2026-10-25

Abide in Christ

John 15:1-10

Have you ever cheated on your spouse? When we enter into a marriage relationship, we make a covenant, a commitment to be faithful. In this relationship we are to live together, we are to remain together, we are to stay connected with each other. Oftentimes this is much harder than we first think. As we grow older, we learn more and we change. Our bodies are not what they used to be. Our minds are not what they used to be. Our likes and dislikes can change. You are not the same person you once were and neither is your spouse. In every relationship there are ups and downs. There are times of **great joy and times** of struggle. Yet through all these changes we are to remain faithful in a loving, growing marriage relationship.

Jesus has just told His disciples three very important things they are to remember and the Holy Spirit will keep reminding them of. Jesus told them, "*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me*" (John 14:1). "*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*" (14:9). "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (14:15). I would have expected Jesus to give His disciples a list of things to keep and follow. We know what is going to happen soon and so did Jesus. I would expect Jesus to give His disciples a strategy, a game plan for taking His gospel to the world. Who was to do what and go where. Some people leave instructions behind for their spouse or children as to what they are to do when they are gone. My dad did. He told us boys to take care of our mother. He had a will that told us the other things we were to do. What did Jesus tell His disciples next?

Jesus told His disciples to abide in Him. This means to stay connected, to live, to remain in Him. The first thing that strikes me is Jesus is going away. He is going to die. What is He talking about? What does it mean to abide in Him, especially since He is leaving? As a disciple, they might understand this better if Jesus was going to remain with them. The Jews were taught that the Messiah would remain forever (John 12:34). Here, Jesus is going away, yet He tells His disciples to abide in Him. Jesus used the example of a vine and vineyard to explain this relationship.

John 15:1 Jesus said, "*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser*." The Jews had been taught, and their scriptures teach that Israel was the vine. Psalm 80:8-9 reads, "*You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, and caused it to take deep root and it filled the land*." Israel was the vine. God brought Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. God planted Israel and caused her to grow and fill the land. Isaiah 5:1-7 describes

Israel as the vine too. God did everything possible to make Israel productive. There was a problem. Israel did not follow God. Unfortunately, it is sad to say that is still true today. God expected Israel to produce good fruit but all it produced was "*wild grapes*" (5:4). Oh, do not get me wrong, Israel has a "*zeal for God*" as Paul personally knew and wrote but again, unfortunately their zeal was "*not according to knowledge*" (Romans 10:2). Israel was supposed to be the life blood for the nations to spread the good news of God's salvation to everyone. When the way and the truth and the life of God's salvation came to His people, they rejected Him. The Jews, the nation of Israel was very religious but had no relationship with God which comes only through a living, abiding faith in Jesus the Messiah.

Jesus is now the true vine. Jesus is the source of life for all the branches. What is true life for these branches? Jesus gives the answer in verse 4. The branch must remain, stay connected, abide in the vine, that is, in Jesus and allow Jesus to live and remain in them. God the Father is the vinedresser. This is a very important role. Hopefully we have all seen pictures of vast manicured vineyards. They are a beautiful sight. It is my understanding that there is still no machine that can adequately do the work of a skilled vinedresser. All those acres of vineyards are cared for by a person, the master vinedresser. Have you seen a vineyard that did not have a vinedresser or a very bad one? It is not a pretty sight. What is the goal of a vineyard and the vinedresser? It is to produce the best and most abundant fruit. How does the vinedresser do this?

15:2 Jesus explained, "*Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit*." Jesus said His Father does two things to cause the branches to produce fruit. First, He takes away every branch that does not bear fruit. Second, every branch that does bear fruit He prunes for the sole purpose of bearing more fruit. It is important to understand this starting point. It effects how you understand everything else in this illustration. Who is the vine? Who are those who abide in the vine? Who are the branches? We know because we are told that **Jesus is the true vine**. Most people assume that the branches are the disciples. If that is true, what do you do with verse 6 that says, "*If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned*." Sound like a disciple can lose their salvation. What people have done is interpret the words "*take away*" differently. And they can be understood to mean "*lift up*." We understand that the vinedresser does everything possible to the branch to get them to produce fruit. He will get them out of the dirt, position them in the right place to get the right sunlight so they can produce fruit. But still if they do not abide in the vine, if they do not live in Jesus, they are cast out.

I believe that **the branches are all people**. Those who abide in Jesus are His disciples. Jesus said, "*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples*" (John 8:31). Here, Jesus said, "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*" (15:5) That last phrase, "*for without Me you can do nothing*," is important. It means without Jesus no one can do anything at all. Without Him there is no life. Jesus is the vine. He is life for every single person in the world whether they believe Him or not. The purpose of the vine is to give life. God is giving physical life to all people alive. There are two types of branches. Those that abide in Jesus and those that abide in darkness (John 12:46). What all people are called to do is to abide in Jesus and let Jesus abide in them. Everyone has this choice. God calls all people to abide, to remain, to live in Him. Jesus said, "*He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit*." Do you know the first fruit of the Christian life? It is salvation, having a right relationship with God. With a right relationship with God, we can bear more fruit. Without Jesus we cannot do anything. We cannot have physical life. We cannot have eternal life.

15:4 Jesus said, "*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me*." The Jewish nation is living proof of this. "*The branch cannot bear fruit of itself*." The **Jewish nation tried** this and is still trying this. So are the people in all other religions. "*They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God*" (Romans 10:2-3). Who is the righteousness of God? He is Jesus. True life is found only in Jesus, not in anyone else or anything else. These people, these branches are trying to bear fruit by themselves. This cannot happen. They may produce something that may be important to them, but it is meaningless to God. The only meaningful fruit that a branch can produce can only happen when they submit to Jesus and abide in Him. Even disciples cannot bear meaningful fruit unless they first abide in Jesus.

It all begins when **a branch choses to abide**, remain, live **in Jesus** and the branch allows Jesus to live in them. Those branches who refuse to abide in Jesus are cast out as a branch and they wither and die (John 15:6). God gave them their opportunity for life in Jesus and they turned Him down. They rejected the eternal life offered to them through faith in Jesus. At some point they are removed from the vine. The vinedresser removes all branches that will not produce any fruit. He removes the suckers that drain life from other branches. The Father knows that those suckers will not produce the fruit He is looking for. They are removed, gathered together and burned. Vinedressers today gather those branches that were removed and make them into mulch to be environmentally friendly.

15:7 Jesus said, "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you*." Do you need your sins forgiven? Ask Jesus to forgive you and He will. Do you need His Spirit to live in you? Ask and He will come and live in you forever. **What does it mean to abide in Jesus?** We are to let His words, His teachings, His commands be central to our lives. This is not optional if you want to abide in Jesus. His commands are His commands. They are not suggestions. If we are to abide in Christ, we are to do what He says. Let His words live in us. Then you will know what to pray and your prayers will be answered.

So, living the Christian life is following rules? How is this different than what the Jews are doing? **The difference is abiding in Jesus**. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, Jesus said several times, "*You have heard that it was said*." "*But I say to you*" (5:21-22, 27-28, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44). There is a big difference when we abide in Jesus. We are not following a rule the way we want to follow the rule. We **follow the rule as we abide in Jesus** and live the rule the way Jesus wants us to live out that rule in our life. The only way to know how Jesus wants us to follow Him is to abide in Him. Stay in constant communion, in constant communication with Jesus. This is what Paul means by "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This is abiding in Jesus. Society's rules do not govern us. Our relationship with Jesus does.

15:8 Jesus said, "*By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples*." Our goal is to glorify God. The more good fruit we bear, the more we glorify God. What is fruit? How do we bear fruit? The plant always bears the fruit of the plant. A good plant bears good fruit. A bad plant bears bad fruit (Luke 6:43-45). **Your actions are the fruits of your heart**. Be your own fruit inspector. Examine your actions. Are they good, honorable, glorifying God or not? They reveal whether you are living for God or for your own sinful nature. The purpose of the vine is to give life to the branches. The purpose of each branch is to abide in Jesus. The purpose of abiding in Jesus is to glorify God by bearing much fruit. Jesus is doing His part. Are you doing your part?

Questions to ask yourself: As a branch, are you abiding in Jesus?

Action to take: The work of the disciple is to hear, understand and live God's word.

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