

ABIDE IN JESUS | HIS INVITATION

BY THE HOLLIDAY DRIVE ABIDERS

ABIDE

to remain or dwell,
to continue in a place,
to wait for

IN

enclosed or
surrounded by
something else

JESUS

Creator of all,
Lover of my soul

JOHN 15:1-11 (ESV)

Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

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.

If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. **These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”**

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

What things did He speak? How do we receive His joy? How can our joy be full? How does this apply to me?

We have been looking to answer these questions. **Our conclusion is: Our Christian life depends entirely on our abiding IN Jesus.**

Jesus (the one who designed us) said, “If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

“God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other.” C.S. Lewis

“We have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides IN love abides IN God, and God abides IN him.” 1John 4:16

It is perplexing and sobering that we the authors, as long-time followers of Jesus, had not until recently understood the importance of Jesus’ commands in John 15:1-11. We are assuming that many other followers of Christ have not considered the depth of our need to abide IN Jesus.

IN Jesus, we receive forgiveness for our sins, life with God forever, and “every spiritual blessing”.

Our salvation, forgiveness, spiritual gifts, transformation, fruitfulness and all of God’s blessings are not given apart from Jesus. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ.***” Ephesians 1:3. **God does not give us a bundle of blessings which we can carry away from Him.** No, God offers us only Himself IN Jesus; not `a la carte, but as the whole, undividable, and only Savior. This is great news! As we remain IN HIM, His Holy Spirit will guide, empower, teach, bless and protect us in order for our lives to bear fruit.

The next reasonable questions are, “How do I abide in Christ? What are my next steps?” Christ declares in John 14:6 “*I am the way and the truth and the life.* No one comes to the Father except *through me.*” This Scripture’s message is vital. Yet, if you are like us, you’d like more specific direction.

Why doesn’t God make “the steps” more obvious? Could it be that God wants you discover these things by coming to Him, abiding In Him, and

staying there? You are the unique one that He created for His pleasure and your good. He wants to answer your questions in person.

Our prayer is that this study will be a helpful tool to transform your relationship with Jesus. In other words, we pray that you will abide in Him as you encounter this writing. Notice this really important distinction. If you abide in Him, the love and power of God will be delivered from God (the Gardener), through Jesus (the Vine), and to you His Follower (the branch). This is God's way to keep you in His purpose. If you merely read about abiding in Christ, no real change will take place. How can you abide when you haven't read the study yet? God has already invited you to abide in Christ. Let's accept His invitation by praying: "Father God, help me to abide IN Christ."

We can say with complete confidence that your prayer will be answered!

Our prayer is that as we (the authors) abide IN Christ, we will communicate God's truths and prompt believers in Christ to receive all that He offers. And, we pray that those who don't trust Jesus as their Lord will understand who He truly is and will trust Him. We pray that you would come to Him, remain in Him, bear much fruit and receive the joy that God desires to share with us.

Let's seek Him together, settling for nothing less than God's all for us. Because of Jesus' work on the cross, He is ready to receive us with joy and make our joy full! As we abide IN Him, Jesus will bear beautiful fruit through each of us for His glory and our joy.

Jesus said, "Because I live, you also will live. **In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.**" John 14:19-20

In Him,
The Holliday Drive Abiders

This devotional was prompted by Andrew Murray's book, "Abide in Christ". After working through "Abide in Christ", each of the authors heard Murray's clear communication of God's deep truths and were changed as we chose to abide IN Jesus. We are eternally thankful for the fruit that God continues to grow in our lives because of Murray's work in Christ, just as it has in the lives of others for over 150 years since its initial publishing.

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Each time you see a blue door icon, please participate in the activity noted.



Each time you see a grey door icon, please join us in prayer.

lov·ing
/'ləvɪŋg/

adjective

1. feeling or showing love or great care.
synonyms: affectionate, fond, devoted, adoring, doting, solicitous, demonstrative;

noun

1. the demonstration of love or great care.

CHAPTER ONE: A LOVING COMMAND

Watchman Nee wrote, “Outside of Christ, I am only a sinner; in Christ, I am saved. Outside of Christ, I am empty; in Christ, I am full. Outside of Christ, I am weak; in Christ, I am strong. Outside of Christ, I cannot; in Christ, I am more than able. Outside of Christ, I have been defeated; in Christ, I am already victorious. How meaningful are the words, ‘In Christ.’”



Please refer back to the scripture before the introduction (John 15:1-11). As you read it, circle the word “in” each time it appears.

Throughout Scripture we are lovingly commanded to abide in Christ. In this way, the kind Father guides us to a full life IN Him – His peace - His shalom. As we abide in Him, we experience salvation, forgiveness, spiritual powers, and all of God’s blessings. These gifts are contingent upon Jesus, they are **In** Jesus, they cannot be separated from Him.

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ **in** God.” Colossians 3:3

“In him we live and move and have our being’.” Acts 17:28

GOD’S CLEAR MESSAGE

Trace’s Story:

“Early in my Christian life, I believed Jesus was with me. I saw Him as available when I needed help. Later I realized the converse as being more true – I was with Jesus. He was leading, even when I did not recognize it. Today, the Lord is showing me what it means to live in Him and Him in me.”



As you read the following scriptures, please go slow. Don’t skim. Many of us have read the scriptures below multiple times and have missed a deep message.

Underline the phrases “in Him” and “by Him” and any other phrase that states Jesus’ position as the sole-provider. The first two verses are completed as examples.

“I am the way, the truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by me.” John 14:6

“And this is the testimony, God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of

God does not have life.” 1John 5:11-12

“For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” Colossians 1:19-20

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace...” Ephesians 2:13-14

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:13-14

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Colossians 3:3-4

“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 15:5

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.” Ephesians 1:3-6

“Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength.” Isaiah 45:24

“That I may be found in Him, having the righteousness of God.” Philippians 3:9

“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:12

What is the big message conveyed through the scriptures on page 3?

On page 3, the scripture in Ephesians 1 states, “For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world...” The sentence would make sense without the phrase, “in Him”. Why do you think the author adds the phrase, “in Him”?

What is the difference between “in Christ” and “from Christ”?

God is speaking to you through His Word. Choose one or more scriptures from page 2 or 3 that stand out to you. Write the scripture(s) and describe the message you are hearing.

EVERY BLESSING IS IN CHRIST

God does not give us a bundle of blessings which we can carry away from Him. No, God offers us only Himself IN Jesus; not `a la carte, but as the whole, undividable, and only Savior. All the benefits, blessings, and gifts of God are found IN Christ. They are not offered apart from Him. “As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me” (John 15:4) and, “for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers.” (John 15:5-6). This truth creates a frightening situation for the believer. When we wander from Christ, we are powerless to do Christ-like acts. Praise God, He has provided for us: when we abide in Him, we bear eternal fruit that is willed and empowered by Jesus.



For you personally, what does it look like when you are not abiding in Jesus?

For you personally, what does abiding in Jesus look like?

If you are not sure, ask Jesus to show you by writing a prayer below:

Adrien's Story:

"A few months ago, my wife and I decided to read Andrew Murray's "Abide in Christ" together in the evenings, a chapter at a time. As we were reading about how abiding is rest for our souls, I received a strong picture in my mind what it would be like to abide in Christ physically – to approach Him as a kid would, crawling on Daddy's lap. I went to bed with that thought in mind. As is unfortunately too common, I woke up in the middle of the night and found myself unable to return to sleep. My normal routine would be to take a sleeping pill and try to rest the remainder of the night. But this night I was trying to imagine crawling up into my Daddy's lap; which was hard for me. I tried to get there but I couldn't. But I did feel a strong conviction to not take the sleeping pill. So, I didn't.

Now I am lying in bed, still not sleeping. About fifteen minutes goes by, and my five-year-old comes into the bedroom and looks for me on my side of the bed. He doesn't come in often, but when he does, it is usually due to a nightmare. I wish I could say that my responses in the past have been great, but they haven't. Because I regularly struggle sleeping, it is hard for me to be gracious after being woken. This particular night, I knew what I was trying to get from my Daddy I was supposed to give to my son. So, I took him out to the living room couch and held him close, loving him unconditionally, without anything expected in return. If I had taken the sleeping pill, I would not have been attentive to my son. It was awesome for him and me. It gave me an experience to "give it" before I "got it" and I know it was the Lord's doing. I don't know exactly why He didn't grant that comfort firsthand, but he allowed me to experience it with my boy and for that I am grateful."

Notice what happened in Adrien's story. He abided in Jesus and waited in expectation for God to work. However, Adrien's expected blessing (peaceful sleep) did not happen. Still, God's love did flow through Adrien and bore the fruit of love. God the Father, Adrien, and Adrien's son were blessed because he chose to abide in Jesus.



Why are we commanded by Jesus to abide in Him? Why wouldn't Jesus merely recommend it?

ABIDING LEADS TO THANKSGIVING AND WORSHIP

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live IN HIM, rooted and built up IN HIM, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” Colossians 2:6-7

Thanksgiving rises as we receive and understand the depth of God’s love for us. He is the source! Not just once but continually. We overflow with thankfulness when we remember how needy we are and how great His provision is. Worship extends from our hearts and minds to our hands and voices when we KNOW that God’s love pursues us. How can we do anything other than shout praise and thanksgiving?



Please pray this prayer, and as always, feel free to alter our suggested prayers to make it uniquely yours.

“Father God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I yield my kingdom to yours. Your Kingdom is perfect, mine is broken. Forgive me for trying to be king of a broken kingdom, for trying to meet my needs apart from you. I accept your invitation to be IN you – receiving everything you want to give me. Strengthen me to remain IN you and bear the fruit that is your will. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.”



What questions do you have?

Turn your questions into prayers - ask our loving Father to answer them.

un·re·mark·a·ble
/ˌʌnrəˈmɑrkəb(ə)l/

adjective
not particularly interesting or surprising

CHAPTER TWO: UNREMARKABLE CHRISTIANITY

Let's start by reminding ourselves who it is we are called to abide in.

King David wrote in Psalm 8:

“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

Our Lord has put us in position to have a remarkable life as we are in fellowship with Him. Is your relationship with Christ remarkable, extraordinary, exceptional, amazing!? Many Christians desire to wholeheartedly say, “Yes!” But often, we quietly mumble, “No.”

There is no desire to offend anyone with this question. The hope is to awaken us Christians from sleep-walking through routines and unremarkable Christian motions. The Creator of all things is inviting us into a REMARKABLE life. Let's expect the Holy Spirit to give us a brightness and vibrancy as we abide in Jesus.



Stop for a second. If you are ready, write a prayer to God that you are opening yourself to the remarkable life – HIM. He loves that.

OUR SITUATION

When some of you first responded to Christ's call, you experienced the miracle of God awakening you as you obeyed his first command to come to Him. Your lives blossomed as you freshly experienced his grace and truth. Many of you have been miraculously changed as the Holy Spirit's power removed you from terrible situations while forgiving you of terrible sins. Some of you had less obvious sins; yet, God made you aware of your disobedience, striving to create your own kingdoms. You too experienced the *salvation of our Savior. Even though we have all come from different categories of sin and brokenness, none of us have regretted coming to Him.*

And, since then, you have had disappointments. You have had seasons of increased sin, joylessness, and feeble connections with your Savior. **Why? Because you wandered from Him.** Jesus commands that, not only must you come to Him, you must stay **in Him**. Please do not miss the intentional use of the word "must." Even though Jesus Christ is the creator, sustainer, and redeemer of the UNIVERSE, while He was in human flesh, He needed to abide IN the Father. Likewise, to receive the remarkable life that is offered to you, you must abide in Jesus.



What is your response when you read that your times of spiritual dryness and disconnection are because you wandered away from Him?

Do you agree or do you think it is caused by something else? What is the something else?

JESUS AS A MAN NEEDED TO ABIDE ALSO

Isn't it stunning that the creator of the universe needed to abide with the Father through prayer?

“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”
Mark 1:35.

In the garden of Gethsemane, hours before Jesus’ crucifixion: “And going a little farther Jesus fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” Matthew 26:39

Jesus said to Phillip, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? **The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,** or else believe on account of the works themselves. John 14:8-11.

If Jesus needed to abide, it is clear that we need to also!



What truths about God are highlighted in the scriptures above? List as many as you can.

INVITATION TO REMARKABLE AND ABUNDANT JOY

Good news! Hear God’s promise from John 15. Please don’t skim, absorb God’s invitation to you.

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. **These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.**”

Romans 12:2

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Anne's Story:

"I clearly remember the bubbling-over joy I experienced the day I was prompted by the Lord's Prayer to be forgiven and then to forgive. I wrote out every person I could think of to forgive; and Christ gave me His forgiveness to extend to them. My joy was full. I skipped around all afternoon."



In what ways do you experience the Lord's joy?

How are those experiences connected to abiding in Jesus?

What is hindering you from receiving the Lord's full joy?

Frank's Story:

"In my morning quiet time, I pray that I will abide in Jesus that day. I visualize Him holding me in His arms. If Jesus is holding me close then I will be where I am supposed to be, doing what He wants me to do, and doing it His way. The Holy Spirit is guiding me, teaching me, protecting me and disciplining me.

During the day when I remember to intentionally ask Jesus to hold onto me and lead me, the different chores of the day, which may not have been scheduled, seem to fall into place in orderly fashion. I get more accomplished and best of all, I receive the Lord's joy and don't feel stress as I go through the day."



Please write below what you are feeling as a transparent prayer to God. He loves to hear your honest praise, lament, frustrations and requests.

Write-out below John 15:11, *"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."*



Pray and ask Him to show you His love for you. Ask Him to show you what is hindering your abiding. Jesus loves you more than you can comprehend. Ask Him to help you receive His love.

Let's receive this remarkable life where Christ's love flows through us by His Spirit in order to love others and bear eternal spiritual fruit. His joy is in us and is full!

May God bless you as you abide in Him!

CHAPTER THREE:
HOW DO WE ABIDE?

how
/hou/

adverb
in what way or manner; by
what means.

Before we answer the question, let's be reminded of our position.

Before the Throne of God By Charitie Lees Bancroft (1841-1892)

"Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea, a great High Priest whose name is "Love," who ever lives and pleads for me. My name is graven on His hands, my name is written on His heart; I know that while in heaven He stands no tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see Him there who made an end to all my sin. Because the sinless savior died, my sinful soul is counted free; for God, the just, is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there! The risen Lamb, my perfect, spotless Righteousness, the great unchangeable I AM, the King of glory and of grace! **One with Himself I cannot die, my soul is purchased by His blood; my life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ, my savior and my God."**

Abiding invites us to give up our false sense of independence and self-sufficiency. Stop trying to be king. Accept His invitation into His kingdom IN Him – loving, resting, remaining, obeying and bearing fruit.

Abiding is active. Because we can't serve two masters, we must stop running around serving ourselves. Recognizing that we are incapable of being a righteous and wise lord, let's give up our feeble kingdom for His perfect Kingdom. In humility and gratitude, let's accept his unbelievable invitation to be in continual **INT**imacy with Him – the perfect and eternal King.

In this abiding relationship, we rest in Him, listen to Him, and through His power, we obey His Word for His glory, our good, and the good of others.

WE ARE DEPENDENT

John the Baptist said, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven." John 3:27

The Apostle Paul wrote, "For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together.**" Colossians 1:16-17

Jesus said, "Apart from me, you can do nothing." John 15:5

Paul Miller wrote: "If you are not praying, then you are quietly confident that time, money, and talent are all you need in life. You'll always be a little too tired, a little too busy. But, if like Jesus you realize you can't do life on your own, then no matter how busy, no matter how tired you are, you will find the time to pray."



Have you come to the point in your life where you know you are truly dependent on God?

If not, write out a prayer of confession for the times when you are depending on yourself. Accept His invitation to be your King.

IN HUMILITY WE YIELD OUR KINGDOM

Abiding in Christ is simply humbling oneself to be empowered by Jesus and staying there. This is the first step to position our hearts and minds to allow Him IN us and us IN Him.

Jesus starts his sermon on the mount with, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Matthew 5:3. Jesus is teaching us that the simple act of humbling ourselves will position us to receive Him and His Kingdom.

Many Christians understand the extent to which Jesus has claimed their life. Paul writes "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" (Galatians 2:20) We know this is our spiritual status, yet we struggle to consistently live-out, "I no longer live, Christ lives in me". We struggle because our "I" wants to be king. We think we are sufficient without Him.

Jesus said in prayer to the Father, “Not my will but yours be done,” and “Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” Oh God, help us! Our kingdoms are pathetic – Yours is perfect and forever.



Please pray this prayer with us again. Feel free to modify it to make it yours: personal and transparent.

“Father God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I yield my kingdom to yours. Your Kingdom is perfect, mine is broken. Forgive me for trying to be king of a broken kingdom. I accept your invitation to be IN you – receiving everything you want to give. Strengthen me to stay IN you and bear the fruit that is your will. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.”



What is keeping you from a deeper yielding to Christ?

Please write your prayer to God to help you **to be willing** to identify and remove any barriers that hinder your full submission to His Kingdom. He loves when we give our will to Him. He is kind, gentle, and gracious with our submission.

Now, we are in a position to abide...

REST IN HIS LOVE

Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come **in to him** and eat with him, and he with me.” Revelation 3:20

Jesus said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28

Rest for our souls! Is that not our deep common need?

Notice that attached to God's promise of rest, there is only the condition of yielding to His direction and teaching. He assures us that He is gentle and humble. To trumpet the promise, He says a second time that He will give us rest.

Someone from a crowd asked Jesus, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom he has sent." John 6:28-29

Our first and daily repeated "work" to abide in Christ is believing that God sent Jesus to remove us from the dominion of Satan and establish us in his perfect and loving Kingdom – IN Him.



What phrase or thought from above stands out to you?

Write your abiding prayer of resting in Christ. Ask Him to guide you to "work" first in believing that He is what He says He is.

REMAIN IN HIS LOVE, LISTEN TO HIM, OBEY HIS DIRECTION

As we stay in His easy yoke, the gentle creator of the universe guides us to work in His will. The yoke is only difficult when we resist it. His yoke is easy because He is the King – He does not need our physical or mental power to accomplish His will. He is lovingly inviting us to participate with Him. We pray that you hear that truth: The Creator and Sustainer of the universe is inviting us to participate in His holy and loving pursuits!

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1Thess 5:16

"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work."
2Corinthians 9:8

BEARING FRUIT

Jesus said, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

Leslie’s Story:

“As I entered the hallway to pick up my boys from school, there was the woman: big, tall and loud. I was glad that I was near the back of the line and not next to her. For the harvest party, she brought in big poster-board witches. I hate witches. I steered clear of her most days.

One morning, during my prayer time, I was asking God who He wanted me to love that day. Her face came quickly to mind. Hmm... “Really God?” I let it sink in. And then I asked, “How?” I felt like God told me to buy her long-johns.

“Nope.” This is my usual response to some of things He asks me to do. But, time and again, what He asks, He supplies. He often asks me to forgive people that I have no forgiveness toward. When I do what He asks, His forgiveness flows through me, my bitterness lifts and is replaced with joy. So, with trepidation, I said “yes” to this crazy long-johns scheme.

I thought, “OK God, if you want me to buy her long-johns. I guess that is what I will do.” I felt like I should buy nice ones so I headed out to REI. When I arrived at the store there was a big rounder of choices. Because this woman is full-figured, I didn’t want to offend her by buying a size too big or too small. I asked God to show me. I kept looking, asking Him to show me the pair. When I saw the XL purple Patagonia long-johns, I just knew they were the right choice.

It was Christmas season. Since I love all things wrapped, I took some time to make the gift look special, maybe then she wouldn’t think I was crazy. When I saw her at school, I awkwardly handed her the gift and told her that God wanted me to give her this. She looked puzzled.

As she opened the gift, her countenance softened. This strong, hard woman explained that she had been working nights on the cold winter runway for FedEx. She had been freezing. And through tears, she smiled and said, “Purple is my favorite color!”

Leslie and this woman now know that God loves us specifically and individually. They will never forget. This message of truth to them is the fruit of a woman abiding in His love, listening and obeying. Praise God!

He cares for those who are hurting and cold. He is inviting us to come IN HIM to do the same!



As you abide and pray, is God repeating messages or commands for you to do something specific? If so, what?

If not, pray that God will help you hear his direction. One starting point is asking Him whom he wants you to love today. Abide In Him, yield your kingdom to His, rest and ask.

CHAPTER FOUR:
I STRUGGLE TO ABIDE
OCCASIONALLY.
HOW CAN I ABIDE
CONTINUALLY?

con·tin·u·al
/kən'tiny(oo)əl/

adjective
frequently recurring; always happening

Let's be reminded about the Author and Creator of ALL. **He is the one who is continual.**

"And this is what He promised us--eternal life." 1 John 2:25

"But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the Lord, and He answered me from His holy hill."
Psalm 3:3

*"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God **in** Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:38-39

ALWAYS; WITHOUT CEASING; IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

*"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; **for this is the will of God IN Christ Jesus** for you."*
1Thessalonians 5:17-18

There are few places in the bible where the will of God is stated more directly: "For this is the will of God IN Christ Jesus for you."

Rejoice always...pray without ceasing.... give thanks in all circumstances.

Obviously, God will bear plentiful fruit through us while we are always abiding in Christ - rejoicing, praying and giving thanks. And, if you are like most of us, at times, calls for spiritual consistency like this frustrate us because we feel we cannot do it.

THE POWER FOR "ALWAYS"

Good news! God is not asking us to be the driving force to accomplish His will. He is asking us to yield to the power and consistency that He offers. He (the vine) will bear fruit through us (the branch) by His Holy Spirit.

*"It is **because of Him** you are in Christ Jesus."* 1Cor1:30;

*"**It is God who establishes** us with you in Christ."* 2Cor1:21;

*"And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you** will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."* Philippians 1:6



Who is the power behind the invitation to abide continually? _____

Pick one of the previous scriptures and write it out – insert your name in place of the pronoun “you” or “us”.



Receive this prayer from the Apostle Paul:

*“We have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. **He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom** we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:9-13*



From whom is the power to fulfill this prayer? _____

Please go back through the scripture above and underline all the blessings Paul is praying for us to receive.

Slow yourself for a moment and write a prayer of thanksgiving to God for lovingly calling you to Himself. Be at peace in His work on your behalf. Thank Him for drawing you to Himself and for being the power - completing His workmanship in you. *“For we are his workmanship, created **IN Christ Jesus** for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10*

HINDRANCES

As you read the scripture below, pray that God will show you things that are hindering you from abiding IN Christ without ceasing. Because this scripture is very familiar to many of us, we are at risk of skimming and missing fresh words from our Lord. Digest each phrase, abide in His love – listen and follow His direction.

The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13)

“That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about Him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.”

The Parable of the Sower Explained

“Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”



What did God illuminate to you in this scripture?

ENCOURAGEMENT

From the firm foundation of God’s power to establish us IN Him, let’s rest and listen. Andrew Murray wrote (paraphrased):

“Many of us admit that it is a blessed privilege and duty to abide in Christ, and yet we question: Is it possible, a life of unbroken fellowship with the Savior?” Maybe saintly Christians will attain it; but, for the large majority of disciples, whose life is so fully occupied, it can hardly be expected. Yet, the more they hear of this life, the deeper their sense of its glory – there is nothing they would not sacrifice to partake of it. But they are too weak, too unfaithful – they never can grasp it.

Dear souls! **Abiding in Christ is meant for the weak!** It is so beautifully suited to our feebleness. Abiding is not the doing of some great thing and does not demand that we first lead a holy and devoted life. No, it is simply weakness entrusting itself to the Mighty One to be kept – the unfaithful person casting himself on The One who is trustworthy and perfect. Abiding in Him is not a work that we have to do to enjoy His salvation. It is consenting to let Him do all for us, and in us, and through us. It is a work He does for us – the fruit and power of His redeeming love. Our part is simply to yield, to trust, and to wait for what He has planned to perform.

Abide in me: These words are not the Law of Moses, demanding behaviors than cannot be performed. These words are the command of love, a promise of a different shape. Think of this until all feelings of burden and fear and despair go away, and the first thought that comes to you as you hear of abiding in Jesus is one of bright and joyful hope – it is for me, you say, I know I will enjoy it. **You are not under the law, with its unstoppable Do, but under grace, the blessed gift of believing what Christ will do.”**



From the reading above, what phrases or thoughts stand-out to you?

Why do you think these phrases or thoughts are affecting you?

If God is the one who is “responsible” for establishing us In Him, what is your role?

EACH MOMENT

Andrew Murray has helped so many believers to understand the loving invitation to abide In Jesus. He writes, “And to all who desire to learn the blessed art of living only a moment at a time, we want to say: The way to learn it is to exercise yourself in living in the present moment. Each time your attention is free to occupy itself with the thought of Jesus - whether it be with time to think and pray, or only for a few passing seconds - let your first thought be to say: Now, at this moment, I do abide in Jesus. Use such time, not in vain regrets that you have not been abiding fully, or still more hurtful fears that you will not be able to abide, but just at once take the position the Father has given you: “I am in Christ; this is the place God has given me. I accept it; here I rest; I do now abide in Jesus.” This is the way to learn to **abide continually.**”

How can we abide continually? By letting God’s love for us do its work in and through us. Our abiding is a work that God undertakes. Let’s yield to His work of empowering us to abide.

*“**Because of Him you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” 1Corinthians 1:30-31*

*“**It is God who establishes us with you in Christ**, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” 2Corinthians 1:21-22*



Write your prayer of rejoicing and thanksgiving. Ask God to empower you to abide IN Jesus and bear much fruit:

hap·pen
/'hæpən/

verb
take place; occur

CHAPTER FIVE:
**WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN WE ABIDE
IN JESUS?**

Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend's song *In Christ Alone* gives us answers:

In Christ alone, my hope is found
He is my light, my strength my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all –
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry, to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from his hand
Til he returns or calls me home
Here **in** the power of Christ I'll stand."

Scripture also gives us guidance.

Psalm 1:1-4

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away."

Galatians 5:22

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."

What happens when we abide?

We love.

"... love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

We rest – knowing that God is in control.

Bob's Story:

“As I was on my way to meet a friend, my friend's blind-spot was circling in my mind. I was thinking, “He doesn't see the damage he is doing.” This happens frequently with me. The formula is this: God reveals to me a sin or blind-spot in my life, then He lovingly guides me to address it. Then, I see the same issue in everyone else. Out of sincere desire to help, I want to say something. But, often, my sincere desire to help is not helpful. Knowing that I have this challenge, I was wrestling with the decision to say something or not. Thankfully, God prompted me to simply come into Him and rest – Jesus is my friend's Lord and deliverer, not me.

As I was entering the cafe to meet my friend, I was “right” with my friend and resting in Jesus. I was there only to be a friend and let him invite me into his life on his terms. As we were talking, my friend said, “God has been showing me some stuff in my life that I need to change.” And, he described to me the things which I was concerned about. The same sin I was fleeing from. He asked me to pray for him. He did not ask me for further help. Praise God! If I had not taken my concern to Jesus and remained in Him, I would have said too much. God is perfectly capable to care for my friend, bearing fruit in his life without my help.”

We pray.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1Th 5:16-18

Take a moment now and pray – silently, out-loud, or written.

Our prayers are answered.

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples”. John 15:7-8

Leslie's Story:

"God healed me. Even saying the words was odd to me at first. Why? I think I'm skeptical.

I went to a prayer training seminar at our church. Before it started, I had to go into the kitchen to see what Ben was cooking up for the meal. He is not only a great cook but a varsity encourager. As I looked around, I realized there was not one thing there that I could eat. I had allergies to food. Lots of different food.

It started in high school, I would get sick and throw up, become dizzy and my balance was off. It turned out that my sinuses were severely clogged. The doctor tried to irrigate them but my face just filled with water. He sent me home with some solution to help break it up. The next day, everything came out. This started a 34-year struggle with sinus infections.

For 10 years, I had infections chronically. When our second son was born, he had terrible ear infections. After he had ear tubes, he got sinus infections. I thought it was just part of our physiology. The doctors wanted to put our little 2-year-old son on low-level antibiotics full time. I knew there had to be a better way. I went to my women's bible study and asked them to pray. All the sudden, I realized the timing of his infections connected to the time when I had started him on dairy. I took him off dairy products and he was a new boy! To help him accept his allergy, I took the whole family off dairy. Two weeks later, I went to my aunt's house and had lasagna. Sure enough, I got a sinus infection. I, too, had a problem with dairy.

So, I eliminated it from our diet. There have been innumerable awkward experiences at friend's houses explaining why we couldn't eat the wonderful meal that had been lovingly made for us. It was hard but it really helped my health. Instead of 8 or more sinus infections a year, I only got 2 or 3.

Each infection came with antibiotics. 30 years of antibiotics. At one point, John told me my constant fatigue was not normal. A few hours after every meal, I just wanted to go to sleep. I went to a bunch of different doctors and did elimination diets and all kinds of other treatments. I realized by trial and error, that I really had trouble with yeast, tomatoes and lemons. For the last few years, I have stayed away from those too. I actually felt better.

But, I still could not fellowship over food. I didn't like going out to dinner,

even to celebrate an event, because I got really sick. Every time.

Two months ago, I had a post holiday party sinus infection. Frank Brown prayed for me and thought that it was a spiritual attack. I had never thought about it that way, I just always thought it was physical.

So, at the prayer training, after fasting, I really wanted to eat and celebrate with everyone. I went upstairs and these beautiful strangers prayed for me. Here's where it gets weird. I got a quick mental picture in my mind of what I can only describe as a demon tape worm in my stomach. Not scary but just right at home. I told the prayer team about it and they didn't think I was completely crazy. They prayed in the name of Jesus Christ for the demon to be gone. I told them I was going to go downstairs and eat and to please keep praying because I am afraid of food.

I went back downstairs to the seminar for a question and answer time and my neck started feeling like my lymph nodes were being flushed - contracting and releasing.

I went and ate. Biscuits and gravy! (Homemade dairy goodness!) I went to Panera the next day and had a sandwich with cheese and tomatoes. I baked bread and ate almost the whole loaf. I went to a Royals game and had a hot dog with everything on it. (So good!) I ate ice cream sandwiches. I went out to dinner with an old friend last night and ate everything that was ordered. It was so much fun to participate in the meal.

People have asked if it has stuck and if I'm still healed. Even in my own doubts, I am.

Praise God and Thank You. Thank You. Thank You.

It is a miracle. My husband says I actually breathe through my nose when I sleep. I have so much energy! I always wondered how people got so much done. The funniest part is I had not realized how emotionally taxing it was navigating what food I could eat and how to respond to friends when I couldn't eat. I feel free."



Since you have accepted the opportunity to abide in Christ, what have you been praying for?

Give Him praise for the answered prayers!

Regarding the unanswered prayers, take a moment, accept His invitation to Abide In Him, seek His will for the situation, pray and petition Him again. He has promised, *“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”* John 15:7

What happens when we abide in Jesus?

We have hopeful joy.

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11

Brother Lawrence’s Story from “Practicing the Presence of God”

“I keep my attention on God in a simple, loving way. This is my soul’s secret experience of the actual, unceasing presence of God...”

I am sure my soul has been with God for more than thirty years. I consider God my King, against whom I have committed all sorts of crimes. Confessing my sins to Him and asking Him to forgive me, I place myself in His hands to do whatever He pleases with me.

*This King, who is full of goodness and mercy, doesn’t punish me. Rather, He embraces me lovingly and invites me to eat at His table. **He serves me Himself** and gives me the keys to His treasury, treating me as His favorite. He convenes with me without mentioning either my sins or His forgiveness. My former habits are seemingly forgotten. Although I beg Him to do whatever He wishes with me, He does nothing but caress me. This is what being in His holy presence is like.*

My day-to-day life consists of giving God my simple, loving attention. If I am distracted, He calls me back in tones that are supernaturally beautiful.”

We have difficult times while God prunes us.

“Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” John 15:2

We will serve the needy.

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

We are not sinless, but we sin less and less.

“You, however, are controlled not by the flesh, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.” Romans 8:9

We have supernatural “light”.

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12.

We are generous.

“for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.”

2 Corinthians 8:2

We are protected during the storms of life.

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

Jeremiah 17:7-8

We stop striving to be accepted by God because we are already accepted as His adopted children.

“In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.” Ephesians 1:5

We stand firm when challenged by evil.

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.” Ephesians 6:13

We make disciples.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

John's Story:

"As I was praying about Jesus' invitation to abide in Him, I was asking Him what it means to bear fruit. Jesus is promising that I would bear fruit if I abide in Him. How will I know when fruit is growing? Jesus' final earthly command to us was to "Go make disciples". It is obviously His will for us to do so. My next thought was, "Who am I encouraging to mature as a disciple of Christ?" At the time, I was not reaching out to anyone in an intentional way, but I was meeting irregularly with several young Christian business owners to discuss challenges and ideas. God led me to gather all of them together regularly to discuss how to abide in Christ through our roles as business owners and aspiring Godly leaders. We discuss how our goals, hiring and firing, taking business risk, and family-work-church priorities need to be processed through the command for us to abide in Christ. Our decisions in the work-place are not apart from Christ.

God has blessed our times together. We have been loving each other through this intentional format and are confident that our decisions to abide in Christ through business will continue to bear fruit."

What does Godly fruit look like?

It looks like the church uniting IN Christ to glorify Him so that the world may know that Jesus was sent by the Father!

Jesus prayed:

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" John 17:20-23

As we read the list of behaviors and results of abiding in Christ, we will notice that some don't yet apply to us. It can be frustrating when we notice that our fruit is growing slow. Good news! Understanding this reality will cause the repentance, humility and awareness that we need. Let's turn to Jesus and abide in Him. His power is made perfect in our weakness.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1John 1:8-9

And, when we do abide, we get out of our own way and let the creator of the universe grow fruit through us!



How would you describe the results of abiding in Jesus?

What questions do you have?

Take the answers to the previous two questions and turn them into a written prayer to God.

Ask God to bring to your mind who he wants you to disciple (pray for, meet with, and encourage to abide in Christ).

Who comes to mind?

What is an action you can take?

pas·sive
/'pasiv/

adjective
accepting or allowing what happens or what others
do, without active response or resistance

CHAPTER SIX: **IS ABIDING PASSIVE?**

Before we address the question, let's pray with King David through Psalm 145. Pray as you read:

*"I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.*

*One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.
They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

*The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The Lord is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made."*



What does King David mean when he says that God's greatness is unsearchable?

Guided by Psalm 145, list at least four of God's attributes.



Please pray with us:

"Father God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I yield my kingdom to yours. Your Kingdom is perfect, mine is broken. Forgive me for trying to be king. I accept your invitation to be IN you – receiving everything you want to give. Strengthen me to stay IN you and bear the fruit that is your will. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

IS ABIDING PASSIVE?

Absolutely not.

Then the people said to Jesus, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” He answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” John 6:28-29

God has called His people to believe IN Him. Belief requires action. One can believe for a moment without acting. But, over time, belief and action are inseparable.

It takes effort to believe. It takes fortitude to push away obstacles that cause us to not ‘believe IN HIM whom He has sent’. Our sin nature, the worldly system, and the devil all oppose God. There is nothing passive about believing and abiding. Abiding IN Christ is active and diligent belief that we can only rely on God. Praise God! He is ready to empower us to do so.

Do you believe IN HIM whom He has sent? Many Christians will answer, “Most of the time.”



In full transparency before God, confess what you don’t believe about His claims. He is not surprised by our unbelief. He knows. Write a prayer asking for Him to support, teach, and correct you - giving you the gift of faith as you abide IN HIM.

Remember just before Christ’s trial and crucifixion, Peter’s unbelief caused him to abandon Christ. Then, after the resurrection, Jesus restored Peter to Himself – see John 21.

Jesus knows that we have times when we don’t really believe – our actions communicate our real beliefs. He knows and He loves us anyway. He is continually calling to us to follow Him.

JESUS IS INVITING US TO ACTIVELY BEAR FRUIT

God can do anything he pleases at any time. If it is His will, He can give someone that has never heard of Jesus a dream that prompts that person to seek Him. He can create another universe. Nothing hinders Him. Therefore, as you read the following message, don't hear that God is limited. He is not. Please hear that **God is inviting us into the most abundant opportunity and blessing of our lives.**

It is critically important to understand that abiding IN Jesus is active and diligent reliance on God. God has chosen us to participate with Him in acting-out His will on earth - to bear fruit by the power He gives us. That work (believing and abiding IN Him) and the result (bearing fruit) will not be done solely by Jesus. God, in His perfection, has chosen to share a heavenly responsibility with His people. That is the bearing of Godly fruit. He has given us the responsibility, opportunity, and blessing of fruit-bearing. Abiding is not passive.

Andrew Murray writes (paraphrased):

“Without the vine (Jesus) the branch (believers) can do nothing. The branch owes everything to the vine: its place in the vineyard, its life and its fruitfulness. And so, the Lord says, “Without me, you can do nothing.” Each day, the believer can be pleasing to God only in what he does through the power of Christ dwelling in him. The daily in-flowing of the life-sap of the Holy Spirit is his only power to bear fruit. He lives alone in Him and is completely dependent on Him alone.

Without the branch the vine can also do nothing. A vine without branches can bear no fruit. The vine is totally dependent on the branch as the branch is completely dependent on the vine. **This is the wonderful condescension (voluntary descent from one's rank) of Jesus, that just as His people are dependent on Him, He has made Himself dependent on them.** He has chosen that, without His disciples, He cannot dispense His blessing to the world; He cannot offer sinners the grapes of the heavenly Canaan. Don't think of this as new or astonishing. Jesus did this Himself. This is the high honor which He has called His redeemed disciple. As critical as He is to them in heaven (from Him their fruit is found), they are just as indispensable to Him on earth (through them His fruit is found). Believers, meditate on this, until your soul bows to worship God – His majesty and the mystery of the perfect union between Christ and the believer.

There is more: as neither the vine nor the branch is anything without the other, so is neither anything except to serve the other – each is for

the other.”

God’s purposes and plans will be done with or without us. He does not need us. But, because of His love for us, God is inviting us to participate in the heavenly work of redeeming His creation – for His glory and our good.



Please write your response or questions to the messages above:

Our active work bears fruit from the outgrowth of a healthy, vigorous life IN Christ - the Spirit and power of Christ living and working IN us. **That power works effectively through us when our main efforts are toward maintaining an intimate dialogue with our Lord.** As He flows into us, our work of believing will bear fruit in God’s will. We are not pipes, in the sense that, as a pipe carries water, it does not drink of it. We are like branches – actively involved. In order to bear fruit, the sap of the vine (Jesus) must first enter the branch (us) so that the branch is nourished and strengthened. At the same time, the Gardener (God the Father) prunes and shapes the branch to be more effective. Then, upon direction from Christ and empowered by Him, we become participants in the creation of Godly fruit.

John 14:12-14

“Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do,** because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”



Please list Jesus’ promises outlined in John 14:12-14 above:

PASSIVE?

15 miles east of Port Au Prince, 100 yards off the main east-west road going to the Dominican Republic sits Foundation de Ebenezer. It's a ministry hub; a source of light containing a school, clinic, orphan homes, guest house, and church serving one of the tougher communities in Haiti. Ebenezer was built by Pastor Claude Mondesir. God was the architect.

Years before the earthquake, God had given Claude a vision for this ministry. Specifically, he saw a vision of a new church with a tin roof and a basement. Tin roofs are considered cheap, and basements are almost unheard of in Haiti. Claude relented and built the basement but refused to make God's House on the cheap. He would build a concrete roof, but it didn't hold. Part of the roof fell in. Humbled, Claude was glad that no one died and finished the construction as directed. The church stood with a tin roof and a basement, which Claude tried to use for various purposes that never stuck. Finally, he just left the basement empty.

January 12th, 2010, the largest earthquake in more than 100 years struck Haiti. In less than a minute, close to 200,000 people died and 2,000,000 were displaced, hungry and homeless. The international community wanted to respond, but it was difficult. With the seaport and the airport damaged, it seemed as if there was no way to get help to the people, but for those who knew the country, the back door was open.

On January 15th, GO Project, a ministry partner of Claude's, brought a semi-truck from the Dominican Republic to Haiti. The 18-wheeler was filled with food, water, and supplies, but where could they unload? Where was there a secure, dry, accessible storage center that could receive such a large shipment?

Pastor Claude's church basement.

The semi unloaded. In the evenings, when the city slept, other local pastors backed up whatever vehicle they could find. Dump trucks, pick-up trucks, and cars filled to capacity left Claude's property and distributed food to thousands of people sleeping in church parking lots. It was a scene that repeated itself scores of times over the next three months. It was seen in the mind of God long before; shared with Pastor Claude in his abiding relationship with Jesus.

This is a dramatic example of abiding IN Jesus, believing Him, and trusting His leading. Just because the story is unusual, please don't dismiss the message. God, in His perfect wisdom, has decided to let you and me, as

His followers, be the ones that bear the fruit. He has determined that bearing fruit is our role. Jesus' role is to prompt and empower us by His Spirit as we abide IN HIM.

We all enjoy special stories, but it is just as special and fruitful to forgive offenses, love the difficult person, pray for miracles, receive God's joy when circumstances are challenging, and be patient and faithful and gentle and self-controlled. By this, our Father God is glorified; we bear much fruit and prove to be His disciples.



How does that make you feel?



Write your prayer:

CHAPTER SEVEN: PRUNED OR THROWN AWAY?

prune
/pru:n/

verb
trim (a tree, shrub, or bush) by cutting away dead or overgrown branches or stems, especially to increase fruitfulness and growth

reduce the extent of (something) by removing superfluous or unwanted parts

Before we dive into this challenging subject, let's slow down and remind ourselves of who created truth.

Excerpts from Psalm 18:

*"I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous. For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. For it is you who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness. For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; **he is a shield for all those who take refuge in Him.**"*



Guided by Psalm 18, list several of our Lord's attributes.

John 15:1-2

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

The topics of spiritual pruning (God training us to be more fruitful) and removal from Him (temporary or eternal) are difficult. We can start with what we know. First, God is always inviting us into continuous relationship IN HIM where we participate in His redemption of everything. That relationship is IN HIM – not with Him or beside Him, it is IN Him. If we accept that invitation and remain in Him, we will be empowered to do his will – bear fruit. Second, as we outlined in the previous chapter, God, in His perfection, has decided will that He is not the branch that bears fruit – we are. It follows that, if we bear fruit, He will train and prune us to bear more fruit. It also follows that, if we elect to ignore God's invitation to abide IN Jesus, He will cause His will to be done through someone else.

GOD'S WILL IS DONE IF WE PARTICIPATE OR NOT

"And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.'" Luke 19:39-40

"Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. **For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place**, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Ester 4:13-14



From above, what phrases or truths are encouraging to you?

What phrases or messages are difficult for you?

PETER WAS PRUNED

Simon Peter, a common man, was invited by Jesus to follow Him. Peter was called to follow, watch, learn, obey and bear fruit. During one of Jesus' first interactions with Peter, Jesus told Peter to fish differently than he had previously. The results were different too.

Jesus said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him

were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him." Matthew 2:4-11

Following this story, Peter became a fruitful disciple of Jesus, one of the inner circle. But, Jesus had planned more for Peter. Jesus' will for Peter was to become a critical person in carrying-out the redemption the WORLD. WOW!! This role requires a person who is stripped of selfish ambition and fear. Even though Peter was fruitful and powerful (driving out demons, healing the sick, and declaring the truths of God) he was not quite ready. Jesus had planned for Peter to be one of the "branches" that would launch His Church and change the world. Peter's pruning story follows.

Matthew 16:21-24

"From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

"Get behind me, Satan!" Really strong words. Although Peter was rebuked, the pruning was not complete. Jesus tells Peter that the pruning is coming.

Luke 22:31-34

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

Luke 22:54-62

"Then they seized Jesus and led Him away, bringing Him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter

sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with Him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." **And he went out and wept bitterly.**

Ouch. The branch had been pruned.

Peter was left without the ability to reconcile with Jesus because the Christ was being hauled away to be crucified. The hope of seeing the Christ establish His Kingdom was crashing.



Can you understand Peter's emotion? What can you relate to?

Days later, Jesus forgave Peter. Jesus then guides Peter back into his role of following Him.

John 21:4-19 (after Jesus' crucifixion, He appeared to His disciple and over 500 others)

"Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered Him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and **threw himself into the sea.** The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you

have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to Him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) **And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”**

The Book of Acts outlines that, weeks later, Peter was a changed man. He had been pruned and made stronger. Now, fully reliant on the Holy Spirit and abiding IN Jesus, he was ready to participate with Jesus in redeeming God’s creation.



Please write out your thoughts and prayers. What is standing out to you? What circumstances from your life is God bringing to you now?

GOD IS PATIENT WITH STRUGGLING ABIDERS

Luke 13:6-9

And Jesus told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

THERE IS A TIME WHEN GOD WILL CUT A BRANCH

John 15:6

“If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.”

The story of Eli’s sons in 1 Samuel 2:12-36 is a good example of a branch being cut off and destroyed. We encourage you to read it.

Matthew 7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

OUR PATH

If the messages above concern you, ask God to take you into Him. He is not hoping to find our disobedience and destroy us. As we continue in our struggle against our brokenness and sin, He continually invites us to abide IN Him, rest IN His safety, receive all of His gifts and love, then follow His lead. Our path is to abide.

Please pray the following prayer with us again. Of course, feel free to expand and elaborate for yourself.

“Father God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I yield my kingdom to yours. Your Kingdom is perfect, mine is broken. Forgive me for trying to be king. I accept your invitation to be IN you – receiving everything you want to give. Strengthen me to stay IN you and bear the fruit that is your will. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.”



What truths from this chapter are impacting with you?

Take the answers above and, as you abide IN HIM, pray prayers of praise, petition, questions, and repentance....

now
/nou/

adverb
at the present time or moment

CHAPTER EIGHT: NOW WHAT?

Let's start with enjoying the words from Augustus Toplady's song "Rock of Ages" – written in 1776.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself **in** thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure;
save from wrath and make me pure.

Not the labors of my hands
can fulfill thy law's commands;
could my zeal no respite know,
could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone;
thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
simply to the cross I cling;
naked, come to thee for dress;
helpless, look to thee for grace;
foul, I to the fountain fly;
wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
when mine eyes shall close in death,
when I soar to worlds unknown,
see thee on thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself **in** thee.

Praise the Lord! He is the Rock of Ages! We have nothing to fear!

So, now what do we do?

It may sound simplistic, but it is true. **Our Christian life depends entirely on our abiding IN Jesus.** Let's abide IN Him.

EXPECT TO BEAR FRUIT

As we have learned through the previous chapters, it is God’s will for us to bear fruit as we abide IN Him. Jesus said, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

Let’s expect for God to fulfill His promises to us. Let’s expect that His specific will for you and me will be done through us as we abide IN Him.

As we expect God to bear fruit through us, we are more likely to notice the subtle movements of God and can remain aligned with Him as circumstances change.



What is exciting or difficult about expecting God to bear fruit through you?

Turn your answers above into abiding prayer:

GOD’S WILL FOR US

God’s will for us can be partially summarized as:
Love the Lord your God,
Love your neighbor,
Rejoice always, pray in all circumstances, and
Go and make disciples.

NOW WHAT? LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

Christians, we need to create time and space in our lives to Abide IN Him. If Jesus, the creator of the universe needed to carve-out time alone to pray, we need to as well.



Pray: Lord, deepen my love for you, show me your ways so that I may love you with all my heart and soul and strength.



What can you do to facilitate time and space so that you can love the lord?

NOW WHAT? LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR



Pray: Lord, you have put people all around me, who do you want me to love today?



Pray: Who do you want me to forgive today? Ask for God's power that is IN CHRIST to forgive.

NOW WHAT? GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES

Notice the verbs – “go” and “make”. They instruct us to be actively and intentionally working to pursue and develop disciples.

How? Abide IN Him. Ask Him and follow his lead.



Who is God leading you to disciple so that they Abide IN Jesus?



Pray: Lord, what is my first step to pursue them?

PRAISE HIM, WORSHIP HIM

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1Thess 5:16-22

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk IN Him, rooted and built up IN Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” Col 2:6-7



What actions can you take that would position you to rejoice and pray more?

PRAY AND PRAY AND PRAY

“You did not choose me, but **I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide (remain)**, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.” John 15:16-17

“For all the promises of God find their Yes IN Him. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.” 2 Cor 1:20



Pause and pray:

The following scripture is Jesus’ prayer for us. Receive the depth of Jesus’ hope for us.

Jesus prayed:

“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, **that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one**, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, **may be with me where I am**, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, **that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.**” John 17:22-26



Pray your version of the following:

“Lord, your will for me is remarkable! It is hard to believe the indescribable love and hope that you have for me. Help me believe IN you. Father, thank you for illuminating the majesty of Jesus the Savior to me. I say ‘yes’ to your invitation to remain in Him. Help me to believe all your promises. Help me to receive all that you desire for me. Help me to yield to you so that I may bring glory to you. Help me to receive your pruning as I bear fruit. Help me to hear His voice and to obey without fear. I anticipate your work through me to bear fruit and bring you glory. I love you Lord.”

AMEN

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At least a dozen people gave of themselves to produce this writing. God knows who you are. Thank you.

May God bless you as you abide and remain IN Jesus – the lover of our souls.

Further Reading:

Book of John – Chapters 13-17

"Abide in Christ" by Andrew Murray

"Praying Life" by Donald Miller

"The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence

Further Connections:

Please find our Facebook Group at "Abide In Jesus - His Invitation"

