ESSAY · FEBRUARY 10, 2022

Jesus Gave One Commandment Ten Times?

Written by Bill Perkins

Confused and afraid, the disciples left the upper room and stepped onto the narrow Jerusalem street. The frigid air–just like their growing fear–surrounded them, nipping at their faces and cutting through their robes. Holding their fluttering torches high, they followed Jesus out of the city.

A Spiritual Mystery

Suddenly he stopped. A key moment had arrived. He would tell them in the simplest of terms a spiritual mystery so amazing–like the first use of numbers or the invention of the wheel–that nothing would be the same again.

In essence he said, “From now on, I want you to stop fighting to please God by trying to improve yourself and defeat your evil urges. Instead, rely on the fact that as long as we’re connected (and we will always be connected), I’ll work in you and through you to accomplish my purposes. So instead of fighting to become someone you’ll never be and striving to accomplish what you can’t achieve, give it up. Relax and rely on me.”

Of course, if Jesus had said it like that, the disciples might have missed the point. And so he took a grapevine in his hand and said, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NASB).

I like the disciples, because like me, they weren’t the sharpest students in the class. On numerous occasions Jesus told them something, only to find that they saw his meaning as well as a blind man sees a sunset. (Remember their confusion over the Pharisees and yeast?)

But the analogy of the vine and branch contains such profound and life-changing spiritual power that Jesus took no chance with the disciples. Just to make sure they didn’t miss his meaning or underestimate its importance Jesus used the word abide ten times in six verses (John 15:4-7, 9- 10, NASB).

One Word Spoken Ten Times

Think about it. Jesus could have said, “If you want to be fruitful, clean up your act, perform a religious ritual, tithe, abstain from alcohol, go to church, think positive thoughts, carry a big Bible, put a bumper sticker on your car, and definitely, definitely, stop having fun.” Instead he repeated a single word ten times:

Abide Abide Abide Abide Abide Abide Abide Abide Abide Abide

It occurred to me that unlike the Ten Commandments that Moses received on the mountain, Jesus repeated one word ten times. The Israelites were given a rock-hard set of rules. Jesus offered a flesh-and-blood friendship. He knew what the disciples would soon discover and what we must learn. Namely, friendship with him, not iron-

willed determination to live up to the standards of God or man, produces a life that pleases God and changes the world.

Christ had a mission for his disciples and he has one for you. Just as soft drink producers use carbonation to jazz up their beverages, Jesus releases us into the world to add life and sparkle–to change it. Yet at the vineyard he stressed friendship, not mission. Why? Because in the spiritual world who you know and how well you know him determines what you will accomplish. All of your skills stand or fall on the foundation of your friendship with Christ.