UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT

A PERSONAL DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
PART OF A SHORT COURSE
Further devotional guides to help explore this theme further are available for download at www.manchester.anglican.org/vocations: ‘Remain in Me’ John 15, ‘The Power of the Cross’ and ‘Explore God’s Call’.
How to use this guide

In the Gospel God offers us a restful but fruitful way to live.

This involves us becoming part of Christ’s own death and resurrection. No longer us trying to live and work for God but Christ himself living and working in us.

This small devotional guide is part of a short course which is freely available for small groups and which can be downloaded from www.manchester.anglican.org/vocations.

It contains 5 simple reflections on Jesus’ challenge in John 12:24 that ‘unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit’.

As we read we are looking for revelation from the Spirit and we suggest that time is taken between each section for personal prayer and reflection.

The material was developed for use at St John’s Pendlebury and we are happy to offer it as a wider resource. We would be grateful for any feedback or suggestions you can offer @ stjohnspendlebury@yahoo.co.uk.

May the Lord bless you as you read.


‘Unless a Grain of Wheat’ © 2012 St John the Evangelist, Pendlebury and the Church of England Diocese of Manchester.
Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.  

**OUR LIFE**

1: Unless a Grain of Wheat  
2: Falls into the Earth  

**DEATH**

3: And Dies  
4: It Remains Alone  

**FRUITFULNESS**

5: But if it Dies it Bears Much fruit  

If a grain stays safe in the sack it remains a single grain - alone, intact, but lifeless. But if it is prepared to fall into the earth and die then a greater life force can begin to work on it and in it.

In the same way if we try to avoid our death in Christ then we remain alone, fruitless. But all who dare to enter into Christ's death and resurrection will bear much fruit.

As we die and enter Christ we enter the soil of his life with his every blessing at work to bring life. Here we no longer try to work for God but God himself begins to live and work in us for his good pleasure.

The image of the vine in John 15 paints the same picture. If a branch abides in the vine, all of the vine’s life sap will flow through it to produce fruit. The branch’s responsibility is to abide, the Father will do the pruning and the vine itself will bear the fruit.

This is not a lazy way of life. We are called to grow in Christian discipleship as we abide in him and his words in us. Learning to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow him Luke 9:23.

This new resurrection life is simply ‘Christ in us, the hope of glory’. Entering Christ’s life and giving him space to live and work in us.

**For personal Reflection:**

- Pause to consider God’s amazing offer ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’
**4: IT REMAINS ALONE**

unless a grain of wheat ... dies, it remains a single grain Jn 12:24

It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me  Gal 2: 20

the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from  the law of sin and of death Romans 8: 2

God .. made us alive together with Christ .. 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus  Eph 2: 5,6

We may think that we need to pray harder, try harder or find new more effective ways in order to bear more fruit. But the matter of fruitfulness is first of all a matter of which life is trying to work.

**By nature** the old life, no matter how it tried, could not please God Romans 7: 18 It would always remain alone, fruitless.

**By location** the old flesh life was under ‘the law of sin and death’. It didn't need to sin all the time but just one outburst of temper or selfishness killed the work of many months or years.

The old life was spiritually dead, unable to bear fruit, alone.

**By nature** the new life has been ‘made alive together with Christ’, Christ himself now lives within. This life is naturally fruitful.

Now ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ’ is at work to bring it life.

**By location** this new life is ‘in Christ’, seated together with him in the heavenly places to reign with him in life Romans 5:17.

This new life is spiritually alive, carrying Christ’s own life within. It is free from sin and death, seated with Christ in the heavenly places, learning to carry his life and so to bear much fruit.

---

**1: UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT**

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.  

John 12: 24, 25

Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.  

John 3: 5,6

‘Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies’ ...

‘no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit’.

Jesus is very clear here that something needs to fundamentally change before we can enter into his purpose for our lives; the grain of wheat needs to die .... we need to hate our life in order to keep it ... we must be born of water and the Spirit.

In John 12 Jesus was speaking not only about his own death and resurrection but about the death and resurrection which every disciple must pass through in order to enter into eternal life.

That death & resurrection is not only when we die physically but it’s the gateway now for every Christian to enter into Christ’s life and fruitfulness here on earth. It’s the birthright of every child of God.

‘Unless a grain of wheat ... dies’. Death and resurrection is at the centre of our Gospel, it’s the gateway into God’s eternal life today.

But many want a gospel without the Cross, they seek new life without death. We may even preach a gospel which speaks of relationship with God without showing people the door to enter by.

We have a challenge to know and unashamedly proclaim the Gospel which is the ‘power of God for salvation’ Romans 1: 16.

---

**For personal Reflection:**

- Reflect on the scriptures above for your own life.
- Will you ask God for grace to know more?

---

**For personal Reflection:**

- Reflect on Jesus’ words’ Unless a grain ... dies ..’
- What has your own experience been?
2: FALLS INTO THE EARTH

unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies John 12: 24

10 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate... 16 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. Romans 7: 15, 18

7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8: 7,8

Why is death and resurrection at the heart of the Gospel? Why does God need the ‘grain to die’ before new life can begin?

In Romans 7 & 8 St Paul describes the struggle which is common to us all—‘I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate’. He’s wrestling within himself to try to live out this Christian life. He knows what he should (and wants) to do, but he just can’t do it.

Then he goes to the root of the problem ‘nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it’.

The problem is not how hard we try and keep trying, the problem is the very life that we carry. The flesh life which he & we were born with ‘is hostile to God’ and ‘cannot please God’ Romans 8: 7,8.

It’s not about trying harder, with new resolutions & more prayer. It’s not about lowering the standard ‘after all we’re all human aren’t we?’ Paul doesn’t want to be like he is but how can he change?

God’s only answer is for our old life with all its good intentions and frailty to die, ‘Unless a grain of wheat ...’.

At the Cross God brings our old life to an end, Christ’s death is our death, the grain of wheat dies. This is the gateway to freedom.

3: AND DIES

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all Is 53: 6

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. Galatians 2: 19, 20

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Romans 6: 3

We thank you ... for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. CW Baptism

God’s forgiveness is so precious but it doesn’t stop us from sinning. We fail and ask for forgiveness over the same sins again & again.

But Jesus didn’t just die to forgive us our sins (iniquities), when he died ‘the Lord laid on him’ the iniquity of us all. Jesus took our weak flesh life to the Cross with him, when he died we died.

‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live’. When we are baptized into Christ we are baptized into his death, our old life is dead and buried with him.

That death sets us free from our old flesh life with all it’s weakness and sin Romans 6: 6,7 setting us free to live for God Rms 6: 12,13.

That death sets us free from the world and the world systems Galatians 6: 14. The world isn’t as attractive to a dead person!

That same death sets us free from the devil and his power. At the Cross the devil has been disarmed & triumphed over Col 1: 13-15. We only now need to stand against his wiles Ephesians 6: 11.

All of this freedom has been paid for but it only effects those who know the truth about it. Jesus said ‘If you continue in my word .. you will know the truth and the truth will make you free Jn 8:31, 32.

For personal Reflection:

- Have you struggled within yourself to do what is right?
- Could it be that something deeper in you needs to change?

For personal Reflection:

- Ponder St Paul’s words in Galatians 2: 19,20 above
- What has your own experience been?