



Spirit of Grace

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July, 2025

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The Power of Abiding

The concept of abiding in Jesus has been a huge part of my life for almost as long as I have been a Christian. It began one day when I read these words: **"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."** (John 15:5). Not all Bible versions use the word abide. Some say remain, and that is essentially the meaning of abiding. We are to be trees of righteousness, planted firmly in Christ Jesus, never moving.

One thing we can say about trees – they never change locations. If you plant them in a certain place, you can come back twenty-five years later, and if someone has not chopped them down, they will be in precisely the same place where you planted them. They do not walk, run, or hop. Rabbits hop, crickets hop, kangaroos hop, frogs hop, but we never see a hopping tree. They "abide" in the soil where they have been planted.

This is abiding. You are a Christian today, you will be a Christian tomorrow and ten years from now, twenty years from now, fifty years from now, if you live that long, you will still be trusting Jesus, loving Jesus, and serving Jesus. But when I looked at the importance of abiding, I came to realize that there is a secondary meaning of abiding in Jesus that goes deeper than simply, "Don't backslide." I came to see the need to abide

throughout each day, staying in touch with the Lord morning, noon, and night.

Before then, I had set up a devotional routine which almost always happened in the mornings. It was in the mornings that I would pray and spend time in the Scriptures. I thought of this as my devotional time. But after that time, I would go about my day without thinking much about the Lord, without praying (unless in an emergency or at dinner time) and without reading any more in the Bible. I had had my time with God; now it was time to work and do real life. It was as though I was saying to God after my morning time with Him, "Goodbye Lord. I've got a lot to do today, but I will see you again tomorrow morning, same time, same place."

But when the Lord began challenging me about the abiding life, He revealed that this was not enough. And as I looked through the Scriptures to investigate this deeper level of abiding, I found a number of Biblical verses and passages that speak of this. One



example of this is found in Psalm 1. David describes the blessed of the man who does not walk in the "counsel of the ungodly." But then he declares how the blessed man or woman lives, writing: **"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."** (Psalm 1:2). He does not say that this blessed man meditates on the Lord every morning, but "day and night." There is a continual communing with God and His word throughout the day. And then he declares that such a man will be **"like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth**

its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." (Psalm 1:3).

Here is the essence of abiding. This man or woman is planted near an abundant source of life-giving water. And they just stay right where they are and keep soaking in the water hour by hour and day by day. They are fruitful, their leaves are always green, and whatever they touch prospers and is blessed. Wow! What Christian would not want this kind of life?

In the Psalm 1 passage, the "job description" for this tree is incredibly simple. He has been planted by the rivers of water, and his number one duty is to stay planted. He dare not try to remove himself from where he was planted. He is to remain exactly where he is, and drink in the sun, soak in the water, and allow time and God to grow him into a fruitful tree.

The Power of Abiding

And that is exactly our duty and command in Christ. We have been planted in the Fountain of living waters. It is our job to remain in fellowship with Jesus and with the Father throughout each day, month, and year. God told Joshua, **"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night..."** (Joshua 1:8).

Morning devotional times with the Lord are good, and if you are doing this, you are probably doing better than most Christians. But they are not enough. We need to check in with God throughout the day. A little time in the word over our lunch hour, sneaking away from the family for brief time in the evening to feed on His word and tell Him what is on our heart – this is the deeper aspect of the abiding life. No, we cannot pray and read the Bible 24/7. God would not expect us to. But neither can we ignore God all day long and expect that the rivers of living water are going to flow freely and abundantly our lives. Through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has made Himself available to us. Let us come before His presence throughout each day and night, pausing from our busyness to fellowship with Him and to draw on the divine rivers. It will be time well spent.

SOCCER EVANGELISM!

Recently we had some money left over from one of our Kenyan missions, and I told one of our team members to buy a new soccer ball with it (they call it football). I told him to use it as an evangelistic tool toward the youth, who absolutely love the game of soccer, but often must play with a worn out ball or a homemade ball. I instructed them to make sure and have short Bible classes either before or after the soccer match. It has worked better than I thought it would. In the first month eight young men gave their lives to Jesus as a result.

I was so excited about this new type of outreach and the results, that I sent them more money to buy five more soccer balls. As a result they had an area-wide tournament and 26 young people received Christ. Praise God for creative means to reach more Africans for Christ!

One local pastor shared: "I'm so grateful for the tournament. We had a blessed Sunday service like never before. So many youths attended that we ran out of space for other members. This is a good challenge, and we thank God for this new direction.."



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