid Food, Wisdom... We've Got It All Wrong

How do we learn from the Spirit? How do we grow in understanding and wisdom? How do we reach the point where the Spirit teaches us?

As we've been talking about in the last few videos, Jesus said, "Those who know my commands and obey them are the ones who love me, and my Father will love those who love me. I will love them and will reveal myself to them."¹

He said again, "If people love me, they will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."²

Jesus gave a conditional promise – if you obey him, then he will love you, the Father will love you, he will reveal himself to you, and both he and the Father will come to you and make their home with you. When they come make their home with you, they do this through the Spirit – the same Spirit that searches out the secret thoughts of God. In this section, Jesus made it clear that he was talking about the Spirit. He said, "If you love me, you will obey my commands. I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he lives with you and he will be in you."³

So, when Jesus said that he will reveal himself to us and make his home with us if we obey his commands, he was saying that he will send the Spirit to those who obey his commands.

Remember what we saw in the last video. Paul told the Corinthians that the Spirit reveals secret things to us that a natural person cannot accept.⁴ He even told the Corinthians that because they weren't spiritual (even though they were Christians!), he couldn't tell them the things that the Spirit was telling him – because they weren't ready for it.⁵ They still needed milk.

Jesus was saying the same thing here. He said that the world cannot accept the Spirit of truth. Natural people cannot accept the Spirit of truth. They won't understand it; they won't accept it; they'll reject it. Because they can't see him, they don't know him. Jesus also told his disciples, "I still have many more things to say to you, but they are too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you into all truth."⁶

Jesus was saying the same thing Paul said. He had more he wanted to teach his disciples, but he couldn't tell them yet because it was too much for them – they weren't spiritual – they needed the Holy Spirit. They needed to become spiritual people.

Paul said the Spirit is our source of wisdom. The Spirit reveals to us the secret thoughts of God – the secret thoughts of God that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and the spiritual rulers of this age did not understand, or they would not have crucified Jesus. They didn't realize all that God

¹ John 14:21

² John 14:23

³ John 14:15-17

⁴ Ref. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

⁵ Ref. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

⁶ John 16:12-13

was going to freely give us, and if they had, they would not have fallen into the trap God set for them. And Paul was telling us that we can come to understand those things through the Spirit. And Jesus was telling us the same thing. He said the Spirit will lead us into *all* truth. He also said, "But the Helper will teach you everything and will remind you of all that I told you. This Helper is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name."⁷

The Holy Spirit is sent to us to be our Teacher. He is sent to us to lead us into *all* truth – not just some of it. Jesus said the Spirit will teach us *everything* – not just some things. No wonder Paul said the Spirit reveals the thoughts of God and shows us secret things that no natural person can accept! No wonder Paul prayed so often for the early Christians to have this spiritual wisdom so they could understand and comprehend all the blessings, all the power, all the inheritance, and all the will of God! The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.

Jesus promised that the Spirit will be our Teacher. He promised that the Spirit will teach us everything. He directly said that he had more he wanted to teach, but his disciples weren't ready yet – so the Spirit would come and would reveal those things to them.

That promise is also available for us.

We can receive the Spirit. We can become one with God in the same way that Jesus was one with God.⁸ We can be taught by the Spirit and come to a full understanding of the truth. We can be taught *everything!*

Think about that. We can be taught everything. We are supposed to reach the point where we understand it all. So many Christians use the excuse that no one is perfect; no one understands everything; no one's got it all right... That's not biblical. We are supposed to be people who arrive at a knowledge of the truth. We're not supposed to be people who are constantly learning and never arriving – Paul said that's what apostasy looks like: People will never arrive at a knowledge of the truth.⁹ But, spiritual people *will* arrive at a knowledge of the truth. They will not be people who are constantly learning; they will not be people who never get it all right. That is an unbiblical idea the Church has brainwashed Christians with, so they don't accept the things the Bible says. They don't accept that Christians can (and should) arrive at a full knowledge of the truth because they don't experience it. They don't experience it because they are still natural people, and natural people cannot accept what the Spirit says because natural people don't experience it – they don't see him, they don't know him.¹⁰ That's what Jesus said, and that's what Paul said.

Why is this something Christians aren't experiencing? Because Jesus didn't say, "I will come make my home with everyone who believes in me." He said, "I will come make my home with everyone who obeys me."

If we want to be taught by the Spirit – if we want to be led into all truth – if we want to be taught everything and have all wisdom and understanding and knowledge, then we must be people who obey the commands of Jesus!

These promises are not for people who merely call themselves Christians and say they believe in Jesus. These promises are not for people who merely call Jesus "Lord."¹¹ These promises are for those who truly love Jesus. And only those who obey him actually love him. So, these promises are only for those who obey the commands of Jesus.

If you want to begin learning from the Spirit of God and grow in wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, then you must start doing the things Jesus said to do. This is something we can see all

⁷ John 14:26

⁸ Ref. John 17:20-23

⁹ Ref. 2 Timothy 3:7

¹⁰ Ref. John 14:15-17; 1 Corinthians 2:14, 3:1-4

¹¹ Ref. Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46

throughout the New Testament:

“So Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, ‘If you continue to obey my teaching, you are truly my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”¹²

This is one of those verses most Christians are familiar with – “the truth will set you free.” But Jesus had a condition attached to this promise! “If you continue to obey my teaching” or in some translations, “if you abide in my word.” Jesus was saying, “Those who obey me – those who follow me and do what I teach, *they* are the ones who are truly my disciples. And *they* are the ones who will learn the truth, and when they learn the truth, *they* are the ones who will be set free by the truth.”

It all comes down to obedience.

Only those who obey will know the truth. And only those who obey will be set free by the truth. Knowing the truth is only for those who obey.

This is similar to how Jesus would end many of his parables by saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”¹³ Jesus wasn’t trying to make everyone understand. He wanted to find the people who will truly listen – those who would hear him and do what he said to do. Jesus is looking for the people who will drop their nets and obey.¹⁴ He’s looking for the people who are all in. He’s looking for the people who are ready to accept his teaching and are ready to accept the cost. Those are the ones who will understand his parables, those are the ones who will receive his Spirit, and those are the ones who will know the truth and be set free.

As we’ve seen in this series, Jesus’ commands are to love one another.¹⁵ It’s not just worldly love where we have feelings and do little nice things here or there. He wants us to love with the same kind of love that he had for us. He said, “This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you.”¹⁶

He wants us loving with a radical love where we completely stop looking out for what’s good for ourselves, and we live our lives consumed with what is best for one another. He wants us living a life where we build our lives around others and make sure that the needs of others are always being met. He wants us to stop living cushy American lives, and stop pursuing the comforts and pleasures of this life, and stop accumulating wealth and possessions, and stop buying stuff for ourselves, and stop living our lives just to have fun, and instead build our lives entirely around the Kingdom of God – loving others, meeting their needs, selling our possessions, and helping others survive.

He wants us to follow his example – to make ourselves poor so that others can be made rich.¹⁷ He wants us to lay down our lives, and die.¹⁸ He wants us to humble ourselves and make ourselves nothing – make ourselves slaves.

And if we do, then he will reveal himself to us. If we do, then he and the Father will come make their homes with us. If we do, then we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free. If we do, then the Spirit will teach us everything. According to what Jesus said, if we want to grow in spiritual wisdom and understanding, then we must live a life defined by obeying his radical and costly commands. If we obey his commands, then we will receive the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will begin teaching us the secrets of God. But only if we obey.

In the New Testament, we can see Paul as such a clear example of this radical love that Jesus commanded. Paul worked harder than any of the other apostles to help as many people as possible

¹² John 8:31-32

¹³ Ref. Matthew 13:9, 13:43; Mark 4:9

¹⁴ Ref. Matthew 4:20, 4:22; Mark 1:18, 1:20; Luke 5:11

¹⁵ Ref. John 13:34, 15:12, 15:17; Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; Romans 5:8, 12:9-21, 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 10:24; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; Galatians 5:13-15, 6:8-10; Ephesians 3:17, 4:28, 5:1-2; Philippians 2:1-8; Titus 3:14; Hebrews 13:1-3, 13:16; James 2:12-17, 5:1-5; 1 Peter 1:22, 4:8-11; 1 John 2:9-11, 3:10-18, 4:7-21; 3 John 5-8

¹⁶ John 15:12

¹⁷ Ref. 2 Corinthians 8:9

¹⁸ Ref. Matthew 20:26-28; Mark 10:42-45; John 13:12-17; Philippians 2:1-8

and get the Good News to as many people as he could without letting anything get in the way.¹⁹ As an apostle, he had the right to accept money from people,²⁰ but he refused because he saw that it was better for them if he didn't give them any reason to think he might be taking advantage of them. So instead of accepting money, he preached full-time and also worked with his hands so as to not be a burden on anyone, and so he would be able to give to those in need.²¹

He was stoned by the people in one city and left for dead outside the city walls.²² But he got back up and went back into the city. He was often in danger of being killed because he wanted people to know Jesus and have life more than he wanted to hold onto his own life.²³ He was imprisoned, insulted, beaten, and shipwrecked. He wrote to Christians, telling them, "Your love must be unhyphocritical... Be devoted to each other like brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor... Share with God's people who need help. Bring strangers in need into your homes. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them... associate with the lowly... Repay no one evil."²⁴

He wrote to the Corinthians, essentially saying, "You want all these spiritual gifts? Great! But the best way of all is to love one another! Love is better than prophesy. Love is better than knowledge. Love is better than speaking in tongues."²⁵ He told them that even with the spiritual gifts, they should want the gifts that are better for everyone else – the gifts that they can use to help others; not the gifts that are good only for themselves – because of love!

He wrote to the Philippians, telling them to think and act like Jesus, who was in Heaven, and was in the form of God himself, but instead of holding onto that for himself, he emptied himself, he made himself nothing, he became a servant, he humbled himself, and he died.²⁶ Why? For others. Paul told them, "I want to share in his sufferings and become like him in his death... All of us who are spiritually mature should think this way, too."²⁷

He taught, "Christ died for all so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised from the dead."²⁸

And he himself demonstrated what this meant over and over, saying, "I am not trying to do what is good for me but what is good for most people so they can be saved. Imitate me as I imitate Christ."²⁹

Paul lived a life of love. He saw the love of Christ and he imitated it. He lived his life obeying the commands of Jesus. Is it any wonder then that he was taught by the Holy Spirit, grew in maturity, learned God's secrets, revealed things that would happen in the future, and understood our spiritual blessings and inheritance?

Paul wrote to the Galatians, telling them that when God first called him, he didn't go to any man to learn the truth. He didn't go to some teacher to be taught the Gospel. He went to Arabia and later to Damascus – he went to a completely different place than where the other apostles were. He said, "Brothers and sisters, I want you to know that the Good News I preached to you was not made up by human beings. I did not get it from a human source, nor did anyone teach it to me, but by a

¹⁹ Ref. 1 Corinthians 9, 15:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9

²⁰ Ref. 1 Corinthians 9

²¹ Ref. 1 Corinthians 9, 10:31-11:1; Acts 20:33-35; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9

²² Ref. Acts 14:19-20; 2 Corinthians 11:25

²³ Ref. 2 Corinthians 1:8-10, 4:7-12, 6:9, 11:23-33

²⁴ Romans 12:9-17

²⁵ Ref. 1 Corinthians 12-14

²⁶ Ref. Philippians 2:1-8

²⁷ Philippians 3:10,15

²⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:15

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:33-11:1

revelation from Jesus Christ... When God called me, I did not get advice or help from any person.”³⁰

Yet, even though he hadn’t been taught by any person, when he finally did meet with the apostles to make sure he was preaching the same thing as them, he said, “Those leaders who seemed to be important did not change the Good News that I preach... The only thing they asked us was to remember to help the poor – something I really wanted to do.”³¹

Paul received everything he taught – including the Gospel itself – not from men, but from the Holy Spirit.

Why? Because as soon as God called him, he gave his life to Jesus – not in the modern sense of *saying a prayer* and *going to church*, but in the radical way that Jesus taught – he gave up everything and lived the rest of his entire life for the good of others.

As we saw in the last video, Paul said that the Holy Spirit reveals the secret thoughts of God.³² The word he used, which is translated *secret*, is the same word that’s often translated *mystery*. And all throughout Paul’s letters, he revealed mysteries that the Spirit had taught him³³ – mysteries that many Christians still don’t understand even though Paul told us! (Because, as Paul said, natural people cannot understand spiritual secrets of God.) Paul was clearly someone who understood the mysterious, secret thoughts of God; and he explained how others can have the same experience he had:

“I want you to know how hard I work for you, those in Laodicea, and others who have never seen my face in the flesh. I want their hearts to be strengthened and joined together with love so that they may be rich in their understanding. This leads to their knowing fully God’s secret, that is, Christ himself. In him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.”³⁴

Paul wanted them to be joined together with love *so that* they would be rich in understanding, and *so that* they would fully know God’s secret.

According to Paul, you don’t grow in wisdom and understanding by studying, going to seminary, listening to sermons, or reading books. You become rich in understanding by living a life defined by God’s radical love. Paul was saying the same thing Jesus said! If you obey the commands of Jesus – the commands to live a life of radical love – then Jesus and the Father will come make their home in your heart through the Spirit, you will be one with God in the same way that Jesus is one with God, and the Spirit will teach you everything, leading you into all truth.

Paul said it again when he wrote to Philemon: “I always thank my God when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about the love you have for all God’s holy people and the faith you have in the Lord Jesus. I pray that the fellowship of your faith may empower you to understand every blessing we have in Christ.”³⁵

Okay, so this one is a little bit more confusing because the modern Church has redefined the word *fellowship*. But Paul was saying the same thing he said to the Colossians. The word Paul used for *fellowship* is the Greek word *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*). We often think of *fellowship* as *talking to each other about God*. But the Greek word *koinonia* actually means *sharing everything in common*. It’s exactly what we see the early church doing in the book of Acts³⁶ – and the word *fellowship* there is also the word *koinonia*!³⁷

Koinonia is what true love is – sharing everything in common, selling your possessions, looking out for the needs of others, and not considering anything to belong to yourself. That’s how *koinonia* was described in Acts, that’s what the word *koinonia* means, and that’s what Paul was saying to

³⁰ Galatians 1:11-12, 16

³¹ Galatians 2:6, 10

³² Ref. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

³³ Ref. Romans 11:25-36; Colossians 1:27; Ephesians 1:9, 3:3-6, 5:32

³⁴ Colossians 2:1-3

³⁵ Philemon 4-6

³⁶ Ref. Acts 2:42-46, 4:32-35

³⁷ Ref. Acts 2:42

Philemon.

Paul was saying to Philemon, “I hear about your love – your radical love. And I pray that as you share everything you have in common with your brothers and sisters and you don’t hold onto anything as belonging to yourself, because of your faith and fidelity to Jesus, I pray that that love will empower you to understand every blessing we have in Christ!”

Paul prayed that Philemon’s love – his *koinonia* – would empower him to understand every blessing we have in Christ.

There it is again – just like we saw in the last video – every blessing, every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.³⁸

How do we understand what it means to have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places? By love. By living in true, radical, biblical love where we share everything with one another and stop looking out for ourselves. When we live this way, the Spirit will teach us everything, leading us into all truth, and showing us all that God has for us as his holy people.

It’s an incredible promise. But it’s all dependent on love. If you do not live the life of love that Jesus and the apostles all taught, you will never experience this kind of life. We can see this same thing in 1 John. When John wrote 1 John, he was warning us about all the false teachers that are out there, teaching all the wrong things. He warned that they are the antichrist.³⁹ A lot of Christians seem to miss that and not realize the significance of what he said there, but that’s what he said – false teachers are the antichrist!

That alone is worth thinking about.

But after he said that, he said, “I am writing these things about those people who are leading you astray. As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, so you do not need any other teacher. His anointing teaches you about everything, and it is true, not false.”⁴⁰

John was saying – “Stop turning to men to teach you! You don’t need men to teach you! If you keep thinking you need men to teach you, you’re going to be led astray because so many false teachers are out there now. They are the antichrist! You have no need to even listen to them! You have God’s anointing – the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches you everything – and it’s true, not false. So, you don’t need to listen to those false teachers. You can receive everything you need directly from the Spirit.”

We don’t need to listen to men because we can be taught directly by the Spirit. But, John didn’t say that this is for everyone. Right before he said this, he told us how to receive the Spirit. He said, “As for you be sure you abide in the teaching you heard from the beginning. If you abide in what you heard from the beginning, you will also abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise which he himself promised to us – eternal life.”⁴¹

John was saying that if you abide in the teaching you heard from the beginning, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father and receive eternal life. It’s another one of those conditional promises. Jesus is the Son. And Jesus told us that if we abide in him, then he will abide in us – through the Holy Spirit.⁴² So, if we want the Spirit, we need to abide in the Son. And John said that the way to do that is to abide in the teaching you heard from the beginning.

If you started at the beginning of this series and have been watching through, you probably remember that John told us in the next chapter what that “teaching you heard from the beginning” is:

“This is the teaching you have heard from the beginning: We must love each other.”⁴³

³⁸ Ref. Ephesians 1:3

³⁹ Ref. 1 John 2:18-29

⁴⁰ 1 John 2:26-27

⁴¹ 1 John 2:24-25

⁴² Ref. John 15:4

⁴³ 1 John 3:11

So, if you abide in the teaching you heard from the beginning, which is love, then you will abide in the Son. And, if you abide in the Son, then he will abide in you. It's that same message: if you want to receive the Holy Spirit, you need to begin obeying God's commands – his commands to love one another. John said this directly: "This is what God commands: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love each other, just as he commanded. The people who obey God's commands abide in God, and God abides in them. We know that God abides in us by the Spirit God gave us."⁴⁴

"...if we love each other, God abides in us..."⁴⁵

"God is love. Those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them."⁴⁶

So, now we see the full picture of what John said: If we abide in love – loving one another with the same kind of radical love with which Jesus loved us, then we abide in Jesus and in the Father, and if we abide in him, then he abides in us through the Holy Spirit – "the anointing." And the Holy Spirit will teach us everything, so we don't have any need for any man to teach us anymore. And therefore, we can keep ourselves from being deceived and led astray by the antichrist (which is, the false teachers that have popped up in the Church).

John was saying the same thing Jesus said and the same thing Paul said: if you obey the commands of God, living a life of radical love, then you will begin to learn true wisdom and understanding from the Spirit. Why? Because wisdom and understanding only come from the Spirit, and the Spirit is only given to those who obey the commands of Jesus. John said the same thing Jesus said – the Holy Spirit will teach us everything! That's also the same kind of wisdom Paul said spiritual people will receive from the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit knows everything – including the deep secrets of God – and the Holy Spirit will reveal those secrets to us.

But it's all contingent on obeying Jesus and living in his radical love. If you live in love, the Holy Spirit will teach you everything, and you will have no need for a man to teach you.

Paul said the same thing when he wrote to the Ephesians:

"We must become like a mature person, growing until we become like Christ and have his perfection. Then we will no longer be babies. We will not be tossed about like a ship that the waves carry one way and then another. We will not be carried along by every wind of teaching we hear from people who are trying to fool us. They scheme and try any kind of trick to fool people into following false teaching. Rather, living out the truth with love, we will grow up in every way into Christ, who is the head, through whom all the parts of the body are joined and held together. Each part does its own work to make the whole body grow and to build itself up in love."⁴⁷

There's a lot packed into this passage, and many things that we could say about it. But look at what Paul said it means to mature: Paul said we should become like Christ and have his perfection. This is the same thing Jesus taught. He said the student should become like his teacher.⁴⁸ He said we should be one with God in the same way that he was one with God.⁴⁹ He said we should do all the same things he did and even greater things.⁵⁰ He said we should be perfect, just like our Father in heaven is perfect.⁵¹

We're supposed to look like Jesus. We're supposed to mature into his image. We're supposed to reach the point where we literally look like Jesus did – the same wisdom, the same understanding,

⁴⁴ 1 John 3:23-24

⁴⁵ 1 John 4:12

⁴⁶ 1 John 4:16

⁴⁷ Ephesians 4:13-16

⁴⁸ Ref. Matthew 10:24-25; Luke 6:40

⁴⁹ Ref. John 17:20-23

⁵⁰ Ref. John 14:12-14

⁵¹ Ref. Matthew 5:48

the same Spirit, the same power, and the same love. We see this in the early Church in Acts. It's what every Christian is supposed to look like.

Paul also said we should no longer be babies. This is the same thing he said to the Corinthians. Babies need milk; they're not ready for solid food. They need to grow up. They need to mature – not just maturing like normal humans mature as they grow up where we figure out how to be adults and live life as adults. We're supposed to mature into the image of Christ – looking like him and having his perfection.

Paul said we should not be tossed about with every new false teaching. This is the same thing John said! If we're being taught by the Holy Spirit, then the antichrist can't touch us. John said the antichrist is all the false teachers and false brothers who are trying to deceive us.⁵² But if we are mature, and we are receiving wisdom and understanding from the Spirit and not even listening to what those false teachers are saying, then we won't be tossed about by what they say. We will only be learning from the Spirit. And we can learn *everything* from the Spirit, so there's no need to go to those false teachers in the first place!

Paul said we should live out the truth with love in order to grow up into Christ.

It's worth mentioning here that some translations say, "Speaking the truth in love." However, that's not an accurate translation. The Greek more accurately says something along the lines of "truthing" in love or *being true in love*. The implication being that it's your whole life – not just what you're saying. Paul was saying that to grow up into Christ, we need to be living out the truth with love. And he also added that we should each do our own part to make the *whole body* grow and be built up in love. Again – love. We grow by loving, and the whole body grows by all its members loving one another. Love is the key to maturing. Not books. Not sermons. Not teaching or preaching. Not prayer. Not worship. Not studying the Bible.

Love.

That's the same thing Jesus said, the same thing John said, and the same thing we've already seen that Paul said elsewhere. Paul was saying that for us to grow and mature, we need to live in love – we should live out the truth in love, and we should each do our part to build up the whole body with love. And the result of maturing through love is that we will look like Jesus and have his perfection, we will no longer be babies, and we won't be tossed around by all the false teaching because we'll be filled with the Spirit of Christ and will have his understanding, his wisdom, and his knowledge.

Maturing into the image of Christ is entirely dependent on love. Do you live in love? Do you obey the commands of Jesus? Do you look out for the interests of others above your own? Do you humble yourself and make yourself a slave of all? Do you live in a kind of love that's foreign to unbelievers – that's foreign to anyone else in the world? We're not talking about people who do nice things. We're not talking about being kind to one another. Kindness is part of it, but it's not just kindness. We're talking about the kind of love where you radically look out for others above yourself. For example, if you see a brother or sister who's about to lose their home because they can't pay rent, and you also owe rent, you pay theirs before you pay your own. You look out for their needs first. You share everything in common.⁵³ You don't consider anything at all as belonging to yourself.

This is a radical kind of love that we're called to live in!

It's not about just being nice, just being kind and just getting along. If it's not this kind of radical love, then it's not the right kind of love, and it's not the kind of love that will result in you maturing. You're not called to love like the world loves; you're called to the same kind of love Jesus had, where he humbled himself, made himself a slave of everyone else, and only did what was best for

⁵² Ref. 1 John 2:18-29

⁵³ Ref. Acts 2:44-46, 4:32-35

them, even to the point of death.⁵⁴ If it's not that kind of love, it's not the right kind of love.

If you want to mature into the image of Jesus, you must first start by living like Jesus. If you want spiritual wisdom and understanding, you must live a life of radical love. If you want to know God's secrets, you must prove yourself trustworthy by living as he lives. If you want the Spirit to teach you so that you have no need for a man to teach you, you must first begin to live in love. It all comes down to love. It all comes down to obeying and doing what Jesus taught, and what Jesus showed us in his own life.

Hebrews said the same thing: "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are so slow to understand. By now you should be teachers, but you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of God's message. You still need milk. You are not ready for solid food. Anyone who lives on milk is still a baby and is inexperienced with the message about righteousness. But solid food is for those who are mature, who through practice have trained their senses to know the difference between good and evil."⁵⁵

The writer of Hebrews was saying, "It's hard for us to even explain to you what we're trying to explain because you're so slow to understand. You should be teaching others by now, but you can't because you still need teachers for yourself! You're immature! You're inexperienced! Mature people grow through practice – through doing."

He was saying the same thing here that we saw John and Paul saying elsewhere: You don't need teachers. You should mature. Teachers are only for giving milk. They give the basics. You're supposed to move past that stage and become a teacher yourself. You should be growing and maturing through practice – through doing what Jesus taught.

If you're a Christian who keeps turning to teachers, to preachers, to sermons, and to books in order to learn, the writer of Hebrews said you're slow to understand. He called you a baby. That means you're not maturing. You're not looking like Jesus. You're not growing up. He referred to *milk* and *solid food*. He was rebuking them that they still needed milk – the basic principles of God's message. Furthermore, he outlined what *milk* is in the very next section:

"Therefore let us move forward to maturity. Let us leave behind the elementary teaching we learned about Christ. We should not again start teaching about repentance from dead works and about faith in God. We should not return to the teaching about baptisms, about laying on of hands, about the raising of the dead and eternal judgment."⁵⁶

He was saying that we need to move on from milk. We're not supposed to keep consuming milk our entire lives. That's a sign of immaturity. And he said *milk* is the elementary teaching about Christ: repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, the raising of the dead, and eternal judgment. He told them to leave those things behind and stop going over it again and again and again.

This is the opposite of what the Church does today!

Today Christians meet on Sundays at their church every single Sunday, week after week after week, year after year after year, to hear a message on the basic principles of the Gospel – the elementary teaching about Christ. In fact, I've heard many preachers teach that we should *never* move on from the basic teachings of the Gospel.

They are literally teaching the exact opposite of what the Bible directly says.

Today, every Christian still feels like they need a teacher. One of the most common things Christians will say is, "God gives the gift of teaching, and he gives the gift of teachers. So, teachers are important." Yes, God gives teachers, but teachers aren't given to us for the reasons modern Christians think. The writer of Hebrews explained what teachers are for: teachers are for giving milk. They teach

⁵⁴ Ref. Philippians 2:1-8

⁵⁵ Hebrews 5:11-14

⁵⁶ Hebrews 6:1-2

the basic principles to unspiritual people who still live like normal human beings. They are for people who still live according to the flesh – who do not walk by the Spirit.

When God gives teachers to his people, it's not so they can sit under a teacher for the rest of their lives. It's not so they can listen to sermon after sermon after sermon. Hebrews said you start with teachers, they give you the milk you need to get started, and then you move on to solid food. You yourself should become a teacher. You shouldn't keep going back to teachers. If you do, you're not maturing.

This is the same thing John said. You don't need anyone to teach you because you have God's anointing, and his anointing will teach you everything.

A lot of Christians seem to think John meant, "Keep listening to sermons, keep listening to teaching, keep reading books, but remember that the Holy Spirit is the one who is *really* teaching you through that man." That doesn't make any sense! Look at the context!⁵⁷ John was warning us about the antichrist! Paul called them servants of Satan! The Holy Spirit is not going to speak to you through the mouth of the antichrist!

The only way John's warning makes any sense is if John was saying, "Do not keep listening to what those people have to say! You have no need to even listen to them!"

God gives teachers, yes. But they're not for you to keep listening to for the rest of your life. Hebrews told us why God gives teachers. They're for the immature! They're for the people who don't have God's anointing teaching them everything yet, because they haven't started to obey yet! They still need someone to teach them the basic principles of God's message – the commands of Jesus! They haven't matured through practice yet.

Teachers are only for babies. They're for people who still need milk. They're for people who can't handle solid food. You're not supposed to keep listening to sermon after sermon after sermon. You're not supposed to read book after book after book. You're supposed to be taught by God. You're supposed to have the Holy Spirit teaching you everything! You're supposed to be learning the deep secrets of God that no eye has seen and no ear has heard and no tongue can express! That means you can't get it from a teacher; you have to receive it from the Holy Spirit.

But you can only be taught by the Spirit if you *have* the Spirit. And the Spirit is only given to those who obey the commands of God. Which is why God gives teachers – to teach people the basic principle of God's message:

Repentance (or, changing the way you live)

Faith (or fidelity, loyalty, and faithfulness)

Baptism (following Jesus into death and rising with him into a new life)

Laying on of hands (I'll admit – I'm still learning this one)

The raising of the dead and eternal judgment (you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for everything you did – and the Bible says you will be judged based on your actions – not your beliefs.)⁵⁸

That's what teachers are for – to teach the basic principles. That's what we've been teaching throughout *Dead Church*. Teachers teach the basic principles *so that* you can begin to obey, *so that* you can receive the Holy Spirit, *so that* you can be taught by the Holy Spirit, *so that* you won't need to continue following men, *so that* you won't be deceived by the antichrist.

If you keep listening to sermon after sermon, and reading book after book, for the rest of your life, it shows one thing: you're not growing up into the image of Christ. You're slow to understand.

⁵⁷ Ref. 1 John 2:18-29

⁵⁸ Ref. Matthew 7:21-23, 13:40-43, 25:14-46; John 5:28-29; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Revelation 20:12-13

You're still a baby. You're still able to be tossed about. You still might be led astray by the antichrist.

You need to move on to solid food. Hebrews said solid food is for those who are mature, who *through practice* have trained their senses to know the difference between good and evil. The writer of Hebrews was saying the same thing we see everywhere else: you mature by *doing*, not by sitting under teachers. You get spiritual wisdom by obeying what Jesus taught, not by listening to sermons.

“This is the teaching you have heard from the beginning: We must love each other.”⁵⁹

The teaching being taught by true teachers from God is this: We must love one another. If you live in that teaching, and you love with God's radical love, then you abide in God and God abides in you through the Spirit, and the Spirit teaches you everything else you need to know; therefore, you have no more need for men to teach you, but instead you can become a teacher because you have matured. How did you mature? By living in love.

When you begin to live in true radical love, you begin to consume solid food – because when you begin to live in true radical love, you're obeying the commands of Jesus, and Jesus makes his home with you through the Spirit, and the Spirit begins to reveal the secret thoughts of God to you. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about learning wisdom through the Spirit, learning the secret thoughts of God, and being spiritual, he also used the analogy of milk versus solid food.

He said, “Brothers and sisters, in the past I could not talk to you as I talk to spiritual people. I had to talk to you as I would to unspiritual people – babies in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, because you were not yet able to take solid food. And even now you are not ready. You are still not spiritual, because there is jealousy and conflict among you, and this shows that you are not spiritual. You are acting like ordinary people.”⁶⁰

Paul was saying, “The first time I came to you, I preached the basic principles of the Gospel because you were lost! You were unsaved! You didn't know the Good News! Yet, even after all this time, I still have to give you the basic message of Jesus! You're still not able to comprehend anything more!” Paul said earlier that natural people won't accept the spiritual things – the deep secret thoughts of God that the Spirit reveals to those who are mature.⁶¹ And so, he told them that he still couldn't talk to them about those things. Why? Because they were still not spiritual people. They still didn't have wisdom. They still weren't being taught by the Spirit. So, Paul still had to go over the basic principles of the Gospel with them.

That's why, when he wrote this letter to them, he included an entire chapter telling them to start loving one another!⁶² His whole letter was trying to get them to start obeying the commands of Jesus! That's what the whole letter of 1 Corinthians is about – it's all milk, it's all basic principles, it's all about obedience. Because as we've seen throughout this series, obeying Jesus is part of the Gospel Paul preached! And you can see it right here in this passage. He told them he knew they weren't spiritual because, “You are acting like ordinary people.”⁶³

Real Christians don't act like normal, ordinary people!

Real Christians live the radical lifestyle that Jesus taught! Real Christians aren't filled with jealousy, like the Corinthians were, because real Christians aren't thinking about themselves! Real Christians don't argue, like the Corinthians were, because as James said, your fights and arguments come from the selfish desires within you – when you want things and you can't have them!⁶⁴ And Paul was saying, real Christians don't do that!

⁵⁹ 1 John 3:11

⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

⁶¹ Ref. 1 Corinthians 2:14

⁶² Ref. 1 Corinthians 13

⁶³ 1 Corinthians 3:3

⁶⁴ Ref. James 4:1-2

Real Christians no longer live for themselves; they live for Christ.⁶⁵ Therefore, Paul could look at the Corinthians and see that they were jealous, they were arguing, and he knew they were not spiritual. Because you're only spiritual if you live your life in love – and if you love, you don't look out for yourself, therefore you don't get jealous, and you don't argue, and you don't do all the other things that Paul addressed throughout 1 Corinthians. The book of 1 Corinthians is telling us what it means to be a Christian; it is teaching us the basics.

If you want to mature into the image of Christ, understand the secrets of God, know what your inheritance is, know God's will, comprehend the incomprehensible, and be filled with the fullness of God, the only way to do that – the only way – is to stop looking out for your own interests, and start putting others above yourself.

Start living radically. Stop living like a normal, ordinary person. Start living in a radical love that no normal, ordinary person would live in. Start sharing everything in common with true believers. Start living a life where you don't consider any of your possessions to belong to yourself. Start living a life where you make sure the other person's bills are paid before your own bills are paid. This kind of love is not just about doing nice things; it's not just some sort of ministry where you go and do something for others, and then return home, sit down in front of the TV and continue living a comfortable, cushy American lifestyle.

Your American lifestyle is what has to die.

Maturity does not come through teaching, preaching, reading, praying, singing, or studying. It only comes through true biblical love. That's the only way to mature.

The world is full of false teaching – antichrists, servants of Satan – people trying to lead you astray. Do not be deceived by them. Repent. Change the way you live your life. Put your faith in God – not just your belief. Give him your loyalty, your faithfulness, your fidelity. Be trustworthy and reliable. Die with Jesus and rise with him into a new life where you no longer live for yourself, but you live for him – doing what he commands.

And his commands are to love – love others with the same kind of love that he has for you. Love others with a radical love that looks out for their needs and their interests. Love others with a love that doesn't hold anything back – a love that lets go of everything this world offers, a love that stops caring about all the things that seem important in this life, a love that completely consumes you and takes over your life. Do that because that's what Jesus commanded, and you love him.

You love him, so you'll obey him.

And you know that because you obey him, he and the Father will love you. They will make their home with you through the Spirit. Your whole life will change, and you'll see all the incredible things that right now you only read about in the Bible. You'll see the value of the Kingdom. You'll see that your prayers are heard by God, and he answers you. You'll start to understand what the Kingdom is, what God offers, what God is doing, and what God is thinking.

And you'll see yourself mature into the image of Christ – the image of the one who created you. And as John said, that love that consumes your life will drive out all fear, and you'll have confidence on the day of judgment, because you matured into the image of Christ, and in this world you were like him.⁶⁶

“Wisdom is the most important thing; so get wisdom. If it costs everything you have, get understanding.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ref. 2 Corinthians 5:15

⁶⁶ Ref. 1 John 4:17-18

⁶⁷ Proverbs 4:7

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“Wisdom begins with fear for the Lord, and understanding begins with knowing the Holy One.”⁶⁸

“I have more understanding than the elders, because I follow your orders.”⁶⁹

“The beginning of wisdom is fear of the LORD; those who obey his orders have good understanding.”⁷⁰

“The LORD tells his secrets to those who fear him; he tells them about his covenant.”⁷¹

“Those who follow the LORD understand everything.”⁷²

⁶⁸ Proverbs 9:10

⁶⁹ Psalm 119:100

⁷⁰ Psalm 111:10

⁷¹ Psalm 25:14

⁷² Proverbs 28:5