

Abiding in Jesus

By Judith TenElshof

Announcer:

As you may or may not know, academic advising is in full swing and pre-registration for the fall ninety nine semester is just around the corner. Beginning on Monday, April 12th, for Talbot students, as you know, academic advising is now required of all Talbot students. You won't be able to pre-register for your fall ninety nine courses without the signature of your assigned advisor on your course request card. You've all received a flyer in your mailbox in the brightest paper we could find. Whatever you do, don't throw this away. Please read it carefully and thoroughly. Separate information will be in your box as well regarding your advisor and how to contact them. So please read this very carefully. This next announcement is very important for Talbot students. Please Mark on your calendar. Friday, May 7th at 7 PM. This is our spring banquet, an evening at the summit. We will again have it at the Summit House Restaurant, one of the finest restaurants in Orange County.

We'll be offering a choice of prime rib or chicken Wellington. Vegetarian plates can be arranged by special request, but certainly not by me. (audience laughter) There will be, there will be a special message by our own Dr. Paul Cox and a special video. A new video will be premiered and previewed. It's the new Talbot video. And that will be very exciting to see that. Tickets are greatly discounted to only 15 dollars. So please order early before they sell out. They can be purchased beginning tomorrow for many Talbot AS member or by stopping by the AS office in the Myers lobby. Now, if you are a Talbot student and you're involved in ministry and you happen to have a Friday evening ministry, this is a wonderful opportunity for you to practice the

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fine art of delegation. A wonderful opportunity for you to affirm your junior staff or your assistant staff members for all of their hard work and to empower them to do what you'd normally be doing on Friday night. Give them the opportunity to grow and do that.

We don't want you to use the excuse that you have a Friday evening ministry as a reason for missing the Talbot banquet. We really do want you to come. I don't think there's anyone in here who doesn't know that next week is that Easter break, Easter recess. So we hope that you'll have a wonderful time of rest, perhaps getting reacquainted with your family, enjoying your family members, perhaps catching up on a little homework, but most especially that you'll have a time of thoughtful reflection and worship on the events surrounding our Lord sacrificial death for us and a joyous celebration of his resurrection.

We'll look forward to having you come back the week following that when our chapel will be one that's always exciting and informative. Our group of students who went to Turkey and Greece and Rome will be presenting wonderful slides, wonderful testimony of their trip. It's always one of the highlights of the year. So come back for that chapel. And then the week following that on April 20th will be our annual Staley lectures. And we're so thrilled this year to have Dr. Irwin Lutzer, the senior pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago as our special speaker.

I'm also thrilled to have our speaker this morning. Judy, is this your first time speaking to us?

(No.) OK. Well, it's one of her first times in speaking to us (hahaha) this year. And Judy

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from Fuller Seminary in marital and family therapy. And she also received an M.A. in theology from Fuller Seminary. She and her husband, Gene, live in the city of La Palma. They have two grown children, both of whom are Talbot graduates, both of whom are married.

Tammy is married and has two children. And Greg, who is a graduate of our M.A. in Philosophy program, is now a doctoral student at USC in philosophy. So, Judy, when you come in just a few minutes, we're really looking forward to what the Lord will bring through you. We're now going to have a time of worship in music. And our worship leader will be Matthew Hooper. Many of you know him. My relationship with Matthew Hooper's family goes back to the time when I was in eighth grade.

Matt's dad led the music and the entertainment at my 8th grade graduation banquet. And several years later, lo and behold, Matt shows up at Biola, where he was a member of the King's men. And we enjoyed him very much and have enjoyed our relationship throughout the years. He is also a graduate of Talbot and is now serving as an R.A. in Stuart Hall. So, Matthew, will you lead our hearts and worship this morning? Oh, one more quick announcement. If you did not receive one of these blue forms as you came in, could you please raise your hand now and keep it raised until one of our volunteers is able to get one of those into your hands?

Matthew:

I was going to ask you to stand up, but it's maybe kind of hard with all your hands raised. So. Ok. They're going around. Would you stand, stand with me as we sing these first few songs? Let me just give a moment to inviting the Lord's presence to be here with us. Holy Spirit of God, we

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invite you now to come and abide with us in this time. And we ask you, Holy Spirit, to prompt us intimately as we sing, abide with you, commune with you. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

[Worship Music]

You're welcome to go ahead and sit. If you'd like if you'd like to stand. Feel free to do that, but may want to just move to a place where you could do that and not obstruct someone's view to the words. This next song, Turn Your Eyes on Jesus, can be sung in several ways. One being actually sung as if the Spirit of the Lord Jesus himself was calling us to turn our eyes to the Lord Jesus. It can be sung in that sense as as we sing this song. It can also be sung in a sense of you as a child of God, as a brother of our Lord Jesus, or sister of our Lord Jesus, encouraging another person next to you, encouraging them to turn their eyes upon Jesus. And so as we sing this next song, when we sing those words, let those thoughts be in your mind. The second part of this song is in addition, and this song is really an acknowledgement of the love of our Lord Jesus and how our Lord Jesus, when he lived in this life, was about giving himself away. So let's sing together.

[Worship Music]

Thank you, Lord, Lord God, for blessing us with your presence this morning, and we thank you for how consistently you seek to give yourself away for for our good. And we just thank you for that this morning. In your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

TenElshof:

Wake up, you Christians. The alarm is ringing. Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it's obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough. Let me put this question to you. How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness, for only crazy people would think that they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God? If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? Are you going through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up. Answer this question. Does the God who lavishly provide you with his own presence, the Holy Spirit, working things in your life you could never do for yourselves? Does he do these things because of your strenuous moral strivings or because you trust him to do them in you?

Jesus says in John 15, I am the vine, and my father's the farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that does not bear grapes and every branch that is grape bearing. He prunes back so you'll bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken. You know, some of you are being paranoid right now and you're struggling against it. It doesn't feel good. Pruning always reminds me of my rosebushes because if I get too busy and I don't prune them, they kind of get straggly and those vines get long and they are without those leaves, those beautiful leaves that support those beautiful roses that come. But you know, when I don't prune them, the roses don't have a solid brilliance that they do when they've been pruned and they've been nourished. Jesus says, live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. Are you at home with Jesus, really at

home with him? Can you allow him into all your rooms and feel comfortable? He says, live in the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself, but only by being joined to the vine. You can't bear fruit unless you are adjoined with me. I am the vine. You are the branches. When you're joined with me, and I with you. The relationship, intimate and organic. The harvest is sure to be abundant.

But separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is dead wood, gathered up and thrown on a bonfire. He says, abide in me, and I in you. Two way abiding. It sounds so easy, doesn't it? Doesn't sound hard, but then why do we struggle against it so much?

I think one of the reasons is because we have such an incredible outward orientation to life. And you say, where does that come from? You know, I think that when we have and we focus on the expectations of others, maybe that's your boss, maybe that's your professor, maybe it's the school, maybe it's your focus on something out there that you want to obtain, and you're just trying to please somebody rather than listening to how God is directing you.

Our accomplishments separate from him. Though attracting many, your accomplishments will attract. But separate from God, they really are dead wood. They're no better than what could be thrown on a fire at the beach. But if you make yourself at home with me, he says, and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon.

This is how my father shows who he is. When you produce grapes and when you mature as my disciples, as you make yourself at home with him, his desires will become your desires. How

does that happen? It happens the same way as when you were children and loving your parents and being with them every day, you began to take on what they said, what they believed, their identity, their values, because you were so at home with them that you began to identify with them and take on whatever they were teaching you.

Are you that at home with Jesus? Are you taking on his identity? Or are you still following the expectations of others? He has to be more important to you than all those other people in your life. He says, I've loved you the way my father has loved me. Credible statement. Make yourselves at home in my love. Again, I ask you, are you at home and his love. If you keep my command, you'll remain intimately at home in my love.

That's what I've done, kept my father's commands and made myself at home in his love. I told you these things for a purpose, that my joy may be your joy and your joy may be wholly mature. Is the joy inside of you deep, fulfilling? Does it bring contentment? Or is your joy dependent on circumstances in your life? Who says what? Who approves of what? Who have you pleased today? That brings you joy. That's a fleeting joy.

He wants it to be a mature joy that flows from him. Luke 10:17 - 20, says, records, when Jesus sent out the 72 and it talks about when they returned and when they were returned, when they returned from doing the ministry Jesus sent them out to do, they were so excited. And they were so excited because they had so much power that even the demons responded to them. But Jesus said, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

In other words, be joyful that you are children of God. You're in my joy, should be because we belong to him. You know, that reminds me when I think of the joy of being at home, I think of my two little grandchildren, Brooklyn and Zachary. You know, when we have them for a couple of days, we, they have our undivided attention. We just love them to death and we take them where they like to go, like Disneyland or to the zoo or to the park and we play with them. And they have a lot of fun and they really enjoy being with their grandparents. But you know what? When their parents come home and they turn around and see those open arms of mom and dad, they run and they get gathered up. And their joy is really true and they turn round and they wave goodbye to us, not because they don't love us, but because their true contentment is found in the home with their parents where they're loved.

Are you that at home with Jesus? Can you feel his arms around you and can you feel the content and joy that he brings when he's there? If you are truly at home with him, then he gives you a command. He said, this is my command. Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your love on the line for your friends. You are my friends. When you do the things I command you, I am no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning.

No. I've named you friends because I've let you into everything the father has, I've heard from the father. Are you ready to lay your life down for a friend, sacrifice something of yourself for someone else? Do you have enough love? Most of us don't. The problem is, is that our outer orientation to life has built a thick wall between our head and our heart. And when we stop and

try to listen, we hit a wall of distractions that keep us from his presence and from hearing what we need to do when we really love somebody else. Jason Wilson, a student here, is going to come and tell you how he broke through that wall of distractions in his own life.

Jason Wilson:

The reason that Judy asked me to share this is because it occurred on a retreat that I went to among about 50 or so other Talbot students at the beginning of the semester graciously put on. I'm very thankful for it. A couple of things lead up to it. Last semester was an extremely difficult one for me. I was getting all preparations made for PhD. applications, preparing and taking the GRE and working on my thesis. My wife is a high school English teacher, I say she goes to hell and back every day for me to put me through school. And she was also taking two classes to finish her credential. So needless to say, we were exceptionally busy and we kind of began to drift. We just didn't have the time to get things pulled together.

We had a little explosion at the end of the semester on various issues. Christmas break came devoted to parents. We leave town, spend it with them, minister them, love them, came back. God did some things over that break where he began to prepare me, read a couple of books, one called Listening Prayer Probing My Thoughts. The retreat comes, chapel speaker named Wayne speaks on Grace in preparation for a three hour time with God and called an EPC extended personal communion.

And so there we go. And I'm out on top of this hill. Nice, big rock. You know, I found my spot and I said, OK, God. I said, I'm ready for whatever you have to say. And he then began to speak

in a in a very strong way. And so I just want to share with you what what kind of happened. He he's told me to read any book. Read it, read something.

I didn't know what. I picked Galatians because I've got a class on it. To be honest with you, I was scared that I wasn't going to find the concept of grace in the book of Galatians because I knew that God was going to say something about grace. But as I began to read, just slowly, meditatively listening to him more than concentrating on the content, he said, not that this is what you are doing. But would it be worth it to you to spend the next five years of your life just ministering to your wife and not directly to others?

I'm very work oriented. It's like, wow. And he said, you need to give grace to your wife, but you cannot give grace. Only I can. Grace destroys pride. And I'm just reading to you right out of what I took down on that day so that it's, it's that, it's not my related reflections. And I said, how does grace destroy pride? Certainly that's an issue with me. He said, through love. Grace is an act of love.

What do you mean? Turn to 1 John 4. All right, Lord. I turned over there. I begin to read. He spoke a few things to me and surfaced a few issues that I knew I was not loving my wife in, particularly related to finances and providing for her needs. Then. This was more of an impression than it was in words. But it was, it's kind of deep. And I phrased it like this, In much of the past couple of months I've been trying to unearth the roots of her problem and eradicate them.

However, God was unearthing the roots of mine. How can she have her roots unearthed if she does not know how? Whose responsibility is it to lead her, save her husband? And that is lead her by example, not pulling. And then, I'm like, OK, great Lord. He says, OK, back to love. And I said, all right, what's the bond? He says, It is this. Keep reading. Verse 7 immediately stuck out my mind. And it said this, "Beloved, let us love one another."

All of a sudden, these thoughts came to me. If you do this, then you will have mastered the Christian life. All grace comes through my love, all compassion and mercy comes through my love, which can bring the power. Without my love, there is no power. Abiding in me is to drink my love, and remaining in is to receive my love in all it entails. This was Jesus's greatest commandment. Meekness, humility and brokenness are the means of it.

This is the upside down world. Grace destroys pride. I was stunned and I began to continue reading in Galatians. Then a very interesting thing happened. I sort of started to get this, this, I don't want to use the word but allegory from Galatians Chapter 2: 11-21, the story where Paul confronts Cephas in Galatians and the Lord basically said this, "I have a law in my life that is loving God and hating all of the world, and that includes the parts of the world that I'm not supposed to hate, the parts I'm supposed to love. And so he said to me, particularly in Galatians, 19 through 21, "For through the law, I died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me and the life which I now live, I live in the flesh, but I live it by the faith of the son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me. And catch this, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for righteousness comes through the law and Christ died needlessly." So how does that apply? He said, "Will you

lay down or crucify this law in your life, namely, of basically thinking that that you just need to be so holy and so frugal that you really deny what you perceive are superfluous things to your wife. But what to her are actually important things? And he said, "Will you do this?" I said, "Yes."

And then he led me. This was interesting to ceremonially, there were these nails on the ground. Nail these four nails into this wooden stump. And it was in the shape of a cross. And then I put this little foreign thing at the top of it. And that was just a symbolic manifestation of this commitment that I had just made. And he said this, "To do this. Let's see. I want you to have faith to go ahead and buy some things for your wife to go ahead and fulfill some of these needs in her life. Just trust me that you need to do this." I was like, "God, I don't want to do that." But I went and I said, "Okay, I'll do it." And I said, "In order to do this, Lord, is there anything in my past that is kind of prohibiting me from doing this or is like the reason that I'm doing this right now, I'm holding back on my wife." And I just began to listen to see if he's going to say anything.

And he said this, "Many missionary speakers and others who sought your assistance by making you feel on the basis of reason, emotions and God's word that you should do it without trusting me to raise their hearts. In other words, you had a lot of people that told you you should do this without telling you it was, you need to ask if it's God's will or not. And I then had a memory, a very distinct memory of a college mission speaker when I was in high school, who, you know, gave the whole spiel, showed the videos, everything, and said, you guys need to support me.

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And I felt guilty because I didn't, I couldn't. And he stepped down off the platform. And then I saw I didn't like see features and stuff, but I saw Jesus get up on the platform. And Jesus looked on the crowd and he pointed to a few people. And first thing he did is say, I want you, you and you to go with this young man. And then he said, I want this, these people here. And he gathered a group of people up to the altar because they had other separate needs that needed prayer.

And then he directed another group to form an intercessory prayer team before the group of missionaries. And then he directed other people to give financial support. I was just sitting in the back watching the whole thing. And it was so powerful. And it freed me up to think back to what that speaker who spoke on grace said. He said there's a difference between doing God's work and God's will. And then I wrote this, "The work is the natural. What the word of God says, the will is the spirit, what he directs. To do the latter is where he's leading me. And then I said this question. I said, God, what's my call? And then he said this, "Asking this question means that you fundamentally don't get it. All I've been asking you to do all along is abide in me." I wanted him to tell me something to do. But the whole point was I just need to abide. So the nature of his call is a daily dynamic adventure, not a list of activities. And that was. So, Judy, to answer your question, am I at home with him? I'm working on it. But there's a long ways to go.

TenElshof:

Many of us strive in the outward orientation because of the fact that we're afraid to look inward. Jason alluded to that, how afraid he is to really look inside and see what really is there. He would much prefer to be out there doing something. When I think about the fear of looking inside, I often think of living back in Michigan and the ice storms that we used to have.

You know, we'd have all that fluffy white snow and it was beautiful. And then it would warm up and it would start to rain and at night it would freeze. And we wake up in the morning and we'd have a slick ice over everything. And we would have to make a choice of whether when we stepped out, are we going to get firmer footing and stamp through the ice and get our feet down to where it's solid or are we going to sort of slip and slide around the top?

And but it was fearful to stamp through the ice because the stamp through the ice meant you never knew what you were going to find underneath. You could get a really wet foot because you stepped into a great big puddle or you could just step in and find a big hole and you could just sink down into the depths. And I think life is like that for many of us. Our hearts are filled with sin and we are afraid to face what's in there.

It's easier to slip around on the surface of relationships. Both our relationship with God and our relationship with others, it's far easier to not take that step into looking deep into our hearts and being open. And the reason why it's hard is because we forget that God gives us the love to be able to do that. When we have openness to God, it's his love that he fills it with. And he will carry us to wherever we have to go. He says.

"You didn't choose me." He said fruit that won't spoil. There's a process there. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the father in relation to me, He gives you. But remember the root command. Love one another. In Matthew 12:34, it says, for the mouth speaks out of what fills the heart, we

need to discover what is in the heart so that out of our mouth will flow living water. I ask you to the people that you minister.

Are they receiving out of a flowing river or a stagnant pond? If you are not abiding in Jesus, then they are receiving from a stagnant pond. The story of Mary and Martha, Jesus responds to Martha when she said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to work by myself? Tell her to help me." You notice she blames him. "Martha, Martha," the Lord said, "you are worried and upset about many things, but the only one thing is needed."

Sitting at the feet of Jesus and making that your home. That is the only thing that's really needed. I want us to take just a few minutes. Right now, let me give you about five minutes and I want you to reflect over the passage on that blue sheet. And I want you to just be quiet for a few moments. And Christy Moore is going to come up and sing for us to close chapel. But beforehand, I want you to just think, what is God saying to you right now? What about that passage? What in it does he want you to hear? Let's pray.

Dear God, you love each of these people here so very much. You want them to experience that love in a way that they open up their hearts to you. Help them not to be afraid, but to feel your gentleness and your love surrounding them. Be with them and meet them, Lord. All these things we ask in your savior's name. Amen.

Just take a few minutes to reflect on the passage.

[Musical Closure]