

Rossville Church of Christ Doorpost Devo



January 22, 2023



Encouragement from God's Word

John 15:1-11: Disciples Abide

A key aspect of disciple-making according to Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 is to teach others to obey all that He has commanded. To be disciples and to make disciples, we must know what Jesus taught and learn to obey those teachings in our lives. In that spirit, the articles included in the Doorpost Devo will now focus on the teachings of Jesus and how that relates to our lives as disciples who make disciples.

Cont. on pg. 3 and 4

Scripture Plan: Read

The Great Commission

Mon, Tues, Wed.:

John 17:1-19 Each Night

Thurs., Fri., Sat.:

John 17:20-26 Each Night

Devo Plan

1. Mon.--Read and Pray Together
2. Tues.--Read, Pray, Ask Questions, and Discuss
3. Wed.--Read, Pray, and Think about how to Apply
4. Thurs.-Sat.--Repeat steps 1-3 with New Passage
5. Sunday--Pray and Reflect on What was Learned in Worship and Class

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Discussion Questions

John 17:1-19

Discussion Question #1: What are some key repeated ideas? What are Jesus' priorities in his prayer?

Discussion #2: Why is Jesus specifically praying for his disciples and not for the world? What does he want for them?

Discussion #3: Think about this prayer in light of Jesus' imminent death. How does that affect how we understand this prayer?

John 17:20-26

Discussion #1: Who is Jesus praying for in this section?

Discussion #2: Why is unity so important for Jesus in this prayer? What does our unity display to the world?

Discussion #3: What are factors that keep God's people from being one? What are some things from Christ's prayer that will help us to be one?

Apply and Obey

To obey what Jesus says in John 17:1-26, this upcoming week I will...

I will share what I learned with...

Prayer Points

- Lord, Thank You--Sending Jesus who loves us so much that He prays for us and is willing to die for His people
- Lord, We Praise You--For your glory and your eternal love
- Lord, Help Us--To be truly one so that can glorify you and that the world may know you sent Jesus

When we look at the sheer magnitude and scope of what God has called us to do in His Word, many of us feel intimidated, inadequate, and overwhelmed. There are hundreds of commands in Scripture from Jesus and from the inspired writers. And not only are there many commands to follow, but the commands are often difficult, if not impossible, to fulfill. The daunting task of loving our enemies comes to mind, not to mention the grand call to make disciples of all nations. When we consider these massive responsibilities and expectations, it is no wonder we sometimes feel overwhelmed and burdened. Many of us are just trying to survive and get through the week, and the commands of Jesus feel like another addition to a foreboding to-do list. All of us want to be productive and fruitful. All of us want to do meaningful work for God. But often we find ourselves exhausted, overworked, and frustrated by our inability to do the things that Christ has asked of us. This creates a vicious cycle of guilt, followed by determination to do better, followed by disappointment and discouragement. Sometimes it feels like just too much. Yet, what we must remember is that God's commands are not designed to burden us. They are designed to draw us into life and joy. Jesus says as much in John 15:11. Consider Christ's words in this chapter. The wisdom and commands he offers here helps us reorient our perspective about the call to obedience and our desire for productivity and fruitfulness. Jesus says this in John 15:1-11:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 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. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 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. 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. 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. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I 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, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

The commands Jesus gives here are not simply call for us to work harder and do better. He provides the key for true fruitful obedience. Fruitfulness, productivity, and obedience that glorifies God is a result not of pure willpower but of abiding in Jesus. The word abide means to live in, to remain, or to rest in. Disciples of Christ recognize that we are not merely rule-followers keeping a list of commands. We are followers of a person that we are deeply connected to by faith. We live in Him and He in us. Because of this, Jesus makes the startling statement that apart from him we can do nothing. This may be a shock to our American sensibilities that tend to elevate self-sufficiency and self-help. In contrast to that, Jesus reminds us of our total dependence. We often try to produce fruit in order to feel good about our relationship. In other words, we think we will be closer to God and more approved and loved if we do more for Him. But Jesus shows us that we must be totally reliant on Him before true fruitfulness can come.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9

If we abide in Jesus, God provides the pruning. If we remain in the Vine, God transforms. If we rest in Christ's love, God produces the fruit. If we stay in His words and promises, Jesus offers joy. Joy and obedience cannot be manufactured by human designs or effort. They flow out of a vibrant connection to Jesus.

In this passage in John 15, we get a good idea of what it looks like to abide in Jesus as the Vine, as the source of life and holiness and joy. Jesus connects this abiding to His Words. We cannot abide in Jesus if we ignore His Words. Now some of us might read that and automatically think of another burdensome checklist item. I guess abiding in Jesus means I have to read my whole Bible in a year. While these plans can be great, if we see Bible reading as another item on a list, we will be burdened rather than blessed. Discipline and planning are necessary, but we must see our Bible reading primarily as a connection to a person. Abiding in the words of Jesus is not just reading words on a page. It is hearing from a living person who is the living God. It means letting those words shape us as we think as we meditate, reflect, and live in the Word. Abiding in the words of Jesus is not simply about scanning an instruction manual for information. It is about delighting in sweet promises. It is about being invited into a more fulfilling way of life. It is about coming to know an unfathomably beautiful person.

Jesus also connects this abiding idea to our life of prayer in verse 7. If we abide in Him, we can be confident that God hears and answers our prayers. As we are shaped by the person of Jesus and who He is, our hearts, thoughts, and prayers will be more and more aligned with the will and purposes of God. And as we abide, we grow in our trust and dependence. If we do not pray, we are not abiding. We are not remembering the truth that apart from God we can do nothing. Prayer demonstrates our humble surrender and loving trust in the God who works powerfully in us. Abiding through prayer mercifully relieves us of so much burden and pressure because we are going to the God of all might to help us accomplish what He has called us to accomplish. So if we are frustrated by our lack of fruitfulness or lack of obedience and success, perhaps we are relying on our own efforts rather than abiding in dependent prayer.

Finally, Jesus tells us that abiding in Him means abiding in His love (verse 9). If we want to reach the world with the love of Jesus that it so desperately needs, we must live in His love. We must draw near to it, remind ourselves of it, see it in Jesus and what He has done for us. And in doing so, we will keep His commands. Keeping the commandments of Jesus and loving Jesus have a mutually beneficial relationship. The more we keep His commandments in dependent faith, the more we will love Him and see His glorious wisdom. The more we love and know, the more motivated we will be to do what He has said.

We attach ourselves to so many things that offer no strength, life, love, or rest for us. But Jesus is the True Vine, and He is exploding with vibrant life, joy, and love. His words created worlds and the abundant blessing of creation. His words are designed to renew and create new life in us as well. As we seek to follow and obey, let us never forget to abide. If we do, we cannot even imagine what God can do in us.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9