

“How to A.B.I.D.E. in Christ”
John 15:4–5
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I’m excited to get into God’s Word together for this study and to talk about abiding in Christ. This is something that the Lord has called us to do and so we will look at how to abide in Christ. I will also speak a little bit to Isaiah’s vision from Isaiah 6 of God’s holiness and tie that in with our Scripture for this study. Let’s start by looking at John 15 and then we’ll walk through this together.

John 15:1–11 says [1] *“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. [4] 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. [5] 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. [7] 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. [9] As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. [10] 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. [11] These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”*

What a beautiful passage from our Lord and Savior. I want to give you some context around this passage. This is the last week of His ministry with the Disciples before the crucifixion. Two chapters before this Jesus is washing the feet of the Disciples as He is there with them at the Last Supper. In John 14 Jesus is encouraging the Disciples and sharing with them about the Father’s House in which He will go and prepare a place for them. Thomas and Philip ask Him ‘how can we go’ and ‘how do we get there’ and Jesus tells them He is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him. Jesus also shares with the Disciples about the Holy Spirit. He tells them that when He departs the Helper, the Holy Spirit will come to help guide and direct them.

As He shares all this instruction and information, He is encouraging the Disciples and the very last time He is with them He starts giving them imperatives – things that are important to listen to. As I think about Jesus’ last days with His Disciples, I think what is it that He wants to leave with them that is vitally important as they move forward in ministry through His crucifixion into His resurrection and then into His departure to be with the Father. Here in John 15 we see that He shares this imperative about abiding in Him – abide in Christ.

The Greek word for abide here is *menó* and it means to stay, to remain, to be constant, to continue. So Jesus is saying to continue in Me and this is such an important aspect of their ministry that He shares this – abide – twelve times with these men. What is Christ communicating here? He is communicating that it is vitally important for them to continue in Christ, to remain and stay in Him. As I look at the passage, I believe, the reason why He share this is because it is pretty clear in Scripture that these men have a tendency to drift, be distracted and to doubt. Much like us, we too struggle with those things and Jesus knows this. So Jesus is

encouraging them through their doubts, distractions and maybe even their discouragements to stay in Him, to remain in Him.

So how do they practically go about abiding in Christ? I want to point out five practices that I think are clearly identified in the Bible for abiding in Christ. I like using acronyms because it helps me to remember things so I'm going to fill out the word 'A.B.I.D.E.' with these five practices. Let's start with the letter A.

The first practice for us to abide in Christ is that we have to be *aware* of our great need for Christ. This is where it all begins for each one of us. If you're a Christian you have come to a place in life where you are aware of your desperate need for a Savior. You are aware of your sin – not acutely but absolutely. Much like Isaiah in Isaiah 6 there is this absolute awareness of your brokenness and your need. There is also this absolute awareness that we are all sinners and we all fall short of the glory of God. Absolute awareness comes and moves us to a place of acknowledgment that we have sinful situation and we need a God-centered solution. We know we can't do it on our own or work our way to heaven and no matter how hard we try we can't merit our salvation. That Savior we need is Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 6:5–7 says [5] *And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"*

[6] *Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."*

Isaiah realizes he is a man on unclean lips and as the seraphim comes to put the burning coal to his lips, it shows us that Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness. It such a beautiful picture of the seraphim coming and giving restoration. That is but a shadow of what Christ does for us. So we are called to be aware of our sin and acknowledge that we need a Savior. That moves us to the next letter – the letter B.

Secondly, we are to believe. We are to wholeheartedly, absolutely, one hundred percent believe that it is Christ who can save us. This isn't a belief that is a static event in life but it's a dynamic event. It is a waking up every day reminding ourselves of our desperate need for Christ and then relying on the belief that Christ is the One that can take us through. He is not just the Author but the Perfector of our faith. He is the One that Sustains us and sanctifies us. We need Him just as much today as the day that He saved us and justified us. That belief at the core has to do with His love, believing that He truly loves us, because when we believe that He loves us and He is who He says He is, then we have a faith that is built on the rock of Christ. When the waves come we can stand them because we have the Cornerstone, Christ.

John 15:9 says [9] *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.* What a beautiful picture. We see this Triune unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and their love for one another. Here, Christ says this love – this unchangeable, beautiful, intense, purposeful love – that the Father has for Me is what I'm giving to you as a child of Mine. Be rest assured of that. Romans 8:1 says [1] *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* At the very end of Romans 8 He says that there is also no separation. Jesus is with us and His love is not going to leave us. He is not going to forsake us or condemn us if we're one of His children. So we can believe wholeheartedly in that and trust in it. In John 15:9b Jesus says [9b] *Abide in My love.* Believe in it, trust in it, rest in it. When Satan comes and surely he will, he tries to make you believe that Christ doesn't really love you because you're too dirty or too

sinful or you've made too many mistakes or had a bad day – don't believe it. Believe in Christ's love.

So we're aware and we believe and that moves us into this faithful walk of inquiring of God's Word. So the 'I' in A.B.I.D.E. is to inquire of God's truth. John 15:3 and 7 says [3] *Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. [7] If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* What is He saying in verse 3? The word is the truth and the truth can set you free. The truth of God's righteousness is His solution of the Gospel of the Good News. Not only have you received this truth personally but you have been commissioned as apostles to go and deliver this truth to others. This truth is what cleanses you. It's not your merit or goodness but it's because of what Christ has done and His truth speaks of what He has done which is the great sacrifice of all sacrifices. We are called to be saturated in God's Word.

God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes I think we really don't realize what an incredible gift that is. It is an amazing gift that we have the presence of the Holy Spirit as believer in Christ. That Holy Spirit gives us insights that we can't gather on our own. I don't care how intelligent you are or how crafty you are for you would not be able to obtain some of the insights you have as a believer in Christ if you did not have the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit relies on His Word, His Truth for illumination so we're called to be saturated in His Word because when we saturate ourselves in His Word then the Spirit is illuminated. It's amazing to see the growth in our lives. It doesn't mean you won't face difficult circumstance in life but the way we approach it, translate it, interpret it and move in those circumstances is greatly adjusted by God's Word.

There is no doubt that Satan knows that. Every moment of the day Satan is there knocking on the door tempting you to inquire of something else other than God's Word. If you question for one moment if that is true, think about your last week. Think about how many 24/7 news channels you connected with, how many shows you watched and how many social media posts you looked at. I'm not saying those things are bad in and of themselves but when they replace feeding on the Word of God there's a problem. The good news is today that can change. Today you can go to the Word of God. Today you can make adjustments. Realize if you have an apple phone and you see that at the end of the week your screen time has increased 30 percent that's not a good thing, unless you have the Bible on your phone. If we want to see God do amazing work in our lives by growing us and maturing us in Christ, then we have to make adjustments and be in His Word. We have to inquire of His Word. That is an incredibly important piece in abiding in Christ. Without His Word were lost and can't find our way.

The fourth practice in abiding in Christ is to *depend* on Christ. Depend on Christ through His Holy Spirit. Yes, this is obvious but sometimes when circumstances are difficult this is not obvious. Sometimes we tend to resource our own self, our own ability and we may forget that Christ calls us to resource Him. Let's continue in John 15.

John 15:5 says [5] *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.*** Do you believe you can do nothing apart from Him? You have to have Christ. If you don't have Christ you don't have anything so depending on Christ at that level puts us in a position of success, not failure but success. When we realize we are powerless without Christ, we connect to the source of all power. This is not just a moment in life but this is the momentum of our life. This is something that we look to everyday and cling to.

In the early 80s when I was around 10 to 12 years old, my family decided to go to a wave pool up in Decatur, Alabama. This wave pool was packed with people and I had never been to a wave pool before. I was out there with one of my friends floating around and feeling pretty confident about my ability to swim because I grew up seemingly swimming everywhere. I kind of go off on my own and I'm out treading water in the deep end of the wave pool. This alarm went off that sounded like a tornado alarm and for me it was incredibly alarming but it was a signal that the waves were about to start churning. Initially I thought that was a pretty loud alarm for the waves to start churning and the waves start getting bigger and bigger. Remember there are a lot of people in this wave pool and the next thing I know I'm trying my best to stay above water but I dip down and get caught under one of the floats – the tubes floating on top of the wave pool. As I'm moving away from that float trying to reach up for a breath of air I go down under again. I'm moving further and further away from my friend towards the side of the pool and there is a ladder there. I grab onto that metal ladder with all the strength I have. Every wave is pelting me trying to knock me off that ladder as I am holding on tight. I hear my friend say 'Hey Tucker, jump on' for he had made his way over to me with a float. I'm afraid to let go of the ladder but I know I can't hold on much longer and I'm thinking, 'what if I miss the float.' I take a lunge and hit the float as I am white knuckling that float. I didn't want to let go at all because I was scared to death that I might not come back up from the water if I let go. I had a real intense fear of drowning at that moment and a high intensity to stay on that float.

In a lot of ways, I think this story kind of parallels our life. Many times in life we may be out in calm water swimming around, very confident about our ability to navigate life and confident about doing certain things because of our experiences. Almost with some sort of arrogance we rely on ourselves a good bit and then the alarm goes off. Maybe we don't hear the alarm or know that it's coming but when it does come the waves start coming. Life gets rough. Circumstances get difficult to the point we may feel like we're drowning. We think, 'what do I do' and then look for that proverbial ladder in our life. We cling to it but it's not Christ for it's something we put in our life as an idol and we realize we can't hold onto it long because it's not going to save us so we have to get to the Float, to Christ, where it's safe. That is what Christ is calling us to do today. He is calling us to trust in Him, to cling to Him, to continue in Him. So, let's practice true dependence on Christ.

The fifth and final practice is one that is much more external and that is exercising our faith in Christ. The first four are more internal. Even though they are practices they are more internal in a sense that there are things we think through and process individually. Exercising is more external for it affects more people around us, but if we have this vertical relationship with Christ then we're going to have a horizontal impact for Christ. So, if we have a vertical relationship with Christ, abiding with Him, then by nature we will be a horizontal impact and that's exercising our faith in Christ to implement these means of grace in our lives, to truly worship the Lord, to spend time with Him in His Word, by ourselves praying and by the means of grace through fellowship, the sacraments, and Godly counsel. When we do these things as we exercise faith we hear His commandments and we follow them. Let's continue in John 15.

Jesus says in John 15:10, *[10] 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.* It is fascinating to me that Jesus is so thoughtful in His imperatives and He is such a servant leader because every time He says 'if you keep My commandments, like I do' He is going before His Disciples and showing them how to do it. He is always showing them the example of how to do it. So, He calls them to exercise their faith and when we exercise our faith that's when true change happens.

As you think through these five practices, I want to leave you with an exhortation and an encouragement. The exhortation is that there is going to be a huge temptation with step one especially given our current circumstance today. I do believe without a shadow of a doubt in the hyper charged environment in which we live there is a temptation to think absolutely about everybody else's sin and to think acutely about our own. That should be reversed because what does Christ say? Jesus says in Matthew 7:1–5, [1] *“Judge not, that you be not judged. [2] For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. [3] Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? [4] Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? [5] **You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.**”*

This is not to say on some level corporately that there is some interaction there at that level but if our focus is on others, then we deflect, can even deny and lose our dependence on Christ because we're so hyper-focused on someone else. I would encourage and exhort you not to follow that practice but rather everyday, as Jerry Bridges says in his book, The Disciplines of Grace, ‘to remind yourself of the Gospel and truly say ‘if not for the grace of God there go I.’’ Have compassion, love, practice forgiveness and exercise your faith by looking at your own life in understanding our great need for abiding in Christ.

The final encouragement I have for you is for you to know Christ is with us. He is there. He says when you abide in Me and I in you, so He is abiding with us. He is not going to forsake us. This promise that He gives us of abiding in Him, has a positive impact not only on us but for the Kingdom and that's how we will see ‘grass roots’ change in our lives, our culture and our society. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your Word. I thank You that you give us such a great opportunity to have a relationship with You, Lord Jesus. Lord, we know just like Isaiah said ‘we are lost, broken and unclean and we need You’ to cleanse us of all filth and unrighteousness. Lord, we know that You promise that You will and that You do and that You continue to be with us. Thank You Father God for Your love, Your Word and the opportunities You have given us and I pray these things in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

HOW TO A.B.I.D.E. IN CHRIST / JOHN 15:1–11

- Abide means to remain, to stay, to continue
 - How do we continue in Christ?
 - A. *Aware/Acknowledge* our need for Christ.
 - B. *Believe* in Christ and His love for us.
 - I. *Inquire* of Christ through His Word.
 - D. *Depend* on Christ through His Holy Spirit.
 - E. *Exercise* our faith in Christ.