

John 14–16, pt.9, 9.20.09

Living In Abundance – Abiding In Christ

John 15.4–11

Intro

1. Review from 15.1–3 :
 - a. God’s desire for you is to live intimately connected to Christ so that you produce much good fruit.
 - b. Your abundance/fruitfulness as a believer is determined by your abiding in Christ and your **submission** to the pruning of the Father.
 - c. God wants you to be fruitful, and He prunes you out of love. He subtracts to multiply.
2. The disciples were in a time of shaking...they needed to abide.
3. Some of you are in a shaking. We as American Christians are in a time of shaking. We must remain connected...learn to abide in Christ.

Key Idea: Remain In Christ – 15.4–5

- “Remain” – to continue on in enduring and uncompromising devotion to Christ. To be settled in Christ and to draw upon His life so that it transforms our own.
- God’s part – He will prune; my part – remain in Him. This is a command! We must intentionally abide; realizing there are all kinds of things which pull us away from our devotion to Christ.
 - Why do some not abide?
 - The parable of the seeds – Mt.13.18–23. Problems, persecutions, worries of life, and wealth are sources that sever the growth.
 - 1 Jn.2.19 – They were never truly saved.
 - Gal.3.1–7; 5.4: False teaching. They fell away from abiding in Christ through faith to trying to abide in Christ through the Law.
 - Gen.4 – Cain’s pride and selfishness;
 - Num.22 – Balaam’s pursuit of money;
 - Num.16 – Korah’s rebellion & pride.
 - What did the disciples do after Jesus rose from the dead? What did they do after he ascended? Acts 1.3; John 21 – **They hung out with Jesus & each other.** There was no fruit production. They didn’t preach, cast out

demons, perform miracles, etc. They just spent time with Jesus and each other. **They abided with Jesus and each other.** This grounded them for the road ahead.

- **I believe there is a clear correlation betw abiding in Christ and with other believers that is essential for spiritual growth.**
- Spiritual growth isn't possible w/o being intimately connected with other believers who are encouraging your faith. You and God aren't a majority. God is a majority, but you need other faithful believers in your life who are encouraging you in your walk. Just being consistent at church and intentionally involving yourself with other believers (ABFs, etc) will boost your spiritual growth. WE are the body of Christ; you, individually, are not.
- I believe the Scriptures teach by precept (Heb.10) and practice (Acts) that consistent involvement in the local church is essential for spiritual growth. The strongest Christians I know are intimately connected with a local church (local church as defined by a group of people who consistently meet together to further the God's Kingdom; it's not defined by location or building); some of those who claim to be strong Christians and are not intimately connected with local churches are posers. Be careful of anyone who claims to be a mature Christian who isn't closely connected with a local church. Be careful of those who claim to be strong believers, yet berate the church and its leadership. The Father doesn't take kindly to people beating up His Son's Bride. In my experience, these things are usually signs of rebellion and pride and possibly false teaching & immorality.
- Spiritual growth isn't possible w/o being intimately connected with other believers who are encouraging your faith. This is a part of abiding...abiding in Christ means you abide in His body.
- **Fruit is only possible when you remain connected to Jesus for a long time.**
 - Erractic and sporadic Christian discipleship is a sure indicator that there will be little fruit or anemic fruit. One season you're pressed into God and then another you've drifted away into other pursuits or you got

depressed or have a stretch of hardships or relationships were stressed, etc. Then, you find yourself burned out or bewildered.

- **Much fruit is only possible when you settle in to Christ.** This constant moving in and out of the vine will leave you weak and wanting.
 - Illust – moving a plant every 2 – 3 years. It may make the transition, but it will reflect it in its growth & fruit production.
- **Stability is needed for fruitfulness.** Not geographical stability, but stability of commitment, spiritual practices, core beliefs, revelation of our position in Christ, mind and emotions. When you are all over the map with your emotions, spiritual practices, personal decisions the fruit production will be spotty. This is a partnership with God. If we'll remain, His life will be manifested in us. BUT, we have to remain.!
- There is another side of being connected yet not abiding.
 - Illust. – My experience of being in a dry season. I see fruit, but I get tired. It's like my battery has been drained for a long time. It's not a short drain. Everything seems like a chore. I am abiding in my spiritual practices/disciplines, but I'm not abiding in the presence of God. I'll explain how to do this later.
- When we are in those dry seasons, we have the tendency to want to recapture those great spiritual experiences. But the reason we had those experiences in the first place is b/c we were in a place of abiding. (Thinking that if I read Why Revival Tarries that would jump start my walk with God.) Therefore, when I will return to the place of abiding, I will enjoy new experiences. We need to thank God for the past, but praise Him also for the present move. It's like when someone ask you, "Which phase in your children's life did you like the most?" And you say, "I enjoyed them all." So it is with our relationship with God, it changes as we abide but we should enjoy it all.
 - I've heard people over the years bemoan the condition of the church in America and say, "if we could just get back to...prayer in the schools, Bible reading, 10 Commandments." The early church didn't have those things in the pagan Roman culture, yet they changed it. How? They had been with Jesus. It's not an activity that will rekindle the fire of God, but it's abiding in a relationship that will do it. Activity that is generated from

abiding = abundance; activity that is generated from tradition/longing to recapture the past/assumption/guilt then it may equal disappointment or burnout. **Qualify:** God uses activity to reengage us, BUT the person's desires have to be in the right place.

- Example of a prayer or outreach initiative and what happens when my heart is in the right place and when it's not.
- **Some of the Fruit of Abiding (How you know you are abiding in the Vine; next week – How to Abide in the Vine)**
 - a. *Assurance of salvation; that you are in Jesus (14.1–11, 20)*
 - i. Cliff's message of assurance of salvation & pursuing a relationship with Jesus.
 - b. The very works of Jesus are demonstrated in your life (14.12; 15.12). Love for others; meeting people's needs; mercy; justice; power; salvation; blessing.
 - c. *Answered prayer (14.13f., 15.7)*
 - i. The key to Jesus' ministry. He was one with the Father & the Father with Him. He didn't have to ask "should I" or "shouldn't I" but rather He just did. When we truly abide then everything I ask in prayer is exactly what God wants. I know I am asking His will. The life of the vine is flowing through me.
 - d. Walking in truth (14.17; 16.13ff)
 - e. The tangible presence of God in your life (14.21, 23)
 - f. Peace of mind & heart (14.27)
 - g. Persecution, resistance and rejection from the world (15.18–21)
 - h. Testifying about Jesus (15.27)
 - i. You won't abandon your faith, but will endure to the end (16.1–3).
 - j. *The conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment by the HS (16.8–11).*
 - k. Joy (15.11; 16.24)
 - l. *The personality of God is manifest in our lives:*
 - i. Ex – people who moved to the area & mention the strong Christian witness they see in the work place and community.
 - ii. Fruit of the Spirit – Gal.5.22f

- iii. Character of God – Ex.33.18–34.7. God showed Moses exactly who he was. **The Father’s genetic code flows through us as we abide in Christ.** It is evidenced by our “looks.” The “looks” of compassion, mercy, enduring patience, unending love, faithfulness, and lavish forgiveness. Anyone who says, “The God of the OT or Bible is harsh and cruel” neither knows the God of the Bible or the God of our lives.
 1. People who abide in Christ demonstrate these attributes
 2. If these things aren’t obvious, then there is a connection problem with the Vine.
- Conclusion – When we abide Gal.4.19, “until Christ is fully developed in you.”
- What does it mean “we can’t bear fruit w/o abiding in Christ”?
 - A non-believer or backslidden Christian can do some good and worthwhile things, but is it lasting/eternal fruit. For instance, an unbelieving politician, teacher and engineer do things that are a positive benefit to millions.
 - Consider the lot of the disciples before they met Christ. They were fishermen, tax collector, etc. Just ordinary men taking care of their families, contributing to society, living according to the Law, etc. They were doing good.
 - Once they became followers of Christ and after Jesus’ resurrection, they were different men. They became world changers. They still contributed to society and took care of their families, but the influence of their lives was magnified beyond anything they could naturally do. Tons of fruit poured through them as they abided in Christ. The same is true for us! As we abide in Christ, everlasting fruit is born that will impact lives well beyond what we could ever imagine.
 - Joy in “Funny Girl”. She encouraged a lady who lived out her faith while participating in the play.
 - Don Piper’s story of the cloud of witnesses who met him at the gates of Heaven. The two young men who died young, yet their

lives were a witness to him to continue on in the faith. The fruit of their lives had influenced Don's life.

- Young former Muslim girl who came to faith in Christ. She is testifying to the transforming reality of Jesus in her life. The courts are deciding whether she must go home, though her father has threatened to murder her based upon the teachings of the Koran.

Conclusion: Abiding in Christ is the source of a fruitful life.

Spend time in John 15.4-6.

- Are you truly abiding in Christ?
- Do you see fruit?
- Is there consistency in your abiding in Christ?
- What is the Lord calling you to do?