

Session 1: Abiding in Christ's Love

Three Goals for this session:

- 1) You'd understand better what Abiding in Christ's love means
- 2) You'd be overwhelmed by God's love for you!
- 3) You may understand better what (if anything) is blocking receiving this amazing love.

Introduction: "Abiding Love"! It sounds like a Janette Oke novel name or some movie on the Hallmark channel. What are we talking about anyway? Who uses the word "Abide" anymore? "Yes I abide at 5336 Kewley Lane" Who says that? Or "Where do you abide?" Live...we say Live. I live at 5336 Kewley Lane. Where do you live? It's confusing to us. It seems outdated. We read the words from John 15:9 (SLIDE #1)

*John 15: 9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; **abide** in my love."*

This weekend we are going to unpack this imperative given by Jesus in John 15:9 (slide)

What does Abide mean...anyway?

"In the NASB the word *abide* is used 14 times in chapters 14-15. In chapter 14 Christ tells us

Chapter 14

- 1) v. 10 the Father abiding in me does His works (The Father abides in Christ himself)
- 2) v. 17 The Spirit of Truth abides with you and will be in you v. 17
- 3) V 23 God the Father and Jesus "will come to him (you) and make Our abode with him. V. 23
- 4) Jesus has spoken these things while abiding with you (the disciples) v. 25

Chapter 15'

- 5) v. 4 Abide in Me and I in you
- 6) v. 4 A branch does not bear fruit unless it abides in the vine
- 7) v. 4 we can't bear fruit unless we abide in Christ
- 8) v. 5 He who abides in me and I in Him will bear much fruit v. 5
- 9) v 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, He is thrown away as branch that dries up...
- 10 & 11) v. 7 If you abide in me and words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you
- 12) v. 9 Just as the Father has loved me, I have loved you, Abide in my love
- 13 & 14) v. 10 Keeping God's commandments will keep us abiding in Him and the Father's love.

Abide, abide, abide...what does it mean? And why is it so important that Christ repeats this idea 14 times as part of his last exhortation before He goes to the cross?

The Hebrew and Greek originals in most frequent use are *yashabh*, "to dwell"; *meno*, "to remain." "Abide (sit or tarry) ye here" ([Ge 22:5](#));

II. Abiding is bringing to awareness the presence of Christ within us and quieting our hearts to live in a place of constant, consistent contact and connection. (slide# 2)

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

The Spirit now permanently lives in us and this is true of every believer. If you are a Christ-follower, the Holy Spirit lives or abides in you!

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The abiding of the branch in the vine suggests the continuance of vital connection' with the living stem, and supposes that connection kept up by constant faith, so that the believer is in a position to draw life from the legitimate source

On January 26, 1930 Frank Laubach writes, "We used to sing a song in the church in Benton which I like, but which I never really practiced until now. It runs:

"Moment by moment I'm kept in His love; Moment by moment, I've life from above; Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine; Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine." He goes on to say, "It is exactly that "moment by moment" every waking moment, surrender, responsiveness, obedience, sensitiveness, pliability, "lost in His love," that I now have the mind-bent to explore with all my might, to respond to Jesus Christ as a violin responds to the bow of the master."

Have we settled for second best...a knowledge of God without tasting and knowing the reality of His presence and love? Laubach goes on to say, "How infinitely richer this first hand grasping of God himself is, than the old method which I used and recommended for years, the reading of endless devotional books. Almost it seems to me now that the very Bible cannot be read as a substitute for meeting God soul to soul and face to face. (Point of clarification...He is not recommending that we quit reading the Bible...he is simply saying that it is not a substitute for the practice of abiding in Christ and His love.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall **abide** under the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91:1

II But what is Christ calling us to abide in? His Love—Unlike the word, "abide" which is rarely used in our society, the word *love is overused!* We don't even know what it means anymore. "Oh I **Love** that outfit", "I **love** that movie!" Or to a friend, "Love ya, girl!" On pictures we really like on Facebook, instead of hitting the "like" button, we say "**Love**" or if we really, really like it, we may comment, "**Love, love, love!**" We have turned the word love into a way to say, "*I really like that thing or person.*" Unfortunately, our casual use of the word love reduces the true meaning and value from the reality of God's love!

Would it make it difference if I said the word, "**Cherish**"? Cherish is used in a very limited way in our culture, but in my counseling and recovery ministries experience it is an idea that comes up fairly often. We long to be cherished! Mom and Dad may love us, but we want that special kind of love...no, we long for that special kind of love. The cherishing kind of love...where we are most highly valued, a rare gift to someone, someone to be held in tenderness and wonder, someone to be explored and enjoyed.

III. God's love is unique: The uniqueness of God's love it is like no other and beyond comprehension, but absolutely worth pursuing the heights, depths, and breadth of it. (SLIDE #3)

Ephesians 3:14-19 "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that he would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God..."

A. God does not need our love, nor is He intimidated by our need for love! (SLIDE#4)

*But God will never forget the **needy**; the hope of the afflicted will never perish.
Psalm 9:18*

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God does not need our love...God needs nothing. But God's very essence is love. God is love. God made us. We are His creation. Why? Our very purpose is to be a vessel to pour His love into. If there was a "need" for God (which there isn't because he is completely all sufficient) it was for a place for the overflow of His love to be received. "Abide in my love." This isn't a request. He commands it. It's an imperative...but it would be like a Mom saying to her child...Go, eat that candy! Or "Shop til you drop" or "Get that whole milk, French vanilla latte with whipped cream" He's commanding us to stay in His love!

B. God's Love is Steadfast—It never changes (SLIDE #5)

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23

Receiving and living in God's love means having a heart open to Him

C.. God's Love is Generous! The overwhelming generosity

Ephesians 1—the gifts he is giving—presents left unwrapped...have you received these? The gifts He's given: Eph. 1: 1) Every spiritual blessing, 2) He Chose us, 3) Made us Blameless and Holy, 4) Adopted us, 5) Redeemed us through His blood, 6) Forgave us our trespasses, 6) Revealed to us His will, 7) Gave us an inheritance, 8) Marked us as His own with the Holy Spirit 8) Gave us wisdom (SLIDE #6)

*Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!
Isaiah 30:18*

C. God's love is sacrificial:

But God's holiness required that we be cleansed before we could He could pour himself into us; His love into us. Hence this required **the ultimate sacrifice**.

The sacrificial nature of God's love—For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (SLIDE #7)

1John 3:16a We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us..."

D. James Kennedy two stories

- Dogsled Chase
- Drawbridge Operator and Son
- The Story of God's Love toward us is much better:
- The plan for rescuing us was not an afterthought or

IV. Five postures of receiving love

A. The Shell

It's too painful to hope; I've been hurt and disappointed so many times I will only let you come so close. I will not hope, because I do not want to be disappointed once again. It is better to remain closed than to open myself up to the kind of pain that disappointed hope brings.; I do not want the rug pulled out from under me again...it's too scary to feel joy and then have it taken away. I've seen extreme to moderate examples of this. In extreme cases there is a lot of isolation...not opening up to anyone...in moderate cases the ability to hope has been deadened...I go through the motions, but when joy begins to appear, I am on guard.

The more clearly we recognize how deep our commitment to self-protection operates in our relational style and the more courageously we face the ugliness of protecting ourselves rather than loving others, the more we'll shift our direction. (Larry Crabb)

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Any counseling method that does not take into account this empty space, longing to be filled, is unbiblical. All emotional problems we experience comes from our desperately trying to meet our own needs and fill the terrible ache in our hollow core. All sin has its roots in our attempt to fill this bottomless void without God.

To open up the ability to receive this person needs to choose to trust again (story of selling of house...open fist at God)

B. The Filter: All messages of love, acceptance are filtered through the grid of my past experience. The beliefs I have about myself and about God often keep me from receiving the Love He has for me; Remedy—radical commitment to the truth in the Word of God and a willingness to look at the messages and where they have come from is important.

When a biblical truth contradicts with your belief recognize the contradiction, engage in conversation with God about why it's so hard for you to believe that. (Example: "I will be loved if I'm not a Burden"...affected the way I interacted and how I related to God.)

C. The Bent Into Another: You are my hope for being okay. I will try to get my needs met in you. I will do whatever I need to do to be acceptable enough to attract your love... even compromise who I am and being true to myself. I will look to you to meet the deep needs of my heart. I need you to be a certain way in order for me to be ok. You need to accept and appreciate me, so I feel loved.; two examples—the relational desert--bending into friends as a source of okayness; bending into a significant other to affirm me and appreciate me. People are poor sources...God is not.

As long as we are bent into another to meet the deep needs of our heart, then God's love is second place...His expressions of love are ignored in our continued pursuit of receiving this person's love. *Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.*" (Psalm 86:11)

D. The Clenched Fist This is the picture of someone who is angry at God for not coming through for them. I first discovered this was in my heart 25 years ago. Bob had lost his job, we were doing everything in our power to help him find a new job, all the doors seemed to be tightly shut. I'm a career counselor at the time...surely my tested and tried methods of skills assessment, informational interviewing, resume writing could get us over this hump. Nothing. We waited...and waited. During that time a spiritual mentor mentioned to me a Dan Allender concept that victims of sexual abuse often have a clenched fist toward God. We shake this fist in our heart and say, "God you didn't come through for me!" "You didn't protect me!" "You allowed this to happen!" And I loved you...I was just a little girl! "Why!!!"The current situation of Bob's job situation made me feel equally helpless and God used that to deal with this "clenched fist" that I had towards him...it had been there for years, but he used these circumstances to bring to the realization of my deep anger and feelings of entitlement. I confessed my clenched fist! I confessed that I did not trust Him! I spent time in confession and asking for His forgiveness. Really this is a spirit of Entitlement...If I do this, then you, God, better do this for me." It's my way of feeling like I have control. But God is about our transformation, not our comfort. He wants us to surrender our lives to him. Ultimately, He wants our trust." I remember choosing at that point to trust Him with our future. The crazy thing was that one month later I had a graduate assistantship at Purdue, Bob had a full-ride fellowship at Purdue for his Ph.D., we had sold our house at full-price, and had found a quaint little home in Lafayette, IN. One month later! The timing was incredible. God goes after things in our heart that hinder our love and trust of Him, but is so ready to bless us once we see our sin that is blew my mind.

F. The Upright Arms Open Wide Posture—there is an expectation that the deepest longings of my heart can be met in Him; I receive His love unfiltered by lies about who He is, but see Him through the truth of His Word.

Frank Laubach, "It is difficult to convey to another the joy of having broken into the new sea of realizing God's "hereness" It seemed so wonderfully true that just the privilege of fellowship with God is infinitely more than anything God could give. When He gives Himself He is giving more than anything else in the universe."

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