



The Bridge Report

ABIDE IN THE WORD OF GOD AND BEAR FRUIT A TEACHING BY PAUL COWLEY — NAIROBI, KENYA

The Word of God contains numerous metaphors, allegories and parables alluding to plants, vineyards and crops. Even to those of us dwelling in non-agrarian communities, God's simple truths are obvious and evident. Plants require a planter. Vineyards require a vine-dresser. Crops require a cropper. There is wild vegetation that bears its own fruit. Then there is domesticated vegetation that bears a greater and more specific yield, as mankind collaborates with the Creator. Much the same amongst God's people.



If we work in unison with God's divine order, ... be it in a Bible School ministry or in our individual walk, we will bear righteous fruit in His eyes. He will be glorified, He will receive pleasure, and His eternal purposes will be fulfilled. If we work outside God and His divine order... we sever the vital link to God and condemn our efforts to fruitlessness.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." John 15:4

Nothing of eternal value...in God's eyes. And so we are forced to face the Condition preceding the Promise: **Abiding**. What does it mean to "abide"? How can a ministry "abide" in Christ? How does a person "abide" in Christ? Where do we begin? Jesus Himself gave the answer....

"If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed" John 8:31

A simple Truth. A commonly quoted verse. A Sunday school stanza we may have memorized in our youth. So simple we may casually overlook the infinite power and potential of what Jesus proclaimed....much to our peril...and much to God's disdain. Surely He is looking for His vineyard to bear fruit. **Cont...**

...CONT ABIDE IN THE WORD OF GOD AND BEAR FRUIT



Apart from **abiding in His Word**, our best efforts will surely bear fruit...but of the wrong type. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, whether intentionally or unintentionally, we will merely reap thorns and thistles...wood, hay and stubble....kindling for the fire of His final righteous judgment. Therefore, we should deliberately determine not to be delayed, distracted or dissuaded from time and focus on abiding in the Word of God. With Christ's simple admonition in our head and heart, we can press forward regardless of what "fruit" we think we "see". In that singular verse, we based the entire ministry to the Pastors of the Least. And on that Foundation, we can build, brick by brick, something pleasing, productive and purposeful to our God.

How does that work out in the practical day-to-day operations of the Bible School? Very simply, we teach the Word of God...**and nothing else**. We teach verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter, book-by-book. We do not teach courses about church planting, evangelism, church administration, financial stewardship nor even discipleship. All of those are well intentioned, well needed

and, some may contend, necessary. That they may be....but such concerns and curriculums are not the **Foundation**....by any measure.

In this specific Bible School and Discipleship Ministry, God has called us to be **Foundation Builders**. Or, more accurately, Foundation **Re-builders**. Those who qualify for the program are already Pastors and Ministry Leaders. They have a spiritual foundation...but rarely a Biblical foundation. Without a proper foundation in God's Word, all other ministry efforts, intentions and programs are doomed. The storms will come...and they will not stand. The shaking will come...and they will fall. The fire will test...and they will be consumed. This is not a supposition....this is the prophetic conclusion Jesus proclaimed.

The essential question remains... how does this change our decisions? Our actions? Our day-timers and agendas? Such a mandate from the Father caused Jesus to focus on "that one thing" to the **exclusion** of others. Jesus described His mandate and mission....a mandate we adopted when establishing the Bible School ministry....

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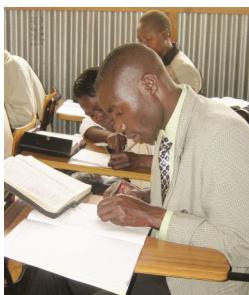
"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to Preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted; to Proclaim Liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to Proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." Isaiah 61:1

To Preach...to Proclaim. Not to give our advises, our opinions, nor promote our programs. Rather, to Preach and Proclaim the undiluted Word of God. No "surveys" of the Old Testament, no "summaries" of the Key Points, no commentaries, no shortcuts of any sort. Jesus came to speak the Word of God...not a PowerPoint outline. We would do well to follow in His steps.

Jesus did not come to establish anything less than a Kingdom of eternal, everlasting value to His Father. He left behind no orphanages, no church buildings, no feeding centers or foundations, no charitable trusts or monthly sponsorship programs. Such works and efforts are needful, and have their proper place in God's economy...but they are not Foundational. Jesus knew this simple Truth. **And it changed what He did.** So that when He left, He left behind a foundation that no person, principality or power could prevail against...not even the gates of hell.

This begs the "application question" and challenge to ourselves.... "Are we that strict with our ministries and programs, our proclivities...and ourselves?" Are we willing to jettison the endless attachments that distract us from Foundation Building? It will require nothing less than full throttled focus. It will

surely necessitate saying "No" to many other ministry opportunities. It will challenge our friendships, contradict our flesh and cost us our "freedom" to do as we see fit.



To many, this may seem a bit simplistic... perhaps even silly. But we have seen the Fruit firsthand in our own times. Countless slum pastors, having disciplined themselves through the Word of God, have been "set free" from busyness, works of the flesh and fruitless labors. **By "abiding" in the Word of God, their ministries have blossomed, their congregations grown and their lives have been truly transformed. It is slow work, it is hard work...it is the work of abiding in a Relationship, rather than a Religious effort.**

Nothing else compares to our time of abiding in the Lord. And the effect on others is Promised as Jesus continues in His prophetic proclamation of the Purpose.

"To comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. That they may be called Trees of Righteousness, The Planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." Isaiah 61:4 **Cont. on p. 4**



Steve and I met Paul and Marcia Cowley nearly a decade ago, just before they moved from comfortable South Florida to follow the call of God to go overseas as missionaries. They relocated to Nairobi, Africa and established a Bible Institute in the Mathare Valley — one of the largest slums in Africa with a poverty-stricken population of 500,000! Paul's passion is to mentor and teach the Word of God to the local pastors and ministry leaders who live among and serve the poorest of the poor in this slum district.

We have been blessed to follow Paul and Marcia and the team at their Disciple Support Ministry's journey of faith and watched them produce much fruit in the midst of very challenging circumstances! The testimonies from the pastors who have attended the Bible Institute are awesome! We are confident that the support funds we at times send the Cowleys through The Bridge are sown into very good soil!

Paul's key to his successful teaching which results in eternal fruit in his students, is his profound, simple message: ABIDE IN THE WORD OF GOD! I have asked Paul permission to reprint his DSM May newsletter, which I am sharing with you as an exhortation to us believers Stateside who are surrounded by "seeker-friendly" churches where entertaining messages often eclipse the teaching of the Word! Let us return to the WORD OF GOD and ABIDE IN HIM!

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...Cont. from p. 3 *The "Planting of the Lord" bespeaks of Eternity...fruit that not only abounds, but also lasts forever. Fruit not only in our ministry to others, but equally important in our own individual walk. Such cultivation requires a concerted effort, a deliberateness, a willingness to focus singularly on "abiding" in the Lord....in His Word. Such concentration removes the careless casting of seed every way the wind blows... undisciplined "get involved!" efforts, as opposed to the discipline of saying "No!" to much that is not "abiding" in Christ. Christ Himself proclaimed the conclusive Fruit...*

"And they shall Rebuild the old ruins, they shall Raise up the former desolations, and shall Repair the ruined cities, the desolation of many generations." Isaiah 61:4

Let's abide in Christ by abiding in His Word. Let's lay the correct Foundation the first time from now on. without neglecting the harder work of Rebuilding some former faulty foundations.

Let's continue Rebuilding the ruined cities of this world for Christ....beginning with the poor, brokenhearted captives in the slums of Nairobi.



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