

Reading Schedule for January 29 – February 4, 2018

I want to invite you into the special room that Jesus used for his final meal with the disciples. John's account of this Upper Room experience is unique, as we would expect, but is especially meaningful. John has recorded the message that Jesus gave his disciples. These words were especially important, as Jesus knew that he was about to be crucified and the disciples would be on their own. However, his main message is that they would have the Helper, who would be with them, that the Father would send. John gives us the most insights into the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This will be a great week of reading.

January 29 – John 13:1-20: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (v.15) The word "example" jumps off the page to me. There are many profound things that we have read in these verses, but the one that I can apply to my life very quickly is following the example of Jesus. Jesus displayed amazing humility and was a model not only for the disciples, but for us. I do not believe Jesus literally meant for us to wash each other's feet, but was using it figuratively to show the importance of serving one another. The meaning behind it is that Jesus did something that no one would have expected and was especially meaningful to his disciples. He is challenging us to stretch the envelope of our comfort by giving ourselves to others. What does it mean to follow in his footsteps? This idea stirs my heart each and every day because I want to be more like Christ. Is that your prayer also!?

January 30 – John 13:21-38: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (v.35) Genuine love is especially rare. We love those who love us. But this love was one that would sacrifice, even as we were challenged yesterday to wash each other's feet. When people see genuine love operating, they are drawn to it. Jesus calls his disciples to a new command, that they love one another. This doesn't sound like a new command, but the idea is that they were to love each other like he loved them. That was different. Soon Jesus would give himself as a sacrifice, demonstrating his love. We are getting at the meaning of love then, when we realize that it means laying down our life for each other. When people see that, they notice what motivates us . . . they see Jesus in us. How do you respond to this message about love?

January 31 – John 14:1-14: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (v.3) I especially enjoy this promise from Jesus because it shows his individual attention to us. He is preparing an individual place that we would receive as a gift in eternity. Jesus wanted to encourage his disciples about heaven. They were worried about all that was happening around them and the possibilities of opposition and difficulties. So Jesus points them to heaven. He tells them not to be troubled. I love to envision heaven and the idea of God's mansion. I know it is beyond my imagination, but I am thrilled as I hear the words in this Scripture reading. I will experience Jesus face to face, and enjoy unending fellowship forever. What do you think about Jesus preparing a special dwelling for you?

February 1 – John 14:15-31: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever . . ." (v.16) I told you that Jesus will introduce them to the Holy Spirit during his teaching in the Upper Room. This is our first reference, and the best translation I think is Helper. I know the word

"helper" doesn't stir up the grandeur of the very Spirit of the Living God, but it is the meaning of the word, "Paraklete." The Holy Spirit will be a helping presence in our lives as he dwells within us. The new and powerful message anticipated after Jesus' death and resurrection is that the Holy Spirit "will be in you." There are several different words used in many translations, like comforter, counselor, advocate, but the Helper clearly shows that we have God's very help to live and serve and grow in him. How do you respond to the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

February 2 – John 15:1-11: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (v.5) Whenever I read this section about the vine and the branches, this verse is always the focal point for me. I can't do anything without the Lord's help that is of any spiritual consequence. This means I can't do anything of eternal value. I have the inability to produce spiritual fruit in myself, or impact others in a spiritual way. Jesus already told the disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit, and I think that is what he is talking about in this connection of Jesus being the vine and we are the branches. We must stay connected to him as we receive spiritual nourishment from him and represent him to others. I like the word "abide" more than "remain," because it gives me that daily, personal, intimate connection as I intentionally seek after him through obedience, prayer and the reading of his Word. This illustration that Jesus uses is very profound and worth meditating on today. What does it mean to you?

February 3 – John 15:12-27: "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (v.15) Jesus characterizes our connection to him as a friendship. Do you notice how often he is referring to this real and continuous relationship that we have with him? To enhance this relationship, we are intimately connected to the Holy Spirit. We are seeking him day after day. And now he is describing it as friendship. The One who is the eternal, all powerful creator of the universe, Jesus himself, invites us into friendship. It is actually very stunning to me, but especially endearing as well. I remember in the Old Testament. Abraham was called a friend of God. What does friendship with Jesus mean to you? How will you cultivate that friendship today?

February 4 – John 16:1-15: "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." (v.13) I can't get enough of this focus on the Holy Spirit. Now Jesus is emphasizing that the Holy Spirit is the dispenser of truth. The Spirit's ministry is guiding us into all truth. I love that the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us as we are sensitive to his direction and promptings. I enjoy the sense of God's whispers that I know come from the Holy Spirit. It even says that the Holy Spirit is declaring the things that are to come, which suggest that we can have a sense of discernment about what is happening all around us. He will take the truth of Christ and make it clear to us. This is a wonderful promise. How do you respond to this promise? What else do we learn about the work of the Holy Spirit in these verses?

Prayers: Please pray for our young families as they are concerned for their children and their upbringing. Pray that God will help them by the Holy Spirit to be the parents and grandparents he has called them to be.