



Where The Green Grass Grows | Doug Wekenman | 2.3.19
Life Group Weekly

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

If you could instantly be an expert in a subject, what would it be? Why?

SHARE

“Dream Big.”

As we begin a new year, we all have dreams of what we hope it will become. Whether last year was painful or it was the best year of your life, we all anticipate what's next; it is human nature. Some of us are dreaming of that promotion that we have worked so hard to see materialize. Others are dreaming of an opportunity on the horizon, we just need some things to line up, but maybe it will be any day now.

We have big plans and we set our gaze on that big ideas: that distant formless-hope, when right in front of us is a tangible reality we can touch and embrace. Right smack in front of us are actual people, oxygen to breathe, friendships, family members, resources, giftedness and a God that wants you to get to know Him and His plans for you, right now.

There is nothing wrong with dreaming big dreams and pursuing the God-given ones, but the moment we make the dream more important than the God who gives them, we create a lifeless idol for ourselves and grow distant from the living God who loves us. Our dream job is

the one we have right now, that dream spouse is the one you live with, that dream opportunity is the one you have each day you walk out your front door.

We can dream big, but live better.

As Christ followers, we need to be wide awake to the reality all around us. Instead of believing that there has to be something better way out there in the future, we can live with purpose, intentionality, and joy today through the power of God at work within us. We can live “awake to life” in all of its fullness each and every day.

As we close out our first series of the year, take some time to recap everything you’ve learned. What was your biggest takeaway?

G R O W

Read John 15:1-5

What do you think Jesus means when He says, “remain in me”?

There is a sequoia tree in California named Hyperion. It is the tallest tree in the world, standing 379.7 feet in the air and towering over every other tree around it. But even the tallest tree in the world still needs all the basic resources to stay alive. The branches still need to be connected to the trunk, and the trunk still relies on the roots. No matter how tall a tree gets, it never outgrows its need to be connected to the source.

This week Doug talked about the story in John 15 where Jesus uses the imagery of a vine and its branches. As Jesus prepared to go to the cross, He essentially tells his disciples that it is their turn to pick up the torch and carry on the movement. However, the way forward is a bit counterintuitive. Instead of moving on from Jesus, their job is to learn to depend on Him even more!

Just like Hyperion, our job is not to outgrow our need for the source, but to learn to stay connected to it. Because as Doug reminded us this week, “branches never graduate from the vine.”

The power is in remaining. Our job is not to become “good” at Christianity that we no longer need Jesus, this is the utterly wrong mindset to have. The more we truly know God and His grace, the greater our understanding becomes to rest in it more. Spiritual maturity looks like learning to rely on Jesus more, not less!

What does it look like for you to remain connected to the source this week?

What is one thing that is going to try to keep you separated from the source? Can you think of a practical step you can take to combat this?

M O V E

Read Galatians 5:16-24

Why do you think Paul calls them “acts of the flesh” but “fruit of the Spirit”? What is the difference between an “act” and a fruit?

What parallels do you see between Galatians 5 and John 15:1-5?

We live in a beautiful world, where we can order our groceries at night and have them at our doorstep the next morning. The world has never been this efficient. However, according to Scripture, our spiritual walk looks more like gradually bearing fruit than having it delivered to our doorstep.

There is no Amazon Prime for spiritual growth!

So, as our Life Group continues to work together to be more like Jesus, we have to remember that this process takes time, which means fruit is the perfect imagery for what is happening.

Let’s take a look at the list:

Love

Joy

Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-Control

That's quite a list. These are all excellent things! I've never heard anyone say, "I just wish I wasn't so at peace." We all deeply desire these to be a part of who we are because we were created to exude them from the very beginning! So, how do we experience the fruit?

Learning to bear more fruit is a natural process of walking in step with the Spirit, it isn't something we have to try to force. Take an orange tree for example. An orange tree doesn't have to try really hard to produce oranges, as long as it gets enough water and sunlight, it will produce them naturally, that's what it was created to do. The fruit of the Spirit works the same way. Instead of trying to become more peaceful or patient this week, the better question to ask is, how can I better walk in step with the Spirit? Because as Jesus told His disciples, "no branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4).

This week we have another opportunity to learn to walk in step with the Spirit, this is the beautiful thing about following Jesus, another opportunity. A great first step is by the practice of beginning and ending your day with prayer.

The first five minutes of the day are crucial. We can spend them checking our emails, responding to texts, scrolling through social media feeds, and finding ourselves already stressing out before the day had even started OR we can use that moment to thank God for another day while being expectant for what He has in store!

The final five minutes of our day are essential too. When we spend the last few minutes of our day allowing our phones or televisions to be a distraction that might possibly stress us out; it isn't good for our Spirit. If we simply learn to put those things down and spend a few minutes thanking God for everything He allowed us to experience that day, we will wake up feeling exponentially better!

Let's do that together this week, here's a challenge for your group:

AM

Wake up every morning and read Psalm 1 three times. As you read, thank God for the new day He has given you and ask Him to be with you every step of the way.

PM

Before you fall asleep, read Psalm 23 three times. As you read, thank God for being your Shepherd who protects you and leads you beside still waters.

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying with and for each other. If you are in a coed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to share more freely.

T O G O

Matthew 7:18

"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."

