

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Know Him
John 15:1-11

In our time together last week, we were in Matthew 28 and saw the mission Jesus has given us as His followers. The Big Idea from that text was disciples of Jesus have a mission from Jesus to make disciples of Jesus.

No matter where you live, work, learn, or play, the mission of Jesus is the same for every one of His followers: be a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples of Jesus.

Where we left off last week was that part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus is to live in obedience to Him. That's why Matthew 28 says making disciples includes teaching people to obey all that Jesus commanded.

That's where we are going to pick up today. How do we teach people to obey the commands of Jesus? How do we expect to obey the commands of Jesus for ourselves?

That brings us to John 15. In this text, Jesus is gathered in the upper room with His 11 disciples. Judas has already left the room on his way to betray Jesus. These words offer us incredible insight on how we live in obedience to the commands of Christ and prove to be His disciples.

John 15:1-11

"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.

The first thing I want you to see is the direct connection between this text and being disciples who make disciples who obey Jesus.

8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Jesus says the proof of being a disciple is bearing fruit that glorifies God the Father. If we are going to be disciples who make disciples, we need to understand how we bear fruit and we need to know how to teach others to bear fruit. So, how is this text teaching us to be disciples who bear fruit?

Jesus uses a metaphor to teach the answer to that question. He says He is the true vine. He is the One and Only Vine. And His disciples are like branches connected to that vine.

John 15:5 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.

Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. In other words, we cannot bear ANY good spiritual fruit on our own. We are as lifeless as a withered, dried-up branch that has been cut off from a vine. We can do nothing apart from Jesus.

We cannot make disciples apart from Jesus. We cannot obey the commands of Christ apart from Jesus. We cannot live with Christian character apart from Jesus. Friends, we are withered, lifeless, and fruitless apart from the person of Jesus.

But the point of this metaphor isn't simply that we need Jesus. The point is that we can have Jesus and His life flowing in and through us. We can be connected to Him the way a branch is connected to the vine. It's called union with Christ.

Ephesians 2:4–10

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

On our own, we are spiritually dead in our sins. But God has shown us immeasurable grace by making a way for us to be saved from our sins, raised to new kind of life, seated in heavenly places, and given an eternal destiny in which He will show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us forever. How? In Christ, as we are united with Christ, as we live in Him and He lives in us.

And how does that happen? By God's grace alone through our faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

Friends, this is the message of the gospel. This is biblical Christianity. If we will place our faith and trust in Jesus, God the Father will miraculously unite us to the person of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. But, through faith in Him, He will live in us and produce spiritual fruit.

That's why Jesus commands us to abide in Him.

John 15:4

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.

The fruit-producing life of Christ flows in and through people who abide in Jesus as Jesus abides in them.

The word "abide" means "to remain, or to continue in the same place." It's the verb form for the word "dwelling place" – think "abode." So, what does it mean to continue in the same place with Jesus? Well, how do we begin the Christian life? How did we enter into union with Christ? Through faith in Him. By Believing and depending on the truth about Jesus. So, I take the call "to abide" or "remain in the same place" to be Christ calling us to continue in faith. He's saying continue believing and depending on Jesus.

Let me show you a couple reasons I say that.

John 15:7

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you...

Here, Jesus connects abiding in Him with His words abiding in us. How do His words remain in us? Through faith. As we believe the good news about Jesus that is the Word of God, He abides in us, and we abide in Him.

1 John 2:24

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

What did they hear from the beginning? The word of Christ, the gospel of Jesus. Abiding in Christ occurs as we believe and depend on the gospel truth about Jesus.

Galatians 2:20

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.

Paul didn't just start the Christian life through faith in Jesus, he continued by faith in Jesus. Or you could say He remained in the same place he started, depending on God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. He was abiding in Christ.

That's how we bear fruit. That's how we obey Christ's commands. That's how we live the Christian life. That's how we make disciples. Not I, but Christ who lives in me.

BIG IDEA: JESUS GIVES HIS FRUITFUL LIFE TO THOSE WHO ABIDE IN HIM BY FAITH.

That begs a question for each and every one of us. Don't answer this out loud, but by all means answer this question: Are you experiencing the fruitful life of Christ in you?

I'm not asking if you are busy in the church. I'm not asking if you are working hard in ministry. I'm not asking if you are doing your best to live a good life. That's not the primary question. The question is, "Are you experiencing the fruitful life of Jesus Christ in you? Do you know Him personally and intimately through His word, in a way that you are trusting and depending on Him? Is His life bearing fruit in you?"

That's the heart of God the Father for you. And that's the heart of your pastors for you. For that reason, there are a couple ways we want to focus on this dynamic so that you can grow in your understanding and deepen your experience of abiding in Christ.

- In the month of February, we will begin our next verse-by-verse study. God has laid on my heart to study the book of Colossians. It's all about Jesus and His life in us. I encourage you to go ahead and start reading it in preparation for our study and make a commitment to be present for that study.
- On Wednesday nights, we will be going through a 13-week study of the priorities of God's heart for us. The first 4 weeks will focus on making Him known. The second 4 weeks will focus on knowing Him better by studying what the Bible says about our life **in** Christ, **with** Christ, **through** Christ, and **for** Christ. So, if you haven't already made plans to be part of Wednesday nights, I strongly urge you to do it. This Wednesday is the opening Session.

The promise of the Gospel is that Jesus Himself will live in and through us, and we will experience Him producing fruit that is impossible for us to produce on our own. A minute ago, when I asked whether or not you are experiencing the fruitful life of Jesus, I realize some of you might not know what that would even look like or some might think they know but have the wrong idea.

So, in the time we have remaining, I want to quickly point out what you can expect to experience as you abide in Christ and He abides in you through faith. I want to warn you, we will go through these very quickly. I just want you to see them so you can form an idea of what to expect by abiding in Christ.

1. When We Abide in Christ, We Experience Pruning

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.

God the Father is at work in those who are united to Christ. He tends to each and every branch. Those who bear no fruit are taken away. Those who do bear fruit are pruned by God so that they will bear more fruit.

The first question is whether or not this is teaching that we can lose our salvation. The answer is ‘no.’ The clear teaching of the Bible, including the Gospel of John, is that the life we receive from Jesus is eternal life and we will never perish once we have it. Our salvation is secure in Christ.

John 10:28-29

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

Those who are in Christ will forever be in Christ.

- Romans 8:1 says there is never going to be any condemnation for those who are in Christ.
- Philippians 1:6 promises that once God begins the work of salvation, He always completes it.

This isn’t teaching that we can lose our salvation. It is teaching that you cannot be united to the life of Jesus and remain fruitless. Fruitless branches aren’t true disciples.

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

There are false branches, who claim to be followers of Jesus but are not truly connected to Christ, so they never bear real, spiritual fruit. Like Judas Iscariot, those so-called disciples are not really disciples, so they fall away. They don’t abide. In the end, they will be taken away by the Father.

But, for all those who are truly abiding in Christ, the Father prunes their lives so they will bear more fruit. And pruning is often a painful process. God allows suffering and trouble and hardship and pain to come into our lives to deepen our dependence on Jesus and thereby producing more and more fruit, making them more and more like Jesus.

So, when I ask you if you are experiencing the fruitful life of Christ, the first thing you should ask is: am I experiencing hardship and pain that makes me realize more and more that I need Jesus and stirring me to depend more and more upon Him?

If so, Praise the Lord! You are being pruned. And the Father only prunes real branches.

2. When We Abide in Christ, We Experience Answered Prayer

7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Abiding in Christ means believing and trusting in His word. That's why the operative phrase in this promise is that Christ's words abide in us. We don't just ask for anything. We ask for anything that aligns with the words of Christ. That's how we can have confidence in prayer, by aligning our prayers with the truths and promises of His word. When you do that, God promises to answer that kind of praying.

This is why we teach people to pray the word of God. As you pray for your family or friends or the circumstances of your life, don't just ask anything, ask according to what God says in His word.

Every morning, I open the Bible and read. As I read, I take notes on what I'm seeing. Promises to believe. Truths about God. Commands to obey. And those things form the basis of my daily prayers. For what I pray for myself and the people in my life.

One of the reasons so many of us do not see more answers to our prayers is because we aren't praying in alignment with the will and word of God. What would it look like if you made 2025 a year of passion prayer in alignment with the promises of God? Being in His Word and Praying from His Word!

Jesus says that abiding in Him corresponds to His word abiding in us. And that produces prayers that align with His word. Prayers that God promises to answer.

3. When We Abide in Christ, We Experience Love

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.

As we abide in Christ, we encounter His love. Remember, abiding is the result of believing and trusting in Jesus. And one of the core truths of the Gospel is that God loves us, and that Jesus demonstrated that love by dying on the cross in our place. That's one of the ways we abide in His love. We believe that. We believe Him in verse 9 when He says that He loves us just as the Father has loved Him.

When we believe that Jesus loves us completely and forever, we obey His commands because we believe they are given to us out of love. We believe that they are best for us because Jesus loves us.

But there's something more going on here than just that. We don't continue in His love by simply obeying Him. Look at verse 12: ***This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.***

This is the command: love others as we have been loved by Jesus. And remember, there's only one way to do that – by the power of Jesus in us. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing, including loving others as we have been loved.

So, as Christ lives in us, He produces His love in us. That's what enables us to love others. We continue in His love. How about taking that as one of your prayers for this year? "Jesus, produce your love in me. Jesus, enable me to love others the way you've loved me."

4. When We Abide in Christ, We Experience Joy

11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

As we abide in Christ, He doesn't just give us joy, He gives us His joy. We begin to rejoice in the things that Jesus rejoices in. We rejoice in ways that Jesus rejoices in. This doesn't mean we walk around in a state of manic hysteria. That's not how Jesus rejoiced.

- He wept outside the tomb of His friend. Even though He had joy.
- He grieved the sin of Jerusalem. Even though He had joy.
- He was angered over the spiritual abuse and manipulation taking place at the temple. Even though He had joy.
- Hebrews 12 says there was joy set before Him even as He despised the shame of suffering on the cross.

Jesus will give us that kind of joy. A gladness that comes from knowing and believing you are loved by God. A gladness that comes from knowing that God has a good plan and purpose in your pain, from knowing that death will lead to resurrection, from known the long night will come to an end and morning will dawn and He will make all things new, including you.

As you abide in Christ, that's what you can expect Him to do in you. A work of pruning and answered prayer, a work of love and joy. He does it and He will do it.

So, are you abiding in Christ today? Are you trusting in Him and depending upon Him to live in you?