

Abide

John 15:1–17

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I'm really excited about Vacation Bible School. One of my favorite things is when I come in and see what the stage is going to look like. On Thursday, Jenny Green and all the crew came and said we're ready for you to see it. When I walked in, I'll be honest, I thought I was in Honey, I Shrunk the Kids, which was one of my favorite movies growing up. We have this huge grape vine, huge branches, huge grapes, three or four times taller than I am! So I'll be honest this morning, it's going to be hard for me to preach and not just play because I'm back in the movie, I am looking for the shrinker, but man, this is cool, right? There's a huge vine to remind us that Jesus is the vine. What an incredible metaphor that Jesus gives us to really talk about who He is. What we want the point to be this morning is not that you would see this and want to have a shrunken life...that would be cool to be a shrunken little kid, get to play in your backyard...we don't want shrunken lives. Instead, what we want is enlarged hearts, we want hearts that are fruitful. So how do we get enlarged hearts? We do that by abiding in Jesus, and that's what we're going to talk about this morning, abiding in Jesus. Our key verse this morning is John 15:4.

Scripture

"Abide in me, and I in you."

Abide in me and I in you, that's what the Lord wants from you. He wants you to abide in Him, and as you abide in Him, the Lord is going to be

glorified. You're going to experience love and joy, and fruit will pour out of your life. So what I want to talk about first is just the book of John because in the book of John, Jesus gives seven 'I am' statements and we're in the seventh one right now. I just want to read real quickly the seven 'I am' statements and it gives you an idea of who Jesus is and what He's claiming about Himself.

John 6: I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger.

John 8: I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness.

John 10: I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved.

John 10: I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 11: I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

John 14: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 15: I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser.

So these big 'I am' statements, this is who Jesus is, and one thing He tells us is He is the vine. In Jesus' day when He is walking around teaching, everyone knew what a vine was, everyone knew what a vineyard was. The kids would play in them, run around them, play tag in them. They all were familiar with vineyards and they were all familiar with picking grapes. For us, we are more familiar with cornfields, so we build a very big vineyard for you. But in this illustration we see in John, Jesus is saying I am the vine.

So what exactly does He mean by 'I am the vine?' What He's trying to tell us is that He is that source of life. So verse 1 of chapter 15 says this, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² 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. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." I love that...you're already clean because of the word I've spoken to you. Notice we don't get cleaned by works, we get cleaned by the Word, by the gospel. It's the gospel that cleanses us. The gospel connects us to the vine. You can't work for it, earn it, or buy your way into the Kingdom, it's through belief in the gospel...who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for you.

Now this vine imagery, by the way, the Israelites would've assumed the vine is them, they are the vine. And if you go to things like Psalm 80, they would know this because Psalm 80 verse 8 says this, "You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. ⁹ You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land." So that's Israel, Israel was God's vine. God cleared the land, brought them out of Egypt, they grew, they flourished, they filled the land. But then Israel, the vine, did what? They sinned against God. They disobeyed, they wouldn't ever obey His Word, they wouldn't ever walk in obedience. So what they experienced is judgment, they got cast out, no longer His vine, but there's a prophecy of hope. In verse 17 it says this, "But let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!"¹⁸ Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name!" So there's one coming. There's a man at God's right hand. There is a son of man who is strong who's coming, and when He comes, we're going to call upon the name of the Lord. We're going to be made to have life again. So what is the Psalm pointing to? Of course the Lord Jesus Christ. So the vine is not Israel, the vine is one Israelite and His name is Jesus and if you're connected to Him, you are part of the new people of God.

Let's think about the image. I am the vine, everything else grows off of me. I am the very source of life. So Jesus is telling us that He is that true vine. So my question is, are you connected to Jesus? Are you connected to Him? Do you have life in the name of Jesus? In this text, there are ten

times Jesus uses the word abide, and we're going to look at eight ways that we can abide.

Number one is abide in Jesus. That's the most important thing to do. Jesus says, "Abide in me and I in you." So what does abide mean? I mean it's a word we don't use a whole lot but it means to remain, to stay, to dwell, to be at home, to hold onto. That's what it means to abide. This morning when my alarm went off at 5:00 AM, do you know what I wanted to do? I wanted to abide in bed. That's all I wanted, I just wanted to stay asleep. But I knew you're going to come here today and I need to have this thing finished so I had to wake up. I couldn't abide in bed. Jesus is saying stay in me, don't leave me, abide in me. Don't grow out of me, don't grow past me; instead, cling to me. I love what John Comer says about this term, abide, because he brings up the concept that Jesus is not asking us to do something we're not already doing. Because here's the reality, all of us abide, it's just what we do as humans. We are people who abide. We have to make our home in something. We have to root in something. It's just the kind of people we are. The question is not are you abiding, the question is what are you abiding in, and one of the ways we can figure out what we abide in is what do you do when you're bored? What do you do when you have free time? What do you do when you're off the clock and the clothes are clean and the dishes are put up? What do you do? What do you gravitate? What do you root in, make your home in?

I want to give you three examples that Comer uses, I think they're so good. He first talks about social media, and for some of us, that's our happy place. Whenever we're bored, we go to social media and we scroll and we look, we scroll and we look. That's our home. We're rooted in it. We abide in it, we stay in it. He says this, "If we abide in the infinite scroll of social media, it will form us into people who are angry, anxious, arrogant, simplistic and distracted." See, what he says is whatever you abide in, that thing begins to form you, and what you're formed in comes your fruit. So you can look at the fruit of your life. Am I angry? Am I

anxious? Am I distracted? Am I simplistic? Well, what am I abiding in, because that's what I'm being formed by, and here comes the fruit of that.

He gives two more examples that I want to note. He says this, "If we are rooted in the endless queues of our streaming platforms of choice, they will form us too, likely into people who are lustful, restless, and bored, never present to what is..." We're just always watching Netflix or YouTube and it's forming us. The things we constantly watch form us, and then fruit from that, we become the people that we make our homes in. Our homes grow fruit, abiding grows fruit.

The last one he says, "If we are rooted in the pursuit of hedonism - another drink, another toke, or another hookup to take the edge off the pain and let us find a moment's peace - that will form us as well, likely into people who are compulsive, addictive, and running from our pain and, simultaneously, our healing." When it's just always about the next high, the next thrill, the next pleasure, then you'll be formed into a person that is compulsive, always chasing after the next thing. So what we abide in forms us.

Then he says this, "But if we are rooted in the inner life of God...that will also form us. It will slowly grow the 'fruit of the Spirit' in our life; 'love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'" See, whatever we abide in, that thing forms us, and how we're formed is what the fruit comes from. So what's Jesus saying? Abide in me. I'm a vine, and if you abide in me, then you're going to be formed by me and out is going to come fruit that's like me. In other words, you're going to act like me when you abide in me. So the first thing we're going to do is we're going to abide in Jesus. Do you know what we have to do to abide in Jesus? We have to stop abiding in things that aren't abiding. See, for a lot of us, we're abiding in things that aren't abiding, they're not lasting, they're not eternal, they're not going on forever. They're temporary, they're a moment, they're flashes in the pan, and then they're gone. What we have to do is abide in things that are abiding, things that are eternal; that is the Lord Jesus Christ, His Kingdom. That's what we abide our lives in.

Number two, abide as dependency. Verse 4 says this, "As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." We have to be dependent on God. What does the branch have to do? The branch has to be dependent on the vine. If the branch falls down and decides I'm just going to produce fruit on my own, I'm going to lay on the ground, I'm going to squeeze real hard and fruit's going to come out, it's not going to work. It doesn't have the power or the ability. Have you ever tried to grow? I remember when I was a kid I wanted to grow. So I'd be like maybe if I try really hard I'll grow. You can't try hard and grow, growth is something that happens to you. You just keep being human and you're going to grow. So what's Jesus saying? The path towards growth is not trying really hard and working really hard and doing really hard, the secret is stay connected to me, keep abiding in me. I will cause growth because apart from me, you can't do anything, you can't grow fruit. So it's like the branch has to be connected, you have to be connected to Jesus. Just think about the holiday we just celebrated, Independence Day. We celebrate our independence from Britain, we're not connected to them anymore, we are independent and that's nice as Americans. But it's really bad as humans because we are not independent of our Creator. We are dependent on God for everything, for life, for breath, for our whole lives. So yeah, we might be independent as Americans, but we are not as human beings and we're not as followers of Jesus. We are connected to Jesus, we are completely dependent on Him. So live your life dependent on the Lord Jesus, clinging to Him. Hold onto Him, make your home in Him and truly believe if you're away from Jesus, you can do nothing.

Number three, abide to bear much fruit. Notice what verse 5 says, "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. 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." Did you notice something? The secret to growing is not in doing it's in staying. Some of

you want to grow, you want to be kinder, you want to be more loving, you want to forgive more, you want to be a better worker, a better husband, a better wife, all those things—those are really great things to want. The secret is not in more doing it's more remaining. It's more staying, staying rooted to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's in connecting to Jesus that He is going to produce the fruit in and through you. See, apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. The goal is to bear much fruit, and if we're connected we're going to bear fruit. And not just some fruit, if you're connected to Jesus you bear much fruit, and that's what we want. That is what branches are supposed to do, and how does the branch get fruit? By abiding in the vine, not buying it, squeezing it, trying it, it's by abiding in it, and then God grows fruit through your life.

Number four, we abide to glorify God. Verse 7 says, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." Notice, "if you abide in me and my words abide in you..." there's a connection between abiding in Jesus and the Word of God abiding in us. In other words, you can't disconnect the two. You can't say I'm going to abide in Jesus but also not read my Bible. No, how you abide in Jesus is through reading your Bible, studying your Bible, loving your Bible, memorizing your Bible, and thinking about the Word of God dwelling in you richly, which is what Colossians teaches, is how we dwell in Christ richly. So how do I make my home in Jesus? I let Jesus's Word make its home in me. I'm spending time with the Lord.

So how does that branch stay connected to the vine? It's through the Word of God. As we love the Word of God, as the Word of God makes its home in us, then what happens? We're praying to the Father and the Father is answering prayers, and then people are seeing God's work in us, God's light in us, and you know what's happening? God is glorified in us when we abide in Jesus. How does that happen? When you abide in Jesus, you become like Jesus, and the more you abide the more you become like Jesus and the more His fruit flows through you. So when people run into

you at work or at home, when they nudge up against you, what comes out? The fruit of Christ. When people see you, you look like Jesus. They get to experience who Jesus is by being around you. They see the light of Jesus and God is glorified when you live your life like Jesus. So we abide for the glory of God.

Fifthly, we abide in love. This is one of those lines that you should probably try to meditate and memorize this week, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love." Just think about that for a moment. Jesus wants you to abide in His love, and He prefaced that with, "as the Father has loved me." Can you even comprehend how much God the Father loves God the Son? Well, God is love, and God the Father and God the Son in eternal relationship have always loved. So God the Father has always loved God the Son from all of eternity. How much love does God the Father have for God the Son? I mean, we can't imagine, we can't comprehend it. How much do you love your family, your son, your daughter? How much more is God's love, the Father's love towards the Son? Jesus says as the Father loved me so I have loved you. In other words, in that same kind of way, in that same manner now I am loving you. So the way God the Father loved God the Son, God the Son is loving us in that same way. That should kind of blow your mind a little bit. What? How could it be that Jesus loves me that much? Well, you can actually see it because He demonstrated His love for you, while you were still a sinner Christ died for you. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life. God has shown, Jesus has shown...for the joy set before Him He endured the cross. He loved us until the end. He loved you and me and He gave His life on a cross for us. That's how much Jesus loves you and me. And you know what He says? Take that love, all that love, imagine how big it is and how you can't comprehend it, and then just abide in it. Abide in my love.

If I could say something right here, all of us want to be loved. It's what we seek our whole lives. We want to be loved, we want to belong, we want someone to sing over us, we want somebody to say I'm proud of you. We

want somebody just to love us for who we are, just to love us and all of our mess and all of our wrinkles, just to give us that unconditional love. Nobody can give it to us except for the Lord. We were made for His love and we won't be satisfied until we snuggle up to the love of Jesus. Abide in His love, love that is unconditional, love that doesn't say when you become lovable I'll love you. No, He said you're unlovable but I love you anyway, and my love is going to make you more and more like me. I mean, how great is the love of God? If you're a believer, you have His love so do you know what you need to do? Abide in it. Don't seek for it somewhere else. Don't seek outside of God to be loved, to belong, to find significance, to find value. No, just believe you've got all the love you need in Jesus. I'm a branch that is stuck to Him. I'm abiding in Him and I've got all the love I could ever need or ever want in the Lord Jesus. Jesus loves you, abide in His love.

Number six, abide in obedience. Notice what Jesus says, "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." Jesus says there there's no abiding apart from obedience. You can't abide and also rebel. It doesn't go together. Abiding involves obedience. He says just like I kept my Father's commandments and I remained in His love, you keep my commandments and abide in my love. So how do we abide in the love of Jesus? We listen to what He says and we obey His voice. We come under Him as a good Lord and Savior and we say Jesus, you know best; I'm going to come under you and I'm going to obey you. That's how we snuggle into His love, that's how we abide in His love...by obeying the things that He's told us to do. See we love him and we obey him. See, we all have the opportunity every day to either abide or rebel. We can abide in the love of Jesus or we can rebel against the love of Jesus and try to find love our own way and try to find happiness our own way. But it never works the other way. What we need to do is to abide in the Lord Jesus.

Number seven, here's why we abide in the commandments, it's for joy. We abide for joy. Notice verse 11, "These things I have spoken to you, that my

joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” Why does Jesus want you to abide in Him? Because He wants your joy to be full. Not just a little joy, He wants your joy to be full. And here comes Satan's greatest lie. Satan's greatest lie is the commands of God, the Word of God, the demands of God are all killjoys. They're all robbing you of happiness. You've got wants and desires and God's got rules against those wants and desires because He doesn't want you to be happy. He doesn't want you to be satisfied. He doesn't want you to be full. He wants you to be grumpy like He is grumpy. That's what Satan wants to sell you on, and Satan says I've got all the joy you could imagine. And Satan just brings it all out. I've got pallets of joy and it's just all of the sin that you can imagine, all the things that your flesh lusts after. You know what it is? It's endless joy, go have fun in all the sin you can handle, there is joy and happiness. But it's all a lie. I don't have to convince you of that because you've all experienced it. I have too. We've all run after something that Jesus said no to, that we thought would make us happier if we said yes to it, and we loved it and we enjoyed it. But then what happened? It didn't last forever, did it? No. It ended up in guilt and shame and ended up in robbing us of joy. Because what Satan offers is moments of happiness but he can't offer joy. He can't offer fullness. He can't offer pleasure forevermore because that is something only at God's right hand like God says in the psalm...*at my right hand are pleasures forevermore. Delight in me and I'll give you the joy, the delights of your hearts.* I've got joy. You are thirsty and I'm a fountain of living water. Just come and drink. I've got all the joy, full joy that's found in me. What Jesus is saying is if you want full joy, there's only one way to get it, by abiding in me, by being the branch that connects to the vine because I am where joy is at and I'm where joy is full. We're all longing to be happy. We're all longing to be satisfied. We're all longing for everything and Jesus saying everything is found in me. I'm the God who satisfies your hearts, that if you abide in me, you will have joy.

Point eight, abiding fruit. Verse 12 says, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than

this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ 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, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.” Notice that we have the love of Jesus. He tells us I've got better love than you could ever imagine. You're no longer servants, you're now friends, and just so you don't get it backwards, I chose you, you didn't choose me. I chose you and now you're part of this thing. You're a branch. Because I chose you, I grafted you in, and now that you're here, you know what your joy is? To abide in the fruit that I'm producing through you. Bear much fruit and so have your fruit abide. You know what one of the markers of that fruit is? To love one another, to love the people in this room, the messy people in this room, to love. So Jesus wants our fruit not just happen for a moment, but for our fruit to abide, for a fruit to keep going. So the question is how do we have abiding fruit? How do we have fruit that keeps going? How do we have fruit that doesn't run out? You can't but Jesus can. You don't have the ability, you don't have what it takes regardless of what anybody told you. You can't do this, it takes the Lord Jesus. It takes His life, His death and His resurrection. And when you believe in the gospel, Jesus gives you the Holy Spirit, and through the Holy Spirit, He dwells in you. He abides in you and you get to abide in Him. As you abide in Jesus, you know what happens? He produces fruit in your life, and that fruit, it abides and it remains.

So as you think about the vine this week, let it remind you of who you are. You're not the vine, you're not the source of life, you're a branch. What does a branch do? A branch abides. You're doing it right now, you're abiding in something, the question is what are you abiding in? Because the thing you abide in, it forms you and out comes fruit from that. So you're

abiding in something other than Jesus or you abiding in the Lord Jesus, letting Him form you and let fruit come out of Him where you're now living a life that looks like Jesus. So what do we do? What's our task? We don't work, we don't try, we don't muster it up, we abide in the Lord Jesus. And as we abide in Him, He makes us more like Him and from it comes fruit. See, the point is not for your life to be shrunk, the point is for your heart to be enlarged. How does your heart get larger? Not by trying but by trusting, by abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ.