

Session 2: The “How’s” of Abiding—What Helps and What Blocks Our Abiding In Jesus’ Love John: 15: 1-11; John 4:23; John 4: 31

I. Introduction:

Whenever I talk to people about what it means for them to “abide in Christ” one thing that usually comes up is this: I don’t really understand how to do this? I’m just not sure what this would really look like in my life! I want to abide, but I just get distracted and then eventually give up. This morning I want to look very intentionally about What keeps us from Abiding in His love and How to Abide in it.

Let’s keep going in our text from last night back to John 15 starting with verse 9 (Slide #1)

*Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also 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 so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. John 15: 9-12*

II. Jesus modeled abiding for us—He aligned his will to the Father’s

Jesus gives us a picture of what it means to abide in the Father in John chapter 14 verse 10, (Slide #2)

“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 initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.” John 14:10

Philippians 2:7 tells us that Jesus “emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” Jesus did not cease to be God during His earthly ministry. But He did set aside His heavenly glory of a face-to-face relationship with God. He also set aside His independent authority. During His earthly ministry, Christ completely submitted Himself to the will of the Father.

Jesus was in tune to the reality of “the Father abiding in Him”: Jesus lived his life abiding in the Father. He was a vessel that God the Father used to do His works. Jesus allowed the Father to lead Him to such an extent that he perfectly aligned Himself with the will of the Father.” The works that Christ did were the result of the Father abiding in Him...he spoke the Father’s words and he did the Father’s works. He is the perfect example of abiding.

Isaiah 50 contrasts the state of Israel with an unnamed servant who later is described in such a way that it is clear this servant is Jesus. In describing this servant Isaiah 50: 4-6 says: (Slide #3)

“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient nor did I turn back.” Isaiah 50:4-6

Jesus’ will was perfectly aligned with God’s. Notice the description of the abiding that is going on here that enables this unnamed servant to obey: the Lord has given me the tongue of disciples (He was depending on God’s provision for what to say.) “He awakens my ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened my ear.” This is the abiding

going on here that enables this unnamed servant to obey: the Lord has given me the tongue of disciples (He was depending on God's provision for what to say.) "He awakens my ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened my ear." This is the abiding part... Jesus, the servant in this, is speaking what the Father is speaking and hearing His voice" It is a picture of dependence on God.

Jesus showed us what it looks like to abide by modeling a complete dependence on God the Father in what he said and did! "I do not speak on my own initiative", I do what I see the Father doing." Jesus aligned His will with the Father's will. He abided. His ear was turned to the Father, His eyes were "seeing" through abiding.

Andrew Murray who is best known for his writing on prayer says:

"The love of the Father to the Son is not a sentiment—it is a Divine life, an infinite energy, an irresistible power. It carried Christ through life and death and the grave. The Father loved Him and dwelt in Him, and did all for Him." Andrew Murray

III. The Connection between Unbelief and Disobedience: Disobedience is always the product of unbelief...unbelief that hinders love!

Abiding Involves Obedience: If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love

Abiding involves obedience, (Slide #4)

*Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also 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.** John 15:9-10*

And obedience is MOTIVATED by loving:(Slide #5)

*"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me" John 14:21
"If anyone love Me, he will keep My word" John 14:23*

If you have an obedience problem, you ultimately have a love problem. Love is the real issue here.

Jesus obeyed out of love for the Father...(Slide #6)

John 14:31: "So that the world will know I love the Father, I do exactly what the Father has commanded me."

Jesus' obedience to the Father was a demonstration of his **love**...and his love for the Father motivated that obedience. Jesus did not say, because I fear the Father I obey Him. We often use fear as a motivation for obedience, but Jesus is calling upon our

If your love has grown cold, you will not only have an obedience problem, you will have an Abiding problem.

"While we were sinners Christ died for us." He loved me as a sinner so He isn't about my performance. He desires my heart and that I would live in His love willing to let Him shape me.

A. At the root of struggling to love God is our struggle to believe that He is good and that He is enough. At the root of any disobedience is unbelief.

Last Sunday Steve preached in Deut. 1 about why the Israelites stayed in the wilderness an extra 38 years...it was unbelief. Unbelief was underneath their disobedience

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There were two core lies involved in their disobedience...the lie that He was not good (he hated them) and the lie that He was not enough (the men are giants and the walls of their fortified cities reach to the sky)

We will not abide in His love if we believe the lies that He is not good, and He is not enough.

A fellow abider writes, "To me, abiding is resting/ dwelling in Christ's love, and that translates into knowing and believing/ trusting in Christ's love for me.

Slide #7&8

"Yet you were not willing to go up (to the land of Canaan), but rebelled against of the Lord your God: and you grumbled in your tents, and said, 'Because the Lord hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us.

SLIDE 8

"Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, 'The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.'" Deut. 1:26-28

The Israelites believed two lies:

1. **Believing the Lie that He is not Good ("Because the Lord Hates Us)**
2. **The Lord is not enough (The People are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven)**
3. **The Lie that He is not Good: (letter from a fellow abider)** If I doubt His goodness then I don't rest in His love. If I look for my own understanding and logic then I will not let Him love me. If I demand understanding about life trials, on my level, then I resist His love. So, I am unwilling to surrender to the fact that I live in a sinful earth which touches my life. I demand that He be a God that I think He needs to be which usually means giving me heaven on earth, that He comes back tomorrow or that I am comfortable.

Our Style of Parenting often = wanting to protect our children from the disappointments, discomforts, rejection we have had...this leads to entitlement;

- God's ways are very different (*Ultimate Gift* video comparison)
- **Deut. 8 v. 2 -3 It's rare that God tells us what he is up to or why he allowed something to happen, but in Deut. 8 vs. 2-3 he gives us a window into what he was doing with Israel in the wilderness**
- **"testing to see what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ...so that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.**

2. Believing the Lie that God alone is Not Enough: We often live our lives believing it's God + something makes me okay; that gives me the life I want.

1. God+ my efforts to purify myself through good works
2. God+ me trying to please everybody so they won't reject me
3. God+Me finding significance and value in what I do, how well I love, personal success as I define it
4. God+my tools of numbing life from pain rather than trusting Him to comfort me...food, alcohol, drugs, fantasy through fiction/movies, etc.
5. God + a significant other who will love me and take care of me
6. **If I think I can handle life or situations then I will not be abiding.**
7. **A fellow abider: "The other reason that unbelief can reign in me is that my mind is not set on the truths of God, and I am focused on my**

6. **If I think I can handle life or situations then I will not be abiding.**
7. **A fellow abider: "The other reason that unbelief can reign in me is that my mind is not set on the truths of God, and I am focused on my agenda rather than His."**

How do we access these lies? Look at your life and where you are living inconsistently with what you profess to believe:

Where are you anxious? Where do you worry and have a hard time letting go? Do you believe that the Bible is God's word, but rarely spend time reading it? Do you struggle with an area of addiction? Do you believe we should be thankful and yet inwardly struggle with comparison and discontentment?

Once lies have been accessed, how do we stop believing them?

confession; We simply confess and address our unbelief by asking God to give us a heart that truly believes what He has to say.

Allowing Scripture to speak into those lies; meditating on these verses.

- Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. "Romans 10:17
- **Sometimes lies formed through certain experiences that were painful.**

Because we don't trust Him we try to Make our lives work apart from God We have this innate tendency to try to make our lives work apart from God...we often live like we believe the old saying that "God helps those who help themselves".

(Slide #9)

So according to Isaiah 50:10-11 we "light our own fires":

In Isaiah 50:10-11

"Who is among you that fears the Lord, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. Behold all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with firebrands, walk in the light of your fire and among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand; you will lie down in torment."

1. The sin of self-sufficiency: If I think I can handle life or situations then I will not be abiding.

2. Streams in the Desert Devotional "When you are confused and do not know what to do, do nothing. When you find yourself in a spiritual fog, do not run ahead, but slow the pace of your life. And if necessary, keep your life's ship anchored or tied to the dock. The right thing is simply to trust God, for while we trust he can work. Worrying, however, prevents Him from doing anything for us. If the darkness covering us strikes terror in our hearts and we run back and forth, seeking in vain to find a way of escape from the dark trial where God's providence has placed us, then God cannot work on our behalf. Only the peace of God will quiet our minds and put our hearts at rest. We must place our hand in His as a little child and allow Him to lead us into the bright sunshine of his love. He knows the way out of the dense, dark forest, so may we climb into His arms, trusting Him to rescue us by showing us the shortest and most reliable road."

Jack Frost in his book Experiencing Father's Embrace says,

"I realized that dwelling in a place where Father's love is constantly renewing and restoring you to intimacy with others can only take place when we are willing to walk in the light of God's love. Fellowship with God is hindered when we choose darkness over light. Jack Frost Experiencing Father's Embrace

II. We Don't Abide Because We Don't Know How

A What We Can Learn From Famous Abiders

Abiding is a consciousness of the reality that Christ is in you by His Holy Spirit and you are never alone.

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- 1) **Frank Laubach: a.p.32 & 33 call it Having an all-day-long conversation with God; Paul calls it praying without ceasing.**
 - A. Select a favorable hour, an easy, uncomplicated hour—see how many minutes that hour you can bring Christ to mind; acknowledge Him. You will not do so well at first, but keep trying for It constantly comes easier; after a while it is almost automatic. Here are a few aids:
 - When at the table remember his words, “eat this in remembrance of me.
 - When reading, **keep a running conversation** with Him about the pages you are reading; If you lean back to consider some problem, how can you remember the Lord? By forming a new habit! All thought employs silent words and is really conversation with your inner self. Instead of talking to yourself, for the habit of talking to Christ;
 - When in a group, try to **recall Christ every minute, or hum a hymn** (silently) —a favorite hymn—For example, Have Thine Own Way or keep whispering “Lord, you are my life” or “You are my thought”
 - **Make all thought a conversation with God.** When evil thoughts come, say, “Lord, these thoughts are not fit to discuss with you, renew my mind by your presence.
 - When you are strolling outdoors alone you can **recall the Lord once a minute...ask Him what is on His heart.** Then answer back what you believe he is saying to you.
 - “The most precious privilege in talking with Christ is this intimacy which we can have with Him...how foolish we are to lose life’s most poignant joy, seeing it may be had while taking a walk alone! But the most wonderful discovery of all is, to use the words of Paul, Christ liveth in me.” He dwells in us, walks in our minds, reaches out through our hands, speaks with our voices, if we respond to His every whisper.
 - Make sure that your last thoughts are Christ as you are falling asleep at night. Continue to whisper any words of endearment your heart suggests. If all day long you have been walking with Him, you will find Him the dear companion of your dreams.
 - **We can cultivate Christ’s companionship while cooking, washing dishes, sweeping, sewing and caring for children. Aids which are helpful are: whisper to the Lord about each small matter, knowing that He loves to help. Hum or sing a favorite hymn.**
 - Students can enjoy the presence of the Lord even when taking an examination. Say, “Father, keep my mind clear, and help me remember all I have learned. How shall we answer this next question.? He will not tell you what you have never studied, but He does sharpen your memory and take away your stage fright when you ask Him.
 - Prices we must pay: 1) **the gentle pressure of our wills**, gentle but constant. But what prize is won without effort. 2) perseverance—poor results at the outset are not the slightest reason for discouragement; everybody has this experience for a long while. Each week grows better and requires less strain; 3) perfect surrender—**We lose Christ’s presence the moment our wills rebel.** If we try to keep even a remote corner of life for self or evil, and refusal to let the Lord rule us wholly, that small worm will spoil the entire fruit. We must be utterly sincere.4) to be in a group who pursue what we pursue—the presence of Christ.
 - The Gain: You may not win all your minutes to Christ or even half, but you do win a richer life. 1) We develop what Thomas a Kempis calls **a familiar friendship with Jesus.** Our unseen Friend becomes dearer, closer and more wonderful every day until at last we know him as “Jesus, lover of my soul.”2) we gain purity of thought; 3) we gain contentment

wonderful every day until at last we know him as Jesus, lover of my soul. 2) we gain purity of thought; 3) we gain contentment

2. Brother Lawrence: I have found that **we can establish ourselves in a sense of the presence of God by continually talking with Him.** I have resolved to make the love of God the end of all my actions. In order to first form the habit of conversing with God continually and of referring all that we do to Him we must first apply ourselves to Him with diligence. After a little such care we shall find His love inwardly excites us to His presence without any difficulty. In all things, we should act toward God with the greatest simplicity, speaking to Him frankly and plainly and imploring His assistance in our affairs, just as they happen. God never fails to grant that assistance. Useless thoughts spoil everything. We ought to reject them and return to our communion with God. I have well considered this and found that the shortest way to God is to go straight to Him by a continual exercise of love and doing things for His sake. Our only business is to love and delight ourselves in Him.

1. If sometimes I have not thought of God for a good while, I do not become disquieted because of it. But after having acknowledged my failure to God, I return to him with greater trust..."
2. *Oh, if we but knew the need we have of God's presence. If we could see how greatly we need the Lord's assistance in everything. If we could only see how helpless we are without Him, we would never lose sight of Him, not even for a moment.*

3. Andrew Murray

"Abide in My love. We speak of a man's home as his abode. Our abode, the home of our soul, is to be the love of Christ. We are to live our life there, to be at home there all the day: this is what Christ means our life to be, and really can make it. Our continuous abiding in the Vine is to be an abiding in His love."

B. Habits of the Mind that Relate to Abiding

1. Remember:

- One woman writes: Abiding in Christ's love is really an issue of remembering. He does love me. He's delighted in me. When I stop and REMEMBER that I feel my spirit exhale and even my body relaxes into that.
- Another Fellow-abider writes: Remember how God has shown His love to you in the past. Remember His faithfulness and how He has carried you through. Set up memorials in your heart or even physical ones that remind you of God's specific love shown to you. The Israelites set up memorials to remind themselves of how God worked in their behalf, and we would be wise to do the same.
- Abiding in Christ's Love is reminding ourselves of His presence with us... that His Spirit indwells us; that we are not alone

2. Renewing your mind in His word

- Hands down, the number one way to abide in Christ is to spend time in God's Word and meditate on it. There is no way outside of God's Word to conquer unbelief which hinders me from abiding in the love of Christ. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." You hear His word when you listen to it and also when you read it. I have found that it is also not enough to just acknowledge His love shown in the Word. I must ponder it, savor it, and see if my actions (which show my beliefs) follow the truth of God's Word. We need to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ. This takes time! It does not happen quickly.
- I find scripture to remind me of His love when you are feeling loved by Him. Then when you don't feel it (His love) you will have a way to reference back to it.

Practical Suggestions:

Him. Then when you don't feel it (His love) you will have a way to reference back to it.

Practical Suggestions:

1) Surrendering my will:

- Abiding involves a surrender of my will that He is God. Realizing I need Him as a Savior every day of my life, not just to get into heaven. I have to let my heart receive and be touched by what He has done for me and seek that love daily. Asking the Holy Spirit to teach me as I read the scripture and talking to Him about everything and at all times.
- Submission and yielding To the Lord Jesus and conviction and urges of the Holy Spirit
- Making "faith choices" to walk in love and die to myself - yield my emotions to the truth. I choose to align my heart with God and trust Him, based on the truth I know about God
- - which is the picture of the branch aligning into the vine. and receiving from the vine.

2) : **Stay in Community:** A fellow abider writes: Have good community around you so that they can remind you and turn you back to Him through their love for you and support for you. It is certainly helpful to have encouragement to move toward Christ in times of not feeling loved by Him.

3) **Look for the expressions of His love** A fellow abider writes: "Often Jesus has given me these profound little pictures of his love for me. Over the years he has reminded me of his faithfulness through birds! "Look at the Birds" he said and unbelievable, often, he has sent specific birds for me to look at! Those silly little feathered friends remind me of God's love for me. A couple of weeks ago I woke up in a lie-haze. Who did I think I was? What did I possibly think I had to offer? I prayed for spiritual protection. I asked Jesus to remind me of his love for me. Immediately I had this image of a pearl inside a shell. He is the Pearl of great price. I am the (crab?!) shell. I bring Him. But I also knew that in some ways I am the pearl and he surrounds me and protects me. I am his. He cherishes me. It really spoke to me that day...and still does when I remember it.

4) **Personal Reminders** There are many days it's harder to remember. On those days I intentionally make my own images or symbols. I write down verses and stick them on my computer or near my sink. I paint one of my finger nails an obnoxious colour--to remind me that he loves me. I move my cross closer to our family picture. He loves us. He's taking care of us. Lots of times I call out to friends to have them pray. Sometimes I ask my husband to speak truth over me. Sometimes I write down what I know to be true and I read it back to myself.