

THE BRAVE SPARROW QUARTERLY

VIGILANCE

ISSUE 2, APRIL 2024

FEATURES:

UNDONE

WASHED & READY

ABIDING IN JOY BY CYNDY JAMES

SOLID FOOD FOR THE MATURE

BEING PERFECTED IN LOVE

BIBLE STUDY:
JESUS, THE ONE THING NEEDED



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“

Abide verb

: to bear patiently

: to endure without yielding

: to wait for

: to remain

Synonyms: remain, dwell, stay,
tarry, linger, wait

Antonym: leave, depart, quit

”

NOTE FROM ADRIENNE

In this second issue of *Vigilance*, there is a recurring theme of abiding and all the blessings that come with it. Like strength, love, and joy. You might wonder what abiding has to do with being vigilant. I believe the answer is everything. Jesus tells us in John 15 that we can do nothing apart from him, which includes watching and waiting for him. With that, it seemed good and right for the Bible study this time to be all about Jesus.

I'm thrilled to have a guest contributor this quarter. Cyndy James is a long-time mentor of mine. Her life sings of devotion and wisdom. When I think of her, the phrase gentle authority comes to mind. She may not be the loudest person in the room, but when she speaks, the Word of God flows quickly and effectively. And there is no other person I can think of to share about *abiding in joy* than Cyndy. You will be blessed.

What to Expect in Vigilance

Vigilance is a quarterly release. Each issue will contain articles, teachings, prophetic content, and a Bible study. Some material will be from guest contributors, and the rest will be new or revised material from Brave Sparrow. The features are aimed at watching and waiting for Jesus' return and being a readied bride. Thank you for reading.

To HIM who is able!
Adrienne



UNDONE

BY ADRIENNE SCOTT, APRIL 2024

The word *undone* in a biblical context is mostly associated with the heavenly scene in Isaiah 6. I love reading this passage and meditating on it. Even though I've experienced the presence of the Lord in unraveling ways, to the point of surrender, I'm still captivated by how undone Isaiah becomes.

I've been thinking about the lowliness of being undone. How low do we have to go?

There are things we carry and pursue that keep us from the state of being undone with our Creator and Savior and Helper. These pursuits are self-inflated. They make us sleepy and unable to stay vigilant with God's word. They will be among the first things to falter as the days grow closer to Jesus' return. And, there's no humility in our pursuit of them. That's the biggest issue because God gives grace to the humble.

I love these lyrics by Jeremy Riddle.

“
Your love leads me low
To come and adore
I have to go low
In awe of you
Your love leads me low
To come and adore
Who is like the Lord?
”

Humility is a necessary attitude to behold the Lord and even more to be undone by him and his word. If we aren't undone with Jesus now, for all that is behind us and all that is ahead of us, when will we be? If we aren't choosing to wear humility now, when will we? If we aren't abiding and listening now, when will we?

I jotted the following prayer down in a journal recently.

Undo the presumption
the pretense
the religion
the expectations
the need to be right, to be seen, heard, acknowledged, etc.

Undo the stubbornness
the independence
the striving
the work, work, work
the I can make this happen if I put a little power to it

Undo the extras
the idols
the fatty sacrifices
the other loves
the, to be biblical, the whoring around with other gods
(Sorry if that last line is too much, but I don't hold anything back in my prayer journals.)

There are many reasons to abide in Christ, to get low and behold him. Overcoming tribulation is one of them. But can I tell you a better one? To see the Lord high and lifted up. To experience his presence in a way that unravels us. To be infused with the confidence of the throne room and the one who sits on the throne. To be surrendered. Yes. It will cost us every ounce of self. But oh, the life that freely flows to the ones who are low and undone before the Lord. We can do nothing without Jesus. But with him... With him, we are walking, talking demonstrations of the kingdom of heaven that draws others to see the Lord also.

WASHED & READY

2024

We are getting ready
to be with you forever
Wash us in the water
the water with your word

Divide our soul from the spirit
as bone is not the marrow
Light the path before us
prepare our feet to follow

We are getting ready
beyond the veil torn for us
Basking in the life
of the Lamb's sacrifice

Bought back, made new
at peace as sons and daughters
A fellowship of joy and
suffering with our Savior

We are washed and ready
a bride adorned with love
Clean hands, pure hearts, we wait
to see your holy face

There's going to be wedding
Jesus, you're drawing closer
Our lamps are lit and burning
the oil is running over

ABIDING IN JOY

BY CYNDY JAMES

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. John 15:9-12, NKJV

The word Abide basically means to dwell. When we dwell somewhere, we move in, take up residence, and make it our home. It's not temporary. It's not an Airbnb or a hotel room. We live there. We abide there. J.C. Ryle explains it this way.

"To abide in Christ means to keep up a habit of constant close communion with Him—to be always leaning on Him, resting on Him, pouring out our hearts to Him, and using Him as our Fountain of life and strength, as our chief Companion and best Friend."

John 15:11 says, *these things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.* What things? Well, the things that Jesus tells us are preceding and following verse 11.

vs.9, If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. Here, he says to abide in His love and walk in loving obedience.

vs.12, This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Jesus tells us these things: Abide in Me, Abide in My love, and Love one another. Why? So that his joy may abide in you, and that your joy may be full.

WE ABIDE IN CHRIST

Abiding in Christ is how we find true and lasting joy. We can experience moments of joy and find happiness. But happiness is not the same as joy. As good as it can be, happiness is still dependent on things, experiences, and circumstances outside of us.

In contrast to happiness, joy is not fleeting or temporary. It is not based as much on external factors. It transcends our circumstances. Happiness is fun! Joy goes much deeper. A simple explanation is that happiness is based on externals, and joy is within.

Happiness is not bad! I like to be happy! I'd rather be happy than unhappy, wouldn't you? Going back to my illustration of abiding being a permanent dwelling, we can apply this same analogy to joy and happiness. Wouldn't you rather have a permanent home to sleep in every night instead of wondering which hotel you're going to stay in, or campsite or Airbnb? Those places are nice when you're there, but they are temporary.

Depending on the translation, the Bible uses the words happy and happiness about 30 times, while joy and rejoice appear over 300 times. This indicates how the Word of God elevates joy over happiness.

A few years ago, God began to teach me to choose joy through Philippians 4:4. *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice.*

I really struggled with the word *always*. Lord, do you mean...

NOW — When everything in my world has collapsed?
NOW — When my friend betrayed me?
NOW — When this child has walked away from God?
NOW — When another child's marriage is crumbling?
NOW — When my husband received a terminal diagnosis?

Paul gives the command to *rejoice in the Lord always*. We don't rejoice in our circumstances or our difficulties. We *rejoice in the Lord* in the midst of our circumstances. Paul was doing just that as he wrote his letter to the Philippians from prison.

We choose joy, ”” but it is God who gives joy.

He writes again in 1Thessalonians 5:18, *Give thanks in all circumstances.* Notice he says *in* all circumstances, not *for* all circumstances.

Joy is not a denial of our pain. God, in his Word, acknowledges that life can be tough. So these instructions are given to us so that we know how to live in the strength of the Lord for *the joy of the Lord is my strength* (Nehemiah 8:10).

Choose joy! It's one thing to say this, but a different thing to actually do it. As we travel through life, we encounter storms, heartache, and loss. There were mornings after my husband died that I would wake up with just this crushing grief. On those difficult mornings, I would say out loud, lying in my bed, "I choose joy." And then, later, I added to it. "God, I choose you."

We choose joy, but it is God who gives joy. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love.

WE ABIDE IN CHRIST'S LOVE

This lifestyle of loving obedience that He calls us to cannot be accomplished in our own power. It is in His presence that we find mercy and grace in times of need. Trying to live life in our own strength just causes us to get depressed because we are going to fail every. single. time. This is not going to lead us into joy. It's actually going to do the opposite. So, we go boldly into His presence and receive this treasure of grace. His grace is the engine that empowers us in our walk of loving obedience. We don't obey out of fear.

I remember early in my walk with Christ, obedience was mostly fear-based. There was a desire to please the Lord, but there was always this undercurrent of fear there, too, that the Lord was going to be displeased with me and punish me. I remember thinking I had to be perfect or God would not love me. Thankfully, as a young adult, I began to walk out of that bondage of fear. *His perfect love casts out fear.*

Sometimes, I think our mentality is, "Let me get right with God so I can experience His love." It may be a conscious thought or unconscious. But I'm

coming to believe that as followers of Christ, we should reverse this. “Let me experience the love of God so that I can get right with God.” Because when we are going to God while we are so burdened with this horrible thing (in our eyes) that we did, and we are so weighed down with guilt and shame as we try to lay this at his feet, we can become so focused on the blot of our sin that we lose sight of the Lamb.

I believe that if we come to the Lamb and our eyes are on Him, through His loving kindness, His grace, and His forgiveness, He will take away that stain.

“we can become so focused
on the blot of our sin that we
lose sight of the Lamb.”

WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER SO OUR JOY MAY BE FULL

We are not called to live in seclusion or isolation. Pulling away for times of solitude with the Lord is a spiritual discipline, one that Jesus practiced, but that is not to be the majority of how we live. We can't love one another if there's no “other” in our lives.

We are designed by God to live in community. Notice that the word ‘community’ has the root word, commune. We are designed by God to commune with one another, to live life together. And, while living life together, *to love one another*.

Recently, I read about an 85-year Harvard University study that has tracked people throughout their lives. It started with white males and later expanded to a more diverse control group. Of the 268 original participants, only 19 are still alive, but they are now tracking 1,300 of their children, plus the added diverse participants.

I'm quoting from an article about this study entitled, “Good Genes are Nice, but Joy is Better.”

"What they found was that close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives, the study revealed. Those ties protect people from life's discontents, help to delay mental and physical decline, and are better predictors of long and happy lives than social class, IQ, or even genes. That finding proved true across the board."

The article goes on to say,

"Those who kept warm relationships got to live longer and happier, said Waldinger, and the loners often died earlier. "Loneliness kills," he said. "It's as powerful as smoking or alcoholism."

The empowerment to love one another is found in abiding in Christ, which leads to joy. *Love one another so that your joy may be full.*

Abiding in Christ is the fountainhead of joy. It is the very source of living water that fills us to overflowing with a joy that bypasses circumstances and surpasses understanding. Our close and constant communion with Him opens the door to experiencing His powerful presence and His endless love. A love so strong that nothing can separate us from Him. To abide in joy is to abide in Christ, in his love, and to love one another. Draw near to God and choose joy!

12 Strengths of Refuge

What happens when we take refuge in the LORD?

1 PROTECTION

*For you are my lamp, O LORD, and my God lightens my darkness.
For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. 2 Samuel 22:29-31*

2 SAFETY

*Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Psalm 62:8*

3 PRESERVATION

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. Psalm 16:1

4 JOY

*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name
may exult in you. Psalm 5:11*

5 ABUNDANT GOODNESS

*Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for
those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of the children of mankind! Psalm 31:9*

6 DWELLING & HERITAGE

Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings. For you, O God, have heard my vows you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name. Psalm 61:4-5

7 FAITHFULNESS

He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. Psalm 91:4

8 DEFENSE

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been a refuge for me, a strong tower against the enemy. Psalm 61:2-3

9 PORTION & PROVISION

I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." Psalm 142:5

10 SOURCE of STRENGTH

I have been as a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge. Psalm 71:7

11 BETTER

It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes. Psalm 118:9

12 KNOWN

The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. Nahum 1:7

SOLID FOOD FOR THE MATURE

BY ADRIENNE SCOTT

But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Hebrews 11:13-14

In a dream, I saw a group of people walking down stairs to the lowest level of a building, maybe a restaurant, away from the crowds. On a work table, a raw steak and a tenderizing tool were provided for each person. But before the tool was usable, it had to be hammered out. Some in the group immediately hammered out the tool. Others took a shortcut and tried to tenderize the steak with their hands, and the meat lost its shape. A voice said, “Don’t play with the food.” The people who took the time to hammer out the tenderizing tool knew it was foolish to take the shortcut or “play with the food.”

Symbolism. I believe the low level is a place of humility and hiddenness. I would also suggest that this represents the secret place with God. The steak represents the will of God—mature food. The tool provided is the Word of God. We don’t make the tool (Word), but we have to “hammer it out” to know and apply it.

I’ll start with the bottom line: Shortcuts in discipleship are a self-centered approach to kingdom living. They won’t get us anywhere but keep us in a perpetual state of infancy. At some point, if we want to grow in Christ, we have to say playtime is over.

I want to encourage us to be clothed in humility and spend time with God. I know I talk about the secret place a lot, but it’s an area we should never neglect. And it takes diligence because there are no shortcuts. So, I’ll keep talking about it.

Because...

It's in the hidden place with God where we hammer out the Word of God. We read it. We inquire about it with the Lord. We meditate on it and hide it in our hearts. As we do that, we are able to use the Word of God rightly. It trains our discernment.

One of the ways we apply the Word is to the will of God. It helps us understand what God is asking. And though there is always a measure of self-denial when it comes to following God's lead, when the Word of God is hidden in our hearts, it tenderizes God's will so we can partake. It may be more theologically correct to say the Word tenderizes our hearts for the will of God. Either way, the will of God, without a love for his Word, is too much. We will be like infants trying to eat steak.

It is foolishness to try to handle, control, or manipulate God's will. Understanding comes from knowing and loving his Word—from loving him! That happens in the secret place. Otherwise, we will try to bend his will to our will. That's immaturity, and it causes us to miss out on God's life. Life with Jesus is full of joy. The fullness of joy, to be exact. Fullness, as in completed and mature.

Let's get low and grow! Let's take this tool, the Word of God, that has been given to us and treasure it, dig into it. Let it divide soul from spirit, and let it be a light to our feet. Your will, God, is our delight!

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he
meditates day and night. Psalm 1:1-2

“

*There is no fear
in love...* 1 John 4

”

BEING PERFECTED IN LOVE

BY ADRIENNE SCOTT, SPRING 2024

“Well, that’s not good. That means I’m not perfected in love,” I thought when I realized I was bracing myself for God’s leadership. I wasn’t positioning myself to hear and follow. I was bracing myself because I was afraid of what he might say. I immediately prayed to be perfected in love and went to the Bible for wisdom. During some time set apart to listen to Jesus, I asked him to show me what being perfected in love looks like. For the next few hours, I encountered the kindness of the Lord as he walked me through his Word and gave me some pictures to search out. By the end of our time, I felt like I was on different footing from where I began.

I’d like to share some of the highlights with you. May we all be perfected in love so we can be perfected in following.

Let’s Start with 1 John 4. Read this passage. I know it’s long, but take your time and consider what John is saying to us.

1 John 4:7-21

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in

love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

I want to acknowledge the context before anything else. This passage culminates in brotherly love and unity. But the path to brotherly love begins with knowing how God loves us so we can love him and others in the same way.

John lays the foundation for being perfected in love by reviewing the gospel. The Father sent the Son, and the Son is the savior of the world. When we confess Jesus as our savior, we abide in God. How do we know that we are abiding in him and him in us? Because God has given us his Spirit.

To abide in God is to know his love for us and others. That is a mature or maturing state of being. It is love being perfected in us. If we are not abiding in God, we cannot love God or our brothers.

With this premise, let's look closely at four results of being perfected in love.

1 Being Perfected in Love is Abiding unto Maturity

Here is vs 16-17 in a different translation to help break familiarity.

God is love; and those who remain in this love remain united with God, and God remains united with them. Here is how love has been brought to maturity with us: as the Messiah is, so are we in the world. This gives us confidence for the Day of Judgment. CJB

As new creations in Christ, with our eternal destination secure, we are on a lifelong journey of maturing in Christ the same way a healthy baby grows and learns from day one. This maturity can only happen as we remain in Christ. Abiding in him and he in us is the unfolding of love in our lives, both receiving and giving. This love is what annihilates fear. God is love, and that is what love does.

To be completely rid of fear is to be on the other side of eternity. However, we are without excuse for maturing while we are on earth. At no point do we stop abiding or learning from Jesus. That's an open door for fear. I would even suggest that if we stop learning, become unwilling to learn or grow bored with abiding in him daily, we jeopardize following Jesus altogether. The themes of endurance, faithfulness, and steadfastness are throughout the Bible for a reason. We have to embrace them.

In our continual journey of maturing, we will face fear. To say we won't experience it misses the point. The point is that when we discern fear's presence, we remember that we are abiding in God, and he in us. Remembering this profound truth is a mark of maturity, and it comes with the ability to call fear out when it raises its ugly head, "Cease! I'm abiding in Christ. You have no place here."

Recap.

Being perfected in love is to abide in Christ unto maturity in Christ. Love doesn't allow fear any space, which frees us to remain, to follow, and to love others in Christ.

 Being perfected in love is to abide
in Christ unto maturity in Christ.

2 Being Perfected in Love Abolishes Punishment

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

1 John 4: 18

There is a difference between punishment and discipline. We have misunderstood this difference in the body of Christ too often. I hope the following information helps us better align with what the Bible says about punishment and discipline.

When it comes to love, punishment can't be present. If it is present, then the motivation isn't love. It's fear. The Word of God is clear: *There is no fear in love because fear has to do with punishment.* However, the Word also says that God disciplines those he loves.

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. Proverbs 3:11-12, Hebrews 12:5-6

When we feel resistance as we mature as disciples, that is training, aligning, and adjusting to the nature of God being formed in us. The impetus for our transformation to be like God is his love for us and our love for him.

Let's look at three terms from these verses. It will help us understand better the differences between punishment and discipline and, ultimately, between fear and love.

- Discipline — Discipline means to teach or mold. We go through discipline so we can become like Jesus. The principle of beholding and becoming (2 Corinthians 3:17) is in action. We look to Jesus for instruction (Psalm 32:8-9), and he counsels according to his nature. It's pretty amazing! Although becoming like him is a deep, innate longing in us, it is still in opposition to our fleshly nature.
- Chastise — Chastisement is probably the most misunderstood of the terms. It means to scourge or to tear the flesh, and it is the punishment Jesus took for us. His flesh was literally torn so we could be reconciled to the Father. So what does that mean for us? Are we supposed to tear our flesh, too? No. Not in the literal sense. Praise the Lord! However, as new creations in Christ, we are called to walk in the Spirit and resist the flesh (Galatians 5:16). In tandem with discipline, resisting is a deliberate choice to refuse or "tear" out our flesh nature and its desires. God's love for us teaches us to take up our cross and follow him. It also teaches us to say *not my will, but yours be done.*
- Punishment — Punishment is a penalty of guilt. Again, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. The cross is the greatest demonstration of love we can ever know. We are going to encounter

fear—fear of man, God’s leadership, the known, the unknown, etc.—as we live life and grow in Jesus. But. This love abolishes the need for punishment and the crushing weight of fear that accompanies it.

Acknowledging fear when we sense it will help us along in the process. Here are two examples of declarations/prayers. Say them out loud.

- I am un-punishable under the blood of Jesus! I am a no-fear zone.
- Jesus, I sense fear about this decision. Forgive me. Perfect me in your love and counsel me today.

(Let me briefly touch on persecution here because I could see some overlap as I studied. The church as a whole and its individual members are subject to persecution, especially these days as we prepare for Jesus’ return. But persecution isn’t punishment laid on us by God. Jesus said to be persecuted for righteousness sake is a blessing (Matthew 5:10). It is part of our fellowship with Christ in suffering and joy.)

Recap

As disciples, we do not train to follow and become like Jesus under the oppression of fear. Discipleship is a response of love to the greatest love we can ever know. Being perfected in love abolishes fear and punishment because we are taking cover under the cross of Jesus.

3 Being Perfected in Love is by God’s Spirit

At the beginning of this series, I mentioned that I had encountered the kindness of the Lord when I asked him to show me what being perfected in love looked like. While tucked away for a few hours, I felt Jesus lead me through his word, and some pictures/visions I saw too.

One of the first pictures I saw started with dirt particles clouding the air as a man brushed the hind legs of a horse. The legs had dried mud caked on

them in splash formations. The man gently but effectively brushed out the dirt. I knew I was the horse in that picture, and the Spirit was at work. A couple of hours later, still tucked away, I felt the Holy Spirit whisper, maybe even sing, this verse to me.

Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord. Zechariah 4:6

Oh, the kindness. When I say kind, I mean it like a breeze that comes in the middle of a stuffy, stifling, southern summer day. Like when an act of kindness moves past courtesy and politeness and actually cares. That's what I was experiencing, and I wept at his grace.

In the biblical context, this verse in Zechariah is an encouragement for Zerubbabel and those surrounding him. His place and purpose, maybe even understanding, would not come from man's strength, force, or ability. It would only come by God's Spirit, by God's breath.

In the context of being perfected in love, perfection only comes from God. My efforts to be perfect are futile. They land me in the mud every time. Perfect love, which is God, is effective in cleaning off the fear, the panic, the striving, and the residue of the pits called "self" we so easily fall into. His love at work in me is joyful, and it is a thorough work.

My efforts to be perfect are futile.
They land me in the mud every time.
Perfect love, which is God, is effective.

Let's read from 1 John 4 again. This passage highlights the Father, Son, and Spirit working together as we abide. It also punctuates the necessity of abiding in order to be perfected in love and to be confident in life and death.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever

abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. vs 4:13-17

The horse is a picture of man's strength. David writes, *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord* (Psalm 20:7). In contrast, he also writes that *God made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights* (Psalm 18:33). Habakkuk has a similar passage, and we will talk more about it the next section. All of the verses have the common thread of strength. We can do life in our strength, or we can do it in the strength of God's Spirit. One is vain and fading. The other is guaranteed and eternal.

The invitation we have is to abide in God. To live in his strength—his way, wisdom, love, and joy. To live in his life and all that it encompasses, which is everything. As Tullian Tchividjian phrased, Jesus + Nothing = Everything.

We can do life in our strength, or we can do it in the strength of God's Spirit. One is vain and fading. The other is guaranteed and eternal.

It's not necessarily easy. We live in a self-centered, self-driven, self-crazed society. All day, every day, from billboards to social media posts, from classrooms to conversations, we are being told to be self-sufficient. And though there are some truths to these messages, truths not grounded in the Truth will only last for so long. We are not made to be independent from our source of life. Our savior is the Everlasting God who created us.

Satan's been lying about "self" from the beginning because he was wrapped up in himself. Of course his message is me, me, me. Friends, we have to cut off the voice that leads to ourselves, to self-sufficiency, to me-centered lives. We have to *look to Jesus, the beginning and end of our faith* (Hebrews 12), and surrender so the Spirit can do the work of Christ in us. That's abiding, and there is no life without it. Jesus said we can do nothing apart from him. Nothing. No thing

J E S U S
+
N O T H I N G
=
E V E R Y T H I N G

In these days ahead of us, to be the people the glory of the Lord rests upon (Isaiah 60), being perfected in his love is a must. His glory is strength! Anything shy of being in that process will hinder our ability to follow the Lord, to follow the Spirit's leading, and to lock arms in brotherly love.

I can't think of a better way to conclude this section than with Isaiah 40. It's a display of God's strength waiting for us, inviting us to come and abide. It's a picture of love. Take a few moments and meditate on these verses. Thank you, Father, for your strength.

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God

He doesn't faint

He doesn't grow weary

His understanding is inexhaustible

He gives power to the faint

He increases those who have no strength

Even youth (people in their prime) still get weak and fall exhausted

But they who wait on the Lord

Renew their strength

They will mount up with wings like eagles

They will run and not be weary

They will walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:28-31

Recap

Being perfected in love is not by our might or power but by the Spirit of the Lord. Like in every other aspect of our lives, we wait for him, his strength, and his perfection to renew us. In his kindness, we mount up with strong wings, and in his breath, we move.

4 Being Perfected in Love is Being Perfected in Following

Fear, in any of its forms, hinders us from fully knowing and loving God. It's a blockade that denies us full access to what has already been paid for through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Because of that, fear hinders us from following the Spirit's leadership. I'm convinced that following God is dependent on loving him. And that can only happen as we are being perfected in love.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. 1 John 4:18

Have you ever thought about the fact that fear is absent in God's love for us? All the power in his love—stronger than death—is not driven by fear. Only life. He is teaching us what love really looks like. I don't know about you, but I'm over fear. I want all the life that comes from abiding in Christ. Back to 1 John 4.

We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19-21

Fear not only sets up blockades, it wants to control every outcome. Fear loves to control. That's how following Jesus gets hijacked every time. Following the Spirit's leadership looks like trust, surrender, humility—abiding. Control looks like avoidance, dominance, manipulation, and isolation. If we find ourselves operating in those types of attitudes, we need to ask ourselves and the Holy Spirit, "Has fear set up any blockades in my life?"

I've got some really good news. We are created to leap!

For by [the LORD] I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. Psalm 18:29

God has given us and created us with the ability to follow. Not in our strength, like a horse, but in his design and in his strength. Both David and Habakkuk use the imagery of the agility of deer and how their feet grace high places. They can leap over walls. They can scale mountainous terrain. I watched a doe go from the base of a 50 ft ridge, at least, to the top in three leaps. In a matter of seconds, it went from low to high. David writes, *[The LORD] made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights.* Psalm 18:33

But maybe Habakkuk's use of the imagery is more applicable here. In Habakkuk 3:17, he writes out six scenarios that would cause anyone to be fearful.

“
*Though the fig tree should not blossom
nor fruit be on the vine
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herds in the stalls...*
”

Think about going to the grocery store and seeing that every section that had meat, fruit, vegetables, grain, and olives is empty, and every product that use any of those staples is out of stock, and no there is no foreseeable sign of change. Would you be fearful? That would also wipe out cotton and leather. How about then? No coffee, either. Would you get a little worried?

That's an equivalent of what Habakkuk was seeing. There were many reasons to be fearful, to blame God, and to walk away. Yet. His prayer didn't end there.

*...yet I will rejoice in the LORD
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*

Why? What did Habakkuk see or remember in such a desolate, barren, fearful, time and place?

*God, the LORD, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's
he makes me tread on my high places.*

Habakkuk's joyful response is one of love, vigilant love. And I hope, I pray, that my response to things that normally invoke dread, hopelessness, and control is just as faithful, hilarious, and fearless.

How is this possible? Abiding. Being perfected in love.

Like deer, when we abide in Jesus, we can follow wherever he leads because there is no fear keeping us from moving up the holy hill of the Lord. There is no fear that can manipulate us from going where we know the Lord is calling. There is no blockade that can hinder us if—when—we abide in him. The place of abiding is the place of love being perfected in us. It begins with the joy of salvation and continues to the joy of maturity in Christ.

Being perfected in love confronts the fear binding our feet from leaping. If we let fear control us, we will eventually stop following Jesus. Not only that but also get out of step with him. This is true for every area of our lives, from the smallest act to the biggest adjustment. But in relation to being vigilant and ready for Jesus' return, this has to do with love. Let's look at 1 John 4 once again.

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:19-21

Love will be an unmistakable, fearless mark of the body of Christ. It always has been. I see this in many ways, but let's start here. It's God's love for us, our love for him, and his love for others through us.

1. God's love for us. The point of this series is to highlight God's love, and how abiding in him leads to being perfected in that love.
2. Our love for God. As we get ready and watch for Jesus' return, we will see an increase in resistance against the Word of God and against the purity of the Gospel of Christ. There will be many Christian churches that will divert away from the truth of the Bible. Jesus' name will be on lips, but not the Lord of lives. Many will try to confess God and other gods simultaneously. That never works. We are already seeing this, and it will continue. In the middle of it, the body of Christ cannot be bound by fear because that will stop us from following Jesus. But. Perfect love won't give into fear. Perfected love is perfected abiding, which is perfected following. Abiding and following will be a demonstration of our love and loyalty to God and the kingdom of heaven.
3. God's love through us. I've never felt the leading to share the gospel or felt the Spirit give a word of knowledge or the urge to comfort someone when

love was not the driving force behind it. Not religion. Not duty. It is love and mercy for people lost in a dying world. When we know God's love for us, and we are devoted to loving him, his love will compel us to others.

It's that same love that should compel us to love each other within the church. We can't be a readied bride if we love the people outside the church more than inside the church. Maturity in Christ looks like majoring on our belief in Jesus rather than our preferences in expressions. Perfected love will be the mark of the bride of Christ. *They will know we are disciples by our love for one another* (John 13:35).

Jesus was perfected in love, Jesus is perfect love, and we've been invited to abide in him.

Recap

Being perfected in love results in being perfected in following. We've been created with feet to follow the Lord. Fear will try to bind us, but following the Lord in devotion is driven by love: His love for us, our love for him, and our love for others. The culmination of 1 John 4 is the body of Christ unified in brotherly love. It will be an unmistakable mark of the body of Christ.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1

I wrote this series because I believe being perfected in love is a game-changer for the body of Christ. It is a vigilant pursuit that only happens from abiding in God. So I'm sounding an alarm of sorts. Being perfected in love is 1 - Abiding unto Maturity, 2 - Abolishes Punishment, 3 - is By God's Spirit, and 4 - is Being Perfected in Following. Friends, love cannot harbor fear nor any of its sidekicks. So, let's abide in the person who is love, who teaches us to love. Let's be ready to follow where the Spirit leads and be a watching, readied bride.

AN INTRODUCTORY BIBLE STUDY ON

Jesus, the One Thing Needed

ADRIENNE SCOTT



BRAVE
SPARROW

JESUS, THE ONE THING NEEDED*

INTRODUCITON

You may have heard this old saying,

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea. — Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

I love this saying because its base is wonder and longing instead of striving. Although it is far from a Christian origin, I believe it resounds the cry in The Parable of the Ten Virgins—we have to long for (watch for) and know Jesus.

There is no to-do list, three-step program, six-week study that will give you knowledge of Jesus. They may give you an avenue and insight toward that prize, but knowing Jesus comes from longing for him and pressing into him.

We see this kind of longing throughout the bible, but let's consider Psalm 27.

*One thing have I asked of the LORD that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.
For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal
me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. Psalm 27:4-5*

O, that we would have this posture!

My prayer over you as you read through these verses about Jesus is that you will see and long for him, that you will press into him. As you do, I pray that you can tangibly feel the oil dripping from his presence, and that it fills the flasks of your heart to overflowing.

Friends, Jesus is the cornerstone of our lives. He is the one thing necessary, the good portion that cannot be taken from us (Luke 10:38-42).

* Taken from *Uncommon: Lessons from the Parable of the 10 Virgins* by Adrienne Scott
A variety of translations were used for this Lesson. CJB, ESV, MOUNCE, NIV, NLT

Read these passages. Really read them. This is not a speed reading activity. This is a slow choice. Invite the Holy Spirit to read them with you. Take notes. What do you see that is lovely? What do you see that is eternal? What do you see that is wise? What do you see that is uncommon?

JESUS PART ONE

JOHN 1:1-5

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*

*He was with God in the beginning.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing made had being.*

*In him was life,
and the life was the light of mankind.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not suppressed it.*

COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

*He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of creation.
For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and
invisible, whether thrones or dominions or ruler or authorities—
all things were created through him and for him.
And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

(Press in a little more. Read Hebrews 1:2-4)

JOHN 1:14-16

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us
and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth...
from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*

COLOSSIANS 1:18-20

*And he is the head of the body, the church.
He is the beginning, the first born from the dead,
that in everything he might be preeminent.
For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him to reconcile to himself all things,
whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

Who is Jesus in these passages?

How is he described?

How does this truth change your life?

JESUS PART TWO

LUKE 2:8-11

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I announce to you good news of great joy which will be for all the people, because this very day there has been born to you a savior who is the Messiah, the Lord...

ISAIAH 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

ISAIAH 53:2-6

...he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

(Press in a little more. Read 1 Peter 2:21-25)

EPHESIANS 2:13-21

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing

the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

(Press in a little more. Read Isaiah 28:16-18a)

Who is Jesus in these passages?

How is he described?

How does this truth change your life?

JESUS PART THREE

John 6:22-40, I Am the _____

John 8:12-30, I Am the _____

John 10:1-10, I Am the _____

John 10:11-18, I Am the _____

John 11:17-27, I Am the _____

John 14: 1-14, I Am the _____

John 15:1-17, I Am the _____

How do these truth change your life?

[illegible]

JESUS PART FOUR

HEBREWS 12:1-2

Therefore, since we ourselves have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every impediment, and the sin that so easily distracts, and let us run with endurance the race that is prescribed for us,

fixing our gaze upon Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who rather than the joy set before him endured a cross, disregarding its shame, and has now taken his seat at the right and of the throne of God. Consider him...

PHILIPPIANS 2:7-11

Therefore God raised [Jesus] to the highest place and gave him the name above every name; so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow — in heaven, on earth and under the earth — and every tongue will acknowledge that Jesus the Messiah is Lord — to the glory of God the Father.

(Press in a little more. Read Ephesians 1:15-23)

REVELATION 4 & 5, excerpts

Holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come... Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered...

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!

To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!

REVELATION 19:11-16

Next I saw heaven opened, and there before me was a white horse. Sitting on it was the one called Faithful and True, and it is in righteousness that he passes judgment and goes to battle.

REVELATION 19:11-16, Continued

His eyes were like a fiery flame, and on his head were many royal crowns. And he had a name written which no one knew but himself. He was wearing a robe that had been soaked in blood, and the name by which he is called is, "THE WORD OF GOD." ... And on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

REVELATION 21:3-7

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

Who is Jesus in these passages?

How is he described?

How does this truth change your life?

Reading these verses is a reminder of what is *uncommon*, what is true, what is alive. This is the life in which we abide, that cannot be taken from us. Keep pressing in. Fill your flasks with oil, fill every space of your heart with Jesus.

Make a list of other verses you can find that describe Jesus and study them too. There are plenty more.

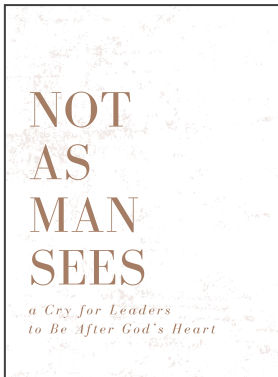
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BRAVE SPARROW

Brave Sparrow exists to create resources
that encourage and equip the body of Christ
in discipleship, worship, and leadership
so that Jesus will be known and the
kingdom of heaven will be evident on
the earth until *he* returns.

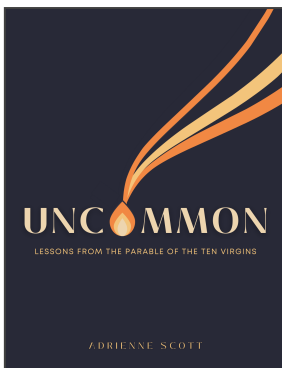
More Resources From www.brave-sparrow.com



Not As Man Sees: A Cry for Leaders to Be After God's Heart

by Adrienne Scott

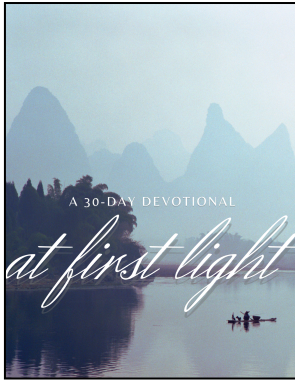
For the church to be light in deep darkness, we need to be after the heart of God. We need leaders who will fearlessly pursue God's heart and equip others to do the same. Not As Man Sees is a cry for leaders in the kingdom of God to revisit an ancient, unshakable, tried and true approach to leadership. This is the standard God seeks, The Lord seeks for a man after his own heart—For the Lord sees not as man sees, man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. 1 Samuel 13 & 16.



Uncommon: Lessons from the Parable of the Ten Virgins

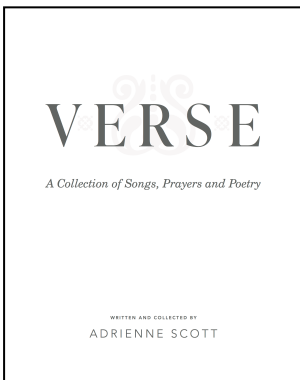
by Adrienne Scott

Uncommon is a study on getting ready and staying ready as disciples of Jesus as we wait for his return. In kingdom life, the oil that gives light to our lamps is an uncommon commodity in the world. It is to know Jesus. These lessons look closely at what distracts us from buying oil, how to buy oil, and how to help others buy oil.



At First Light: A 30-Day Devotional
by Adrienne Scott

30 Days of devotions anchored in the Word of God, inspired by his creation. *At First Light* includes themes of hope, endurance, and presence as each day encounters God's strength and faithfulness.



**Verse: A Collection of Songs,
Prayers, and Poetry**

Written and Collected by Adrienne Scott

This coffee table book is full of song lyrics, prayers, poetry, and stories I have written over twenty years. These pieces are like mile markers on a discipleship journey. Intertwined with the beauty and brokenness of life is the everlasting hope found in Jesus.



For more information about Adrienne Scott and Brave Sparrow Publishing, visit brave-sparrow.com