



# ABIDE

Good Morning Church!

Today we are beginning a new series entitled ABIDE.

We have just concluded a series about KNOWING OUR ENEMY SATAN and the schemes he employs to distract us, discourage us, to ultimately destroy us.

And now we are moving on in a new series to LEARN THE JOY of what it means to ABIDE IN CHRIST.

Today we are going to explore together one of the most important passages where Jesus explains how people change.

And truthfully I think this is a question on everybody's mind: Is real change possible? And if so, how does it happen?



# ABIDE

One of the ways we know that everyone is focused on changing themselves is just go look at all the ***self-help*** books on Amazon.com. I looked... there are over 60,000 books on how you can help change yourself.

Well in this passage we are going to explore this morning Jesus takes you down deep to show you how **He says** you change; and along the way He gives one of the best pictures of what a disciple of His looks like.

You see church, WE CHANGE AS WE ABIDE IN HIM.

But what does it mean to ABIDE?



# ABIDE

*Illus:*

*Let's enter into that conversation this way.  
By a show of hands, how many of you have been  
married for at least 25 years? How many of you have  
celebrated your Silver Anniversary?*

*Clap.....the reason why I ask is because an  
American Social Psychologist, named Robert Zajonc  
compared photographs of couples on their wedding  
day with those taken 25 years later. His study  
showed that even if a husband and wife had no facial  
similarities at all, some 25 years later they looked  
surprisingly alike.*

*Do any of you feel that's true for you? 😊*



# ABIDE

*The study found that life-long lovers become so in sync with one another that they end up unconsciously imitating each others' expression, which in time changes the appearance of their faces.*

*Isn't that cool. It's science!*

*Literally being around someone close to you can make you LOOK MORE LIKE THEM.*

*Here we have (on the screens) a couple who has been married for more than 25 years, and with them I bet it's not just their facial expressions or their mannerisms that makes them look similar....after 50, 60 years of marriage, after connecting with someone that long I bet they can almost read each others minds. TIME SPENT is a huge component of what it means to ABIDE.*



# ABIDE

The word that Jesus uses in our text this morning for ABIDE is the Greek word meno which means ***“to make your home in.”***

It carries the idea of the conscious decision to NOT BE MOVED from something.

Church, honestly we choose every day what we will STICK WITH, what we will NOT BE MOVED FROM.

Some of those things we ABIDE in are good, they bless and fill out lives. But truthfully if we are all honest there are ATTITUDES, THOUGHTS, BEHAVIORS that we ABIDE in that are poison to us. And in our sinful state we have chosen to NOT BE MOVED from these poisonous ATTITUDES, THOUGHTS and BEHAVIORS.





# ABIDE

And friends when it comes to ABIDING IN CHRIST there are generally 3 categories of people.

There are those who HAVE NOT KNOWN the JOY of what it means to ABIDE IN CHRIST.

Most of the people in our world fit into this category, they follow their natural impulses and ABIDE in whatever feels good to them in the moment.

There are also those who have tasted the JOY of what it means to ABIDE IN CHRIST, but they are caught in the daily struggle between spirit and flesh, earthly priorities, heavenly priorities. This is where most of us (believers live) in the tension, in the struggle.



# ABIDE

But I believe there is also another, there is the opportunity to ABIDE in Christ in such a way that the struggle still remains, but you have already made the decision on where you stand, where you will make your home, where you will stick, and so when the tension comes you are already **STANDING ON JESUS, HIS WORK, HIS REDEMPTION.**

And friends what I really want to explore this morning is **HOW DO WE BECOME THE PEOPLE OF GOD WHO ARE NOT MOVED.** Because if that were not possible, Jesus wouldn't have called us to it.

**Pray:**



# ABIDE

I am going to start by reading this entire passage (John 15:1-17) slowly.

This is what Jesus says to His closest friends, His disciples as He is preparing them to literally **CHANGE THE LANDSCAPE OF THE ENTIRE WORLD BY ABIDING IN HIM.**

As I read this, allow these words to penetrate your heart. Because I know that for each one of us the Spirit is going to try to reach us through these words of Christ for us today.



## **John 15:1-17 (NIV)**

**“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.”**

# **ABIDE**

**Read:**

**4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**

**ABIDE**

**Continue Reading:**

**6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**

**ABIDE**

**Continue Reading:**

<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command.

**ABIDE**

**Continue Reading:**

**<sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business.**

**Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is my command:**

**Love each other.**

**ABIDE**

**Continue Reading:**





# ABIDE

At the beginning of our text Jesus uses the metaphor of gardening.

I am not a gardener at all, I literally have a brown thumb 😊.

But fortunately for me my wife is an excellent gardener and she has taught me that for many plants to flourish they have to be pruned.

My wife loves roses and we have several rose bushes. I have learned that roses need pruning because, if not, 2 things happen: #1. the branches begin to grow in on themselves. They literally choke on themselves. Too many branches also shield the roses from the light and air flow.



# ABIDE

#2. All the extra branches divert the plants' resources and attention away from the few good roses. So you end up with a bunch of little, scraggly, ugly roses rather than vibrant, healthy ones.

And in this gardening metaphor we see an example of the Christian life.

Jesus is the Vine, the source of LIFE, God the Father is the gardener, the one who prunes to make for more effective growth.

And you see often we forget that the Christian life isn't about what we can get from God, but rather a process in which we are pruned for maximum effectiveness.



# ABIDE

Raise your hand if you have experienced pruning by God?

It hurt didn't it?

These are the experiences in our lives that we would never want to live through again, but we wouldn't trade them for the world because we GREW EXPONENTIALLY as a result.

You see friends we often avoid these opportunities to be pruned by God because we know there might be pain involved. We might miss out on something, we might have to give up something.....but friends being willing to be pruned is CENTRAL TO ABIDING IN CHRIST.

<sup>4</sup> Remain in me, as I also remain in you. *No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.* <sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; *apart from me you can do nothing.*

**ABIDE**

But notice with me again in verse 4, Jesus says

**Read:** 

The branch only lives as it is connected to the vine. A branch has no life in itself, but as it is connected to the vine, the life of the vine flows into it.

*Illus:*

*I have a vine here that I brought with me. This is a vine from our back yard. Do you think that those of us here can use our ingenuity, our smarts to bring forth fruit from this vine? I mean we have PHD's here, chemists, we are a highly educated congregation.*

*Maybe we could duct tape a few strawberries to this vine ☺, but I don't think with all our efforts we can bring this back to life let alone make it grow.*

<sup>4</sup> Remain in me, as I also remain in you. *No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.* <sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; *apart from me you can do nothing.*

**ABIDE**

And that's Jesus' point here.

We have no spiritual life in ourselves; but as we ABIDE in Jesus, the life of the Holy Spirit flows into us.

In verse 5 when Jesus says, apart from me you can do nothing. Nothing does not mean nothing, because clearly a lot of people who aren't connected to Jesus do lots of things; even religious things/"good things". Throughout the Gospels Jesus frequently talks about lots of people who are not connected to Him at all who do lots of religious things. They go to church, read the Bible, participate in ministry.

No, "nothing" here means "nothing of eternal value." Nothing with real life in it.



Abiding in Christ means  
that *I rely on The Spirit.*

**ABIDE**

And this brings us to our first truth for this morning.

Abiding in Christ means that *I rely on The Spirit.*

We are not naturally good at relying on The Spirit of God, because often we are too self-reliant.

We rely on ourselves, our smarts, our ingenuity.

**Illus:**

As an example of this the dating site OKCupid revealed that when they asked people to rate their intelligence 2 out of every 5 people indicated they were geniuses.

Church does it feel to you that 40% of the people in your life are geniuses?

**Abiding in Christ means  
that *I rely on The Spirit.***

**ABIDE**

It was even worse when they isolated that question just for men, nearly 50% of men indicated they had a genius level of intelligence.

Now clearly this was highly influenced by the fact that these people were trying to attract a mate. But the fact remains that only about 1% of the population have genius level of intelligence, not 40% or 50%.

But this really does illustrate that we practice an unhealthy level of self-reliance in our culture.....and this self-reliance is fed by our pride.

And this is often what keeps us from relying on the Spirit of God as our home base from which we draw strength, wisdom, and insight about how to be who God created us to be.

Abiding in Christ means  
that *I rely on The Spirit.*

## ABIDE

*Relying on The Spirit means* that prayer is my first reaction when trouble comes my way.

*Relying on The Spirit means* that God's Word is my source of wisdom when I need clarity, answers.

*Relying on The Spirit means* that I care more about what God says about me than what man says about me.

*Relying on The Spirit means* that I can make decisions for my life that go against the flow of culture and I don't even feel ashamed or that I'm missing out.

*Relying on The Spirit means* that I have allowed (what The Apostle Paul calls) the deposit that guarantees my inheritance to run my life.

# John 15:9, 10

<sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> *If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love*, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

## ABIDE

Moving on, I want to focus on verses 9 and 10 where Jesus says.

**Read:** 

*What an awesome statement by Jesus here!* Think of God the Father's love for His Son Jesus. It is a love beyond what we can imagine.

Think of the love you have for your child/grandchild. Our love is just a pale reflection of His.

God has a perfect, everlasting love for His Son, ***and that is the love with which Jesus has loved us.***

Jesus says, **ABIDE** *"Make your home in that."*

# John 15:9, 10

<sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> *If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love*, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

## ABIDE

And this often seems to be the hardest part of Christianity for people to take hold of.

But you see Church, God's acceptance is given to us not as a reward for what we have done, but as a gift. It's called 'gift righteousness': God's righteousness given to us as a gift.

You see we often think we become righteous (*or, acceptable*) in God's sight by getting it right. (*And it makes sense, right? The more righteously you act, the more God accepts you and approves of you.*) But the gospel is the counter-intuitive truth that you can never be righteous before God, therefore God offers righteous standing before Him as a gift, not according to what you have done, but according to what Christ has done in your place. **THIS IS THE GOSPEL.** Gift righteousness given in *love*.



Abiding in Christ means  
that *I rest in His love.*

**ABIDE**

And that leads us to our second truth for this morning.

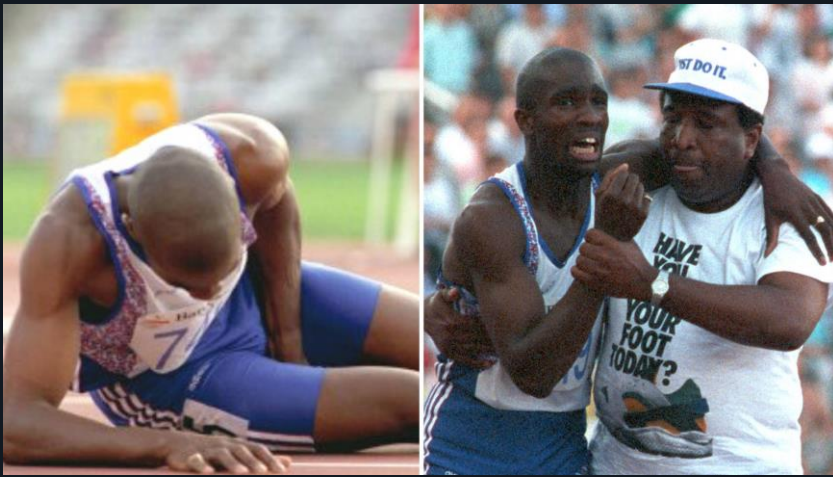
Abiding in Christ means that *I rest in His love.*

Illus:

One of my favorite depictions of a father's love happened at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Spain.

The world watched as a parable of the father's love was played out on international television.

As the gun sounded for the 400-meter race, Great Britain's Derek Redmond knew that his lifelong dream of winning the gold medal was in view, he could taste it. It was to be the culmination of years and years of hard work. This was his moment to shine.

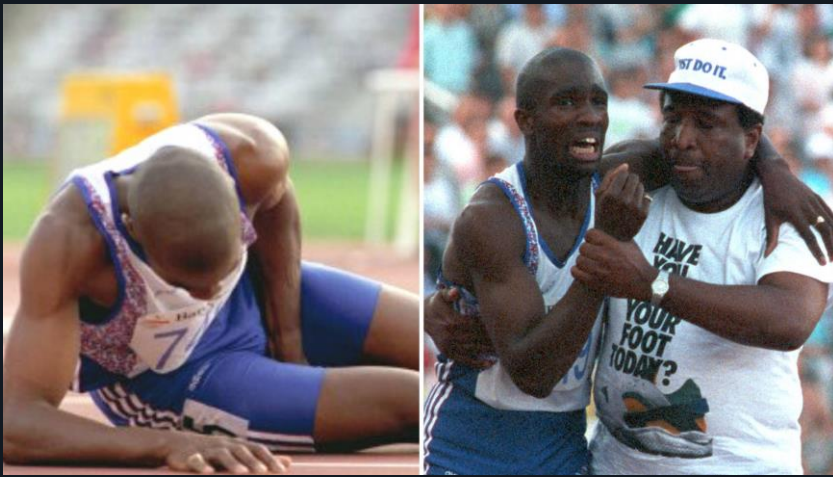


# ABIDE

But as he entered the back stretch, Derek was sent crashing to the ground by the ripping pain of a torn hamstring.

By an act of sheer will, Derek struggled to his feet in excruciating pain and began hopping toward the finish line (*many of you probably remember this*).

Suddenly Derek's father ran out of the stands, past a security guard. He threw his arms around his son. In a voice choked with emotion, he whispered, "Come on, son, let's finish this together." The crowd cheered and wept as they watched the father half-carrying his wounded son jerkily down the stretch and across the finish line.



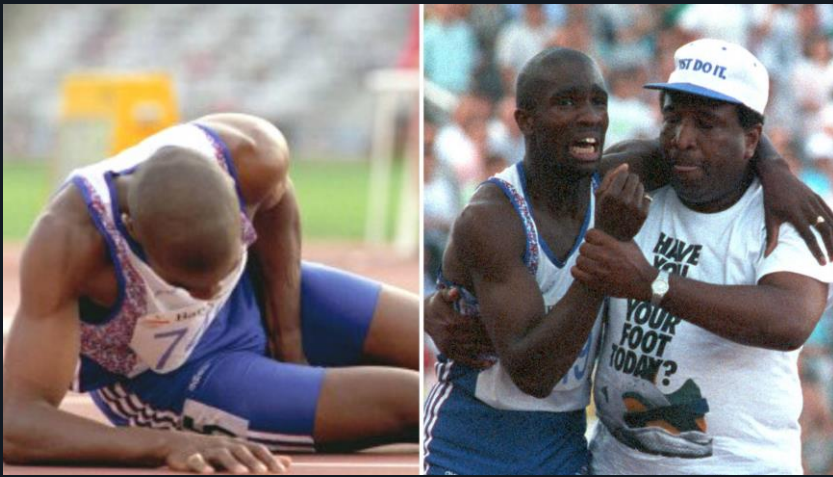
# ABIDE

If you have ever seen this video, it fills you with emotion to watch it...WHY?

Because it is the depiction of a SON IN NEED RESTING IN HIS FATHER'S LOVE. DEREK MADE HIS HOME IN HIS FATHER'S LOVE AS HE HOBBLING ACROSS THE LINE.

Friends our souls know how much we all truly need this, and so when we see it we are captured by it, moved by it. Church ask yourself this question, **when I fall down in life, when life injures me, is my initial reaction to rest in the LOVE OF THE FATHER?**

I don't know about you but too often in my life this isn't my initial reaction.



# ABIDE

Imagine if Derek, instead of embracing his dad had slapped him. Kind of like Will Smith slapping Chris Rock 😊. That would have been awful, and this moment would still likely be remembered but for a very different reason.

You see church, I would contend that when we fail to rest in THE LOVE OF THE FATHER in our daily lives it is a slap to Him.

Because you see Jesus didn't come down out of the stands for us, He came from the Throne Room of Heaven to lift us up.

And when we reject His love, and chase the love of the world or our own self-sufficiency we dishonor Him.

# John 15:16, 17

<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, *but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last*—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> *This is my command: Love each other.*

## ABIDE

But as we move onto and examine verses 16 and 17 in our text we are going to see exactly how we can HONOR Him by ABIDING.

**Read:** 

If you are IN CHRIST, if you are CONNECTED to the VINE, then you were CHOSEN, APPOINTED to BEAR FRUIT THAT WILL LAST. But what is FRUIT THAT WILL LAST?

Because you see Jesus is not interested in mere professions of faith in Him.

Jesus isn't interested in do-gooder gestures that do not amount to much.





# ABIDE

***Fruit that will last*** is the display of FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES.

In Galatians 5:22, 23 we are given this list of what MAKING OUR HOME IN CHRIST, AND SURRENDERING TO THE HIS SPIRIT CAN BRING FORTH FROM OUR LIVES.

That His Chosen might display....**LOVE** instead of hatred, **JOY** instead of misery, **PEACE** instead of arguments, **PATIENCE** instead of frustration, **KINDNESS** instead of cruelty, **GOODNESS** instead of wickedness, **FAITHFULNESS** instead of apathy, **GENTLENESS** instead of brutality, **SELF-CONTROL** instead of being undisciplined.

But in our text, Jesus doesn't give this list. He focuses on just one of these.

# John 15:16, 17

<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, *but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last*—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> *This is my command: Love each other.*

## ABIDE

## LOVE.

Verse 17: This is my command **LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

Jesus was asked by a Pharisee in Matthew chapter 22 what the greatest command of all the commands was and Jesus said, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*” <sup>38</sup> *This is the first and greatest commandment.* <sup>39</sup> *And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’* <sup>40</sup> *All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

But why is love the greatest? Because the **FRUIT OF LOVE LASTS THE LONGEST.**

**Abiding in Christ means  
that *I share His love freely.***

**ABIDE**

And that brings us to our third and final truth for this morning.

Abiding in Christ means that *I share His love freely.*

Our first two truths this morning *relying on the Spirit* and *resting in His love* deal with our INWARD ABIDING. This last truth deals with the OUTWARD EXPRESSION of our INWARD ABIDING.

Friends you will not be able to share Christ's love freely if there isn't a deep inward ABIDING going on in your life. And if the LOVE we show is the FRUIT THAT LASTS, how important then is it that WE [The Church] demonstrate this to a world in desperate need of the LOVE OF CHRIST. *[Pause]*

**Abiding in Christ means  
that *I share His love freely.***

**ABIDE**

Our nation has endured another horrific tragedy with this slaying of school children in Texas.

And as you turn on your TV to watch the coverage, do we see an exhibition of human LOVE to redeem this EVIL deed. No, it's this side fighting with that side, assigning blame, scoring points, all while EVIL prevails.

You see Christ doesn't just call us to ABIDE for our own sake, it's also for the sake of others.

Because as onlookers see us, "the redeemed" engaged in uncommon behavior (amazing Love) that leads to LIGHT, they have hope to find that same LIGHT too.

**Abiding in Christ means  
that *I share His love freely.***

## **ABIDE**

And this is why we need to share the LOVE OF CHRIST freely, and I say freely because we often find it easy to LOVE THOSE who agree with us, who share our values, who align with us. That's not loving freely. That's relatively easy.

But Jesus said himself (in Mark 2) that he didn't come for the healthy/righteous, He came for the sick, the unrighteous. Loving freely means that I don't need someone to measure up to a standard in order for me to love them. THIS IS HOW CHRIST LOVES US.

We need to own the fact that a part of what it means to ABIDE in Christ is how we LOVE ONE ANOTHER. IN HERE (the church) AND OUT THERE (the world).

**[Pause]**



# ABIDE

Illus:

From Saul Bellow's collection of traditional Jewish tales comes this story:

In a small Jewish town, there is a Rabbi who disappears each Friday morning for several hours.

His devoted disciples boast that during those hours their rabbi goes up to heaven and talks to God.

A stranger moves into town, and he's skeptical about all this, so he decides to check things out. He hides and watches.

The rabbi gets up in the morning, says his prayers, and then dresses in peasant clothes. He grabs an axe, goes off into the woods, and cuts some firewood, which he then hauls to a shack on the outskirts of the village.



# ABIDE

There an old woman and her sick son live. He leaves them the wood, enough for a week, and then sneaks back home.

Having observed the rabbi's actions, the newcomer stays on in the village and becomes his disciple. And whenever he hears one of the villagers say, "On Friday morning our rabbi ascends all the way to heaven," the newcomer quietly adds, "If not higher."

Why are this Rabbi's action admirable? Because he didn't do it to justify himself, he didn't do it for acclaim, he did it because the LAW of LOVE was in his heart.

Friends our Rabbi Jesus invites us to GROW IN HIM, to be SHAPED, PRUNED by The Father, so that we might HONOR His sacrifice and BEAR FRUIT THAT WILL LAST.





# ABIDE

Friends let's go inward with this.

Where might God be calling you to BEAR FRUIT THAT LASTS?

Can we bear fruit that lasts ***in our Homes*** (marriage, parenting, unbelieving relatives)?

Can we bear fruit that lasts ***at our Places of Work*** (co-workers, bosses, can we be light in darkness)?

Can we bear fruit that lasts ***in our Community/Neighborhood*** (school, the people we see when we walk down our the street/next door neighbor)?



# ABIDE

Next week is GO SUNDAY...an opportunity for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our community, to ABIDE in Him, bearing fruit that will last.

There are all sorts of ways to get involved. So if you are not involved get involved so that God's Love might be shown forth as we ABIDE in Him.

**Pray:**