

Exegesis

Vs. 7 – Needless to say, at this point, the disciples must've seen the importance of abiding in Christ. By remaining in close personal fellowship with Jesus, they *avoid* a fiery future and *ensure* their fruitfulness. But what did it *mean*—i.e., practically, realistically, fundamentally—to “abide” in Christ? What could the disciples *do* to ensure they were, in fact, *maintaining* a close personal fellowship with Jesus? After all, their master was not some hotel that a person could check into and never leave. Considering that the stakes were incredibly high, there had to be a *tangible* way for the disciples, as branches, to keep their connection to the True Vine. Sure enough, there was; Jesus says, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you...” If Christ's word abides in the disciple, then the disciple is abiding in Christ. Scriptural obedience is evidence that the believer truly loves the Son of God and that God the Father has made his home with the believer (cf. 14:21, 23). Those who safeguard the Scriptures in their hearts have been secured by Jesus and vice versa (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). If you'll recall, in 8:31-32, the Lord reassured believers that, “If ye *continue* [emphasis added] in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Thus, as before, the Lord is emphasizing obedience.

However, considering the vine analogy currently at play, “abiding” cannot mean mere conformity to Jesus’ word, though, to be sure, it cannot mean less than that. It must also imply a long-lasting *reliance* on the teachings of Jesus that *transforms* the believer.¹ It must mirror the same type of relationship that a branch experiences in a vine. In other words, “abiding in Christ” is not only being mindful of the “dos” and “don'ts” but also *embracing* a whole new way of life (cf. 14:6). Our conduct *and* character will be changed when we become a part of Jesus. Or, as Carson so aptly puts it, “Conformity in one area ensures conformity in the other; a test in the observable area of obedience to Christ is a test of the unseen area of genuine spiritual vitality.”² Obedience is indicative of a dependence on Christ. Are you dependent on Christ? If so, you will act and be different. Essentially, “abiding in Christ” is learning to live out a new nature (cf. 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-17).

And one of the traits, aka “fruits,”³ of that new nature is *answered prayer*. Jesus says, “Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” This is not a blanket promise that God will

¹ Köstenberger (2008), p. 455.

² Carson (1991), p. 518.

³ Though “fruit,” as explained before (see notes for vs. 4-5), refers to *any* Christian virtue (i.e., love, joy, peace, etc.), Jesus explicitly highlights peace (cf. 14:27), answered prayer (cf. 15:7, 16), obedience (15:10), Christ-like love (15:12), and bearing witness (15:27) in the Farewell Discourse.

grant every prayer request (see notes 14:13). Instead, it is a promise to those who live and breathe the word of God.⁴ Only those who "abide in the word" will experience a fruitful prayer life. Few things are as powerful and effective as the prayers of such a person (cf. Jam. 5:16). Why? Because they ask only for those things that they *know* God wants them to have (cf. Ja. 1:5-8; 4:3). When we are so entuned with the will of the Father via the word of his Son, asking becomes a simple prerequisite to receiving because we will ask for the things that we *know* we ought to receive (cf. 11:41-42; Mat. 7:7-11). Every request becomes like a hungry child asking its father for food; it's gonna happen.

But sometimes, even when our requests are informed by the Scriptures, certainty can still allude to us. What then? Ultimately, in whatever we ask for, we ought to be after the Lord's will for our life (cf. Mat. 6:31-33; Lu. 22:42-44; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; esp. Jam. 4:13-15). Even in the realm of our daily necessities (i.e., food, clothing, etc.), we still ought to desire God's will *more* (cf. 4:34). The prayer life of a fruitful branch is theocentric—i.e., God-centered—rather than egocentric—i.e., self-centered (cf. 1 Jn. 5:14-15). So, when it's hard to know what to pray for, we can *always* ask for God's will to be done and rest assured that we'll receive what we should have. Ending a prayer with "thy will be done" is not hedging our bets; it is putting every request in its proper place and order.

Vs. 8 – Jesus concludes the vine imagery by reminding the disciples that their fruit serves a specific *purpose*. He says, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." The believer does not abide in Christ for selfish reasons, such as, for example, answered prayer. They "bear much fruit" so that they might *glorify* God.

To "bear much fruit" does not mean the disciple gets the most out of life; it means God gets the most out of the disciple. After all, if everything that Christ accomplished was for the sake of his Father's glory (cf. 12:28; 13:31-32; 14:13; 17:4), then, likewise, all that we do, ought to be done for the sake of God's glory (cf. 21:19; 1 Cor. 10:31).⁵ The sole reason we should *want* to abide in Christ is not to make a name for ourselves but to make a name for God. Fruitfulness magnifies the glory of God in the same way that fruitlessness "robs God of the glory that rightly belongs to him."⁶ A false disciple is a *stain* on the name of God (cf. 2 Sam. 12:14; Prov. 30:8-9; Jer. 34:16; Ezek. 36:20; Amos 2:7; Rom. 2:24), whereas a true disciple is a *credit* to his reputation (cf. Mat. 5:16; 1 Cor. 6:20; Col. 3:17, 23; 1 Pet. 2:12; 4:11). So, all those who glorify

⁴ Klink (2016), p. 654, "This prayer is not asked in isolation but in the intimate, mutually indwelling relationship between Jesus and the disciples."

⁵ Morris (1995), p. 597, "God is glorified in the work of the Son (13:31-32). Now we have the other truth that God is also glorified in the work of believers who abide in the Son..."

⁶ Klink (2016), p. 654; Carson (1991), p. 518.

God by bearing "much fruit" are, without a doubt, showing themselves to be Christ's disciples. When asked, "what do you want to do with your life," before the Christian says anything else, they will say, "Glorify God."⁷

⁷ Köstenberger (2008), p. 455, "Hence, both Jesus' and his followers' missions culminate in the bringing of glory to God."

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 56 | John 15:7-8

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

At this point, the disciples must've seen the importance of *abiding* in Christ. By remaining in close personal fellowship with Jesus, they *avoid* a fiery future and *ensure* their fruitfulness. But what did it *mean*—i.e., practically, realistically, fundamentally—to “abide” in Christ? What could the disciples *do* to ensure they were, in fact, *maintaining* a close personal fellowship with Jesus? After all, their master was not some hotel that a person could check into and never leave. Considering that the stakes were incredibly high, there had to be a *tangible* way for the disciples, as branches, to keep their connection to the True Vine. Sure enough, there was: abiding in Christ = continuing in Christ's word. *Obedience* indicates that a disciple is a fruitful branch in the same way that *disobedience* indicates that a disciple is a fruitless branch.

For example, true disciples live to glorify God, whereas false disciples live only to please themselves. Genuine believers are theocentric in everything they say and do, while fake believers are egocentric. And the best way to distinguish between the two is to look at their *prayers*. The prayers of a fruitful branch will be overly concerned with the will of God, but the prayers of a fruitless branch will be concerned only with its own needs.

When asked, “what do you want to do with your life,” before the Christian says anything else, they ought to say, “Glorify God.”

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