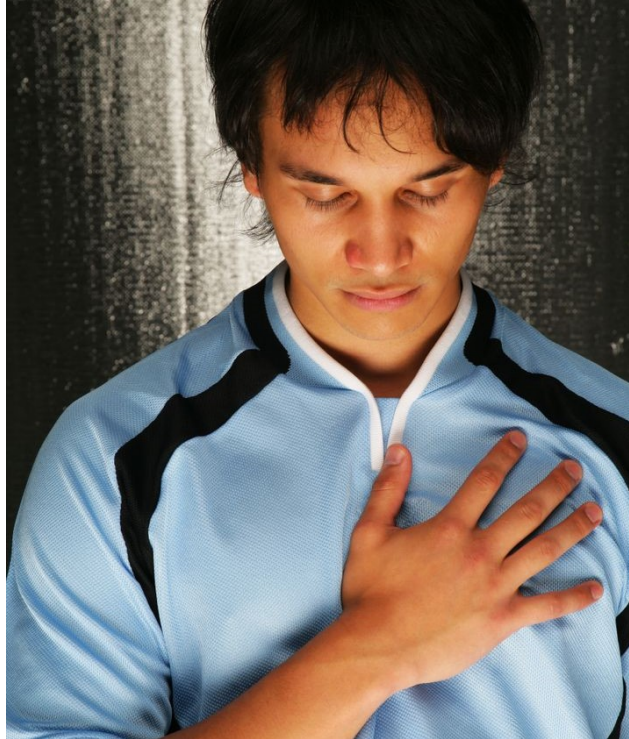


How Spiritual Life is Maintained



Peter McArthur

- **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.** (Romans 8:2)

Our Christian faith is based on a LIFE PRINCIPLE. What I mean by that is that we do not practice a dead religion (the tomb is still empty!). We do not join an organisation. We do not (should not) become set in our ways. No; we are JOINED to a Living Person.

Likewise, we do not “invite Jesus into *our* life” but rather we are invited to step into *His* life. I always cringe when I hear Christians say to unbelievers “just invite Jesus into your life”. It’s one of those Christian/Churchy sayings that somewhere, someone first started using, and is now used all over the world in evangelism. Oh, the power of tradition, even modern-day tradition.

All the covenants of God express the concept that we join onto/into God. The covenants always used blood. Why? Because there is life in the blood.

- **So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.” (John 6:53)**

Both parties to a covenant were joined by blood, and in fact shared the LIFE OF ONE BLOOD. This is what made a Biblical covenant unique and holy.

So, to violate a covenant was to break the blood-bond of Life. It was regarded as a “death” if you did so. Hence believers who no longer have a physical life but who have died, are regarded as being “asleep”, meaning “life” is still present in some wondrous way. Because even though natural life has departed them, their names remain written in the Lamb’s Book of **Life** (Revelation 13:8). There is a record kept and at the resurrection, life in all its fulness shall be restored to them – and us. Hallelujah to that!

The life of the New Covenant still operates even beyond death, but only to those who have been part of it during their living days. The Book of Hebrews focuses on this very Life Principle. Nothing in the New Testament calls us to have a “set way of doing things”. True spiritual life doesn’t come just because we have a New Testament style of meeting on Sundays, or have a number elders instead of one man in charge, or anointed musicians, or even solid Bible-based preaching.

New Testament life is found in having a first-hand revelation **of** Christ and a first-hand relationship **with** Christ. In fact the New Testament spends most of its time trying to show the exciting realm of living in the Spirit of Christ through these means. Each believer is a believer because they’ve had a first-hand revelation of Christ. It’s personal, but not private. This knowledge of Him is their very own. It is not second-hand or passed on through some religious ceremony. And you certainly cannot get it from others passing it onto you in some kind of new-age transference or impartation; a practice sadly quite common in Spirit-filled circles.

- **For God who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).**

It is interesting that “light” and “life” are intricately linked in the natural realm. If plants don’t get enough light, they wither and die. That’s a creative principle the Creator has entrenched into the very fabric of nature, and it’s also a spiritual truth. We need spiritual light in order to have spiritual life.

Jesus said of Himself “**I am the light of the world**” (John 8:12) and “**I am the resurrection and the life**” (John 11:25). Notice the order – **light** first (in chapter 8) then **life** later (in chapter 11). There is always a sequence in Scripture, so please don’t overlook its significance.

The Hebraic meaning (remember, Jesus was a Jew) of “**light of the world**” has more to do with receiving spiritual insight than simply being a “light” morally or shining a light on dark deeds and exposing sin. The concept is based on the idea that light is instinctively linked to “truth”.

In fact the Greek word for “truth” is made up of two words meaning “not forgotten”. Hence truth is a form of light that you will not forget. So “light” becomes a metaphor for “truth”. Revelatory Scriptural truth is in fact a form of light (see my teaching [here](#)).

God’s truth (His light) may be suppressed by people, by man’s philosophies and by Satan, but His truth is always self-evident and self-validating.

- **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them (Romans 1:18-21).**

Similarly “life” has its own metaphor, particularly in Hebrew. The pictorial representation of the word “chayim” (Hebrew for *life*) is of two hands joined together. It symbolises the union of our spirit with God’s Spirit. The meaning is transparent: there is no true life (or even natural life) apart from union with God, just as Jesus said, **Abide in Me, and I in you**. (John 15:4). Jesus is the source of our life, our nourishment and strength, and even our fullness of joy. We are joined, hand in hand as it were, by abiding in Him.

The word “abide” might seem strange to us in the twenty-first century, but it has a powerful truth behind it. The idea is about **permanency** of something or of someone, being enduringly connected, meaning to remain, to stay fixed in position.

It stresses the idea that we are to “**keep on abiding**”. This has nothing whatsoever to do with “striving” to stay connected by repeating Bible verses over and over to convince yourself of some truth. Nor has it anything to do with performing religious practices like going to church every Sunday, or saying grace at every meal, or praying for a set length of time each day, or anything else like that.

Now many of the above might be helpful and encouraging, but by themselves they will not bring about a permanency of spiritual life. Yes, they may bring you a “sense” of being spiritually alive, but only to your mind, not your inner spirit. Life is found in the spirit by the Spirit of God. That comes first, then the rest might be helpful to you – but not always!

In John chapters 5 and 8, Jesus underlines the importance of a believer’s relationship with God’s revealed Word. In John 8:31 He states that the genuine believer is one who “is remaining” or “be remaining” in His word (note the exact phrase). He stresses that this will identify who really is a true believer, “**you truly are My disciples**”.

On the other hand, He describes unbelievers as those who do NOT have God’s Word remaining (abiding) in them (John 5:38). Nothing to do here with any religious exercise folks – except the one about having His word permanently at work in your life.

We shouldn’t think that spiritual life will come to us if we merely read Scripture a lot, or give attention to Bible study, and learn many Bible verses. I’m certain they all help enormously, but that’s not what Jesus is primarily talking about here.

He's referring to His teachings and the truth of them first of all, and our heart response to that. The truths that Jesus spoke need to be lived out, enacted on each day, and held close as a treasure. Above all they need to be *obeyed* and not simply *acknowledged* as truth.

- **Be doers of the word, and not just hearers. Otherwise you are deceiving yourselves** (James 1:22).
- **Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I say?** (Luke 6:46).

Now here's one of those delightful truths. Jesus said **"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who is abiding in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing"** (John 15:5).

We've already seen that "abiding" means an ongoing condition of a true spiritual life. It speaks of a follower of Jesus who is learning to live continuously aligned to Him. In the above verses it seems to suggest that such a person "is bearing" fruit; it is already at work in us. This makes it clear that the fruit of the Spirit is produced by God's own Spirit, not by any amount of human effort.

Also, that our "bearing much fruit" is a direct result of our being "in Christ". In one sense we don't have to strive to bear fruit because it's already at work in us because we are in Him. This is one of the evidences that such a person truly belongs to Christ.

For instance, I'm not a particularly evangelistic kind of person, and often find it a little hard to strike up a conversation and turn it around to telling someone about Jesus. I can do it, and have done so, but it's not an easy thing for me. On the other hand, if someone asks me a question about the Bible or Jesus, I'm off and running.

Whenever we had a visiting evangelist in our churches, I always felt guilty that I wasn't doing enough witnessing and leading people to the Lord. Then I would spend time and a lot of effort learning the right strategies for witnessing, memorizing more Bible passages, and practicing my introductory techniques. And what happened? Not a lot.

My point is, I confused "bearing much fruit" with leading people to Christ and doing a lot of witnessing and seeing people get saved. Certainly, that's part of the overall picture, but not all of it. Each of us are called to bear witness to Jesus whenever and wherever we can (2 Timothy 4:2), but we're all different personalities, as well as having distinctly different callings from God. Some are evangelists (bless them), some are the prophetic type, some doers of good works, some great and steadfast pray-ers, some Bible teachers, etc.

Our "bearing much fruit" is the righteous life we live, the way we speak, the ability to evidence Jesus to others by our goals and direction in life. In short, I would call it being a Truth-Bearer. If we are in Christ, aligned to His truths, seeking to live consistently connected to Him, and simply doing what He says (particularly in the Sermon on the Mount), then we'll be Truth-Bearers. It won't take too long before unbelievers see we're quite different from the way of the world. We will be noticed. We will be **"the light of the world, a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden"** (Matthew 5:14).

And so we return to “light” and “truth” and their connection. The relationship between “light” and “truth” are remarkable, just as the connection between “light” and life” are. “Life” is therefore a fundamental Biblical principle (Romans 8:2). This is a life proceeding from the life of Christ and therefore producing further life to others.

Please note, we are not called to reproduce *our* life in others, the mistake of a lot of spiritual dynasties. We are to produce the life of Christ in ourselves first, by conforming to Him (Romans 8:29) and thereby in God’s timing that life will be apparent in others. The Father will bring about the reproduction of life, not us. In other words, don’t dare attempt to reproduce other people after your own image.

- **All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.** (John 16:15)

The same principle is reiterated in John 6:56.

- **He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.**

So many things are related here: the life producing principle, the disclosing and passing on to others (us), and the abiding. This is the wonder of a shared life **with** and **in** Christ Jesus. Let us persevere to maintain this precious Life above all else, not neglecting the truth we’ve received as the Church collectively, nor as individuals as we grow in our personal faith.

You cannot pass onto others what you’ve neither received yourself nor lived.

Grace in our Messiah, who is **the Way, the Truth, and the Life**.

Peter

See also these teachings

[Learning to Adjust Spiritually](#)

[Are we doing these things?](#)

[Adjusting to the Truth](#)