

Pictures that *Abide* Brings

At what has become known as the Lord's Supper, Jesus gathered with His disciples. He had important things to say to them as He faced arrest, torture and death on the cross before He would be resurrected, offering those who believe in Him eternal life.

In His message were these words: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5 ESV).

I like that word *abide*. It conjures up pictures in my mind. They are images of home, of dwelling, of staying with, of living in and with, of trusting and being there.

To abide is to know that no matter what comes our way, we will not be deserted or left to face whatever the matter is on our own. Christ comes to live within us, to take up residence in our spirits, and promises not to leave.

Over the years, I have witnessed many scenes of this abiding presence played out in the lives of persons I have known or witnessed. None is more powerful, more moving, more meaningful than the images which walk across my mind of faithful spouses who care for each other to the very end.

Like the story of Clarence and Louise. They were a couple in my hometown of Cookeville, Tennessee, who owned a service station. Years later, Louise developed Alzheimer's disease and was admitted to Life Care Center of Sparta, Tennessee. She no longer recognized anyone, even Clarence, and he came to see her every day, seven days a week, from 8 in the morning to dark.

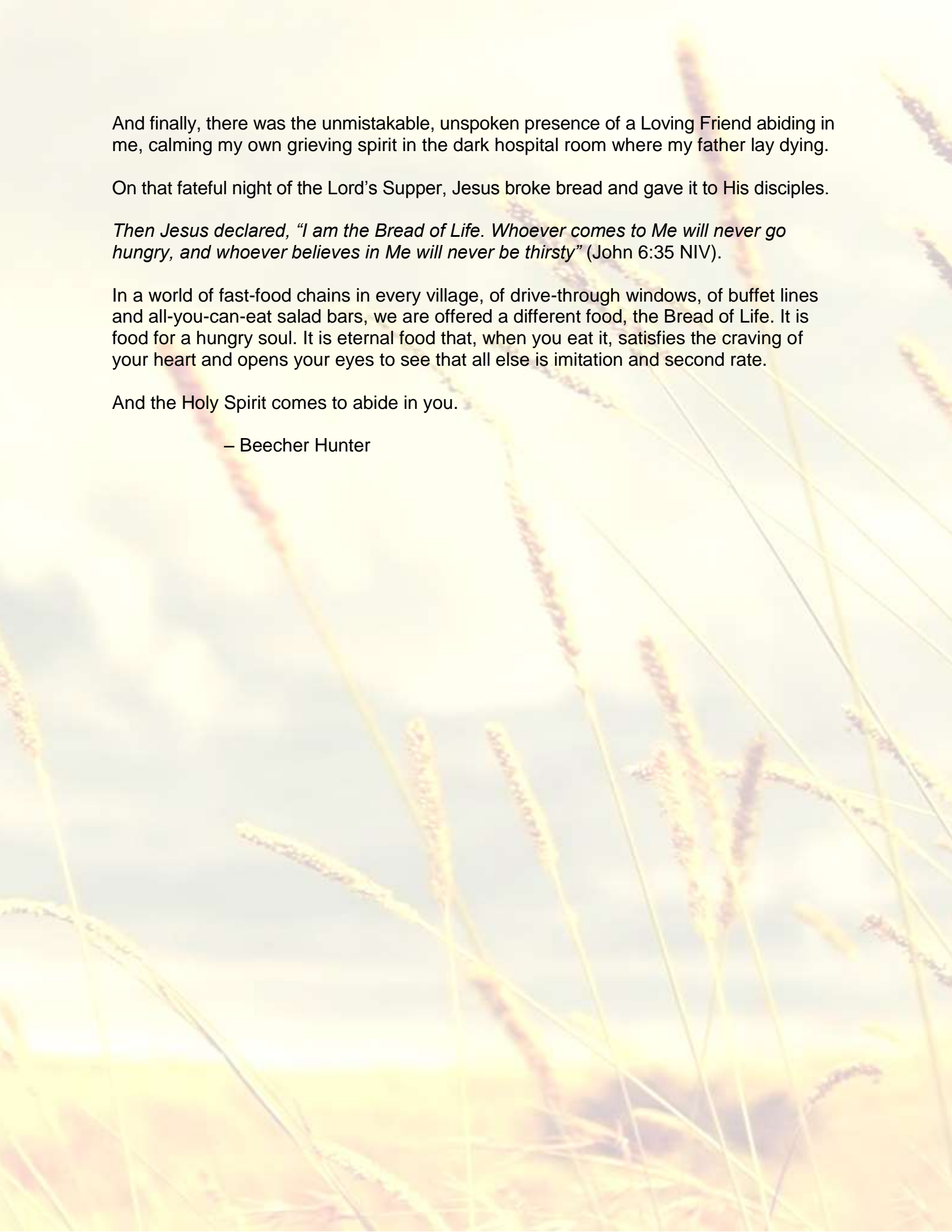
He ate his lunch before noon in the ice-cream parlor so that when Louise was brought to the dining room, he could sit with her and give her his full attention while she was being fed. When asked about his faithfulness in attendance, Clarence responded, "This is my home. Wherever she is, that's my home."

"But why do you come every day, especially when she no longer knows who you are?" he was asked.

"Well, I know who she is, and that's what really matters," he replied.

And here is another picture – of a woman standing beside the bed of her husband, holding his hand, offering a calm, reassuring voice to this one who had only moments before been thrown into convulsions. "I will not leave you," she said.

(more)



And finally, there was the unmistakable, unspoken presence of a Loving Friend abiding in me, calming my own grieving spirit in the dark hospital room where my father lay dying.

On that fateful night of the Lord's Supper, Jesus broke bread and gave it to His disciples.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35 NIV).

In a world of fast-food chains in every village, of drive-through windows, of buffet lines and all-you-can-eat salad bars, we are offered a different food, the Bread of Life. It is food for a hungry soul. It is eternal food that, when you eat it, satisfies the craving of your heart and opens your eyes to see that all else is imitation and second rate.

And the Holy Spirit comes to abide in you.

– Beecher Hunter