

Do you remember what it was like to receive a love letter?

- When I was in College, traveling, singing in Churches ... Tricia and I had just started dating...
 - She had our itinerary – She would send letters to the places I was going.
 - The Pastor would say, "I have a letter to Brett and Marc." Could not read until after
 - Could not wait to get to our rooms...rip it open...
 - She would tell me what she has been doing...How things are going.
 - Love, Tricia. What did she mean by "love" There is a heart, where the "O" should be...what does that mean?
- Imagine if you received a letter from a loved one, and they realized you had not opened it.
 - "You did not open my card / letter – We're like, "Oh, I haven't opened it yet." Yeah, I read a little bit, but I have so much going on – Really busy, didn't think it was important...
 - I haven't opened it this week... I haven't opened it today...

The God of the universe, who loves you more than you can possibly image, has written an incredible letter...all about Himself, His plan. His love for you. His Sacrifice... The future

- **If wonder if that's the way he feels...I haven't opened it this week / today**

As we continue our Unstoppable Force Series – **Preach a message on our Values: Abide in Christ**

- We are examining how the church is to be a people of hope for the world in darkness
- We have looked at Our Salvation – Our Statements - Our Structure: We examined the Two Offices & Two Ordinances
 - This Series is not only Foundational and to who we are as a church family, but it is Fundamental to who we will become moving forward.
- If you have missed any of the last three sermons in this series, I would encourage you to watch those on-line.

Today, We begin talking about Values – What is it

What church values are and why they matter

- **They are foundational beliefs:** They are **guiding principles** that shape a church's identity and purpose. **They drive culture and behavior:**
- **They are a compass:** Values provide guidelines and principles for the church's strategic thinking and decision-making, and are used to assess if ministries are aligned with its goals.

If you have been here for any length of time, you have heard us refer to this before, but not necessarily in this way...

We Value God's Word – We will Abide in Christ (Personally & Collectively)

- For the past few years, we have been using this phrase to challenge and encourage us to be in God's Word, but we want to clarify, and communicate that we not only Value God's Word, but abiding in it!
- Abiding in Christ is a Foundational Belief, a Guiding Principle that drives our culture & behavior

John 8:31 - Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

- Abiding is Evidence of Identity as disciples and Sons and Daughters

These Values, are not only Guiding Principles, but are Definition/Description of what

ABIDE - "It is impossible to follow Jesus without abiding in Him."



- Just as Jesus valued His relationship with the Father, we too must value our Time with the Lord

We know we ought to...Before we dive into the Theology of this truth, let me share this with you
Researchers call it **THE POWER OF FOUR**

In a recent study from the Center for Bible Engagement, they said...

- If you read the Word of God 1,2, or 3 times a week, the results are **negligible** – It has little or no effect on your life
- What they saw is that when you got to 4 times or more a week, people's lives radically changed...

Temptations decreases: [Link](#)

- **Drinking** to excess -62%
- Viewing **pornography** (other **immoral** behavior)-59%
- Feelings of **loneliness** decreased by 30% (**Anger** by 32%)

Researchers also found that Bible engagement also produces more peace and joy in a person's life by reducing the frequency of various emotional struggles. "Receiving, reflecting on, and responding to God's Word four or more times a week decreases a person's odds of struggling with these issues:

- (Positive results) **Sharing** your faith increased by 200%
- **Discipling** other increased 230%
- **Giving** Financially to a church increased 416%
- **Memorizing** Scripture – 407%

The Word of God Renews, It Enlightens, It guides, It guards, It Brings Joy, It is Rewarding

- This is Why there is no time like God Time

John 15:4-5 - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "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.

KEY THEOLOGICAL TRUTH: ABIDE (John 15:5) "It is impossible to follow Jesus without abiding in Him."

- My Relationship with Jesus Christ, must be my highest priority

Two truths about Abide that I want you to see this morning...

Living Union – Relationship – Salvation aspect

Fruitful Communion – Fellowship – Sanctification aspect

Living Union – Relationship – Begins At Salvation

John 15:1-5 - "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 bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

John 15:4-5 - Abide **in** Me, and I **in** you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it **abides in the vine**, neither can you, unless you abide **in** Me. "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.

When we commit Jesus as our Lord of our lives, repent of our sins and by faith trust him as Savior we become His children and He becomes our father – One commentator put it this way...

- We are in a solemn, binding, indissoluble covenant with Christ and so are eternally in union with Him and identified with Him. When He died, we died. When He was buried, we were buried. When he was raised up, we were raised up.
- When He was seated at the right hand of His Father, we were seated at the right hand of our Father in heaven.

The Phrase “in Christ” is repeated throughout the NT – This is Based on Christ Finished Work/Our Response

2 Cor. 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Rom. 8:1 - There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are **in Christ Jesus**, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Col. 2:6-7 - As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, **so walk in Him**, ⁷ rooted and built up **in Him** and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

KEY THEOLOGICAL TRUTH: ABIDE (John 15:5) “It is impossible to follow Jesus without abiding in Him.”

WE are Initially United with Christ at Salvation – Relationship – This is our Position

- Moment of Salvation (repent and belief-Trust Him-Saved) Made New
- **John MacArthur** said, “Repentance itself is not a work, but works are its inevitable fruit. Repentance and faith are inextricably linked in Scripture. Repentance means turning from one’s sin, and faith is turning to God” (Study Bible Notes)
- **Matthew 3:8** - Therefore bear fruits worthy of **repentance**
- **Mark 1:14-15** - Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent**, and believe in the gospel.”
- **1 Thessalonians 1:9** - For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you **turned** to God from idols to serve the living and true God
- **Acts 3:19** - **Repent** therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

If Jesus hasn’t CHANGED you, He hasn’t SAVED you!

Regret vs. Repentance

- Walk into Work –
 - Furious for no good reason – Lash Out – Let your boss have it... You tell him exactly what you think about him and his wife and mother and his grandmother and his dog. Next thing you know, you’re fired.

- Later that night, you feel **just sick** about the whole thing. How could you have been so stupid to say all that. Now you're out of work. That's regret. You don't have to see your sin or admit wrong and be humbled to feel regret. You just have to feel bad about the consequences of your actions. It's easy to have regret, but that's not repentance.
- Suppose you're out in the lobby after church and a group of you are chatting about "her."
 - No one has talked to "her," but you all talking about her—what's wrong in her marriage, what's wrong with her kids, what's wrong with her house. You aren't strategizing how to help her. You're just talking about her. And then you realize she's been looking for her coat right behind you the whole time. She's heard the whole thing. And as she bolts out of church crying, you feel just terrible.
 - You are so embarrassed. Now, maybe you feel bad, might be moved to ask for forgiveness, but it could be that you are just embarrassed that you got caught.
 - **You feel terrible, not so much with having gossiped, but that she heard you gossiping.** You wonder what she thinks of you now and if she will tell others about this incident. Sure, you feel terrible, **but it's out of love for your reputation, not out of hatred for sin. You're simply embarrassed, and that's not repentance.**
- Apology is not repentance either.
 - To be sure, repentance often involves an apology. But just because you've issued an apology doesn't mean you've repented. We've all heard and given pseudo-apologies. "I'm sorry if you were offended." "I'm sorry if you took things the wrong way." "I'm sorry I said that about your kids. It's not that I think their bad kids, their just wild, unruly, and undisciplined. I'm sorry you're so sensitive." Or even when the apology is sincere, it may not be a sincere statement of repentance. **It may just be a sincere statement of feeling remorse or shame.**
- I am convinced that many who claim to have professed faith in Christ, have had a feeling of regret, that falls short of repentance.
- **Repentance involves two things: a change of mind and a change of behavior.**
- Most of us have heard/know Amazing Grace – written by John Newton was a drunken sailor and a slave trader. He was converted in a storm at sea. His life whole did not change at once. But because his repentance was genuine, he did change.
 - I stood in need of an Almighty Savior; and such a one I found described in the New Testament. Thus far, the Lord had wrought a marvelous thing: I was no longer an infidel: I heartily renounced my former profaneness, and had taken up some right notions...I was sorry for my past misspent life, and purposed an immediate reformation. I was quite freed from the habit of swearing, which seemed to have been as deeply rooted in me as a second nature. Thus, to all appearance, I was a new man.
 - From there he had a long road of being transformed from one degree of glory to the next. He changed his mind and his behavior slowly began to follow suit. It took time, but he bore fruit in keeping with repentance (Luke 3:8). He did not change in order to become new, but that he was a new man had to be proved by his change.
([Kevin DeYoung - Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven Is at Hand](#))

We are Continually United with Christ through Sanctification – Fellowship – This is our Practice

Fruitful Communion – Fellowship – Continues in Sanctification

John 15:4-5 - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "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.

Abide Means to Remain – to Stay attached – Begins with Salvation, Continues through Sanctification

So not only is Abiding in Christ about **Living Union, it is about Faithful Communion**

- To abide in Jesus is not a static relationship but an ever deepening, joyful, vital personal fellowship with Him.
- To abide means-being at home with Christ, comfortable with Him, enjoying unbroken fellowship, to live in, to dwell or to make your home it
- This is not just an academic pursuit of "truth" in general; but it is fellowship,

1 John 1:3 - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

As we Abide in Christ (Communion) – His life flows through us

Our Union with Christ is Supercharged by Our Communion with Christ

Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

- Paul is saying, "Christ lives in me...life I now live is His..."
- Imagery of Vine and Branches – The life-giving nutrients-flow from the vine to branches

2 Corinthians 3:18 - But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Application – Action Steps

We Value God's Word: Individually and Collectively

We want every environment to be saturated with God's Word – Preach it, Proclaim it

We value the Word of God so much, we strive to align everything (as much as possible)

- Worship – Sunday School – D-Group (Large Group, Small Group, D-Group)
 - Building on each other – Lord Willing, we will begin Matthew in December.
- What we preach / teach is taught to our Kid Min
 - We know what is being taught, but we are equipped for those conversations
 - We produce a Parent Take Home paper
 - You read the story, talk about it at home, they come to church, hear the story, and they say, "My dad told me this story." Now who is the hero?
 - Parents, You are the primary Faith Trainers / Primary Disciple Makers in your home. You can disciples your children, We like to say, "You can do it; We can help"
- We teach / preach on their level
 - Fun Environment, using puppets, and skits...
 - It is a sin to bore a kid.
 - We want them to have a faith they can grow into and not out of

Individually: Get a Game Plan – If you fail to plan, you plan to fail
Place, Plan, A Pen, Prayer

GET A PLAN – To Read the Word

Where do I start? Where do I read? There are several great resources – Let me encourage you to get a plan

- Daily Discipleship Guide TFBC+ Our Church's Reading plan & Daily Discipleship Guide (email / post weekly)
- YouVersion – Bible Recap – F-260

GET A PLACE – To Meet with God

Not only should we get a plan, but let me encourage you to get a Place.

- Warning, lying in bed is not the place for God Time – Certainly can talk to the Lord, but if you are not careful, what could happen... Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed by thy.... (snore)
- Start Your Day with God Time –
- If I don't exercise in the morning, it's not gonna get done – I have more control over AM

GET A PEN – To Write with

Observations – Application – Action Steps –

Write Down what God is doing - Sermon Notes -

- Write it down - "Faded ink is better than forgotten memories."
- You cannot apply what you cannot remember, and you cannot remember what you don't write down.
- That's why we encourage you weekly to bring a pen and paper and write down message notes
- Writing notes helps you remember what you heard – It keeps you engaged and promotes concentration and boosts effective listening which in turn increases understanding

GET A PRAYER – To Pray

Ps. 119:18 - Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.

Charles Spurgeon observed, "Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures till you open them

Get a Grip

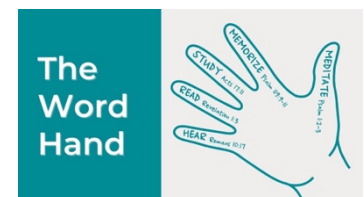
Hear – Rom. 10:17 - So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Read – Rev. 1:3 - Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.

Study – Acts 17:11 - These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

Memorize – Ps. 119:9-11 - How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. ¹⁰With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! ¹¹Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

Mediate – Ps. 1:2-3 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. ³He shall 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.



Get into the Word until it gets into you!

- **Daily Time in the Word**
- **Scripture Memory – Increases the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit in our life.**

Do you really think this is that important...

- Henry Blackaby (Experiencing God) wrote, "Everything in your Christian life, everything about knowing God and experiencing Him, everything about knowing His will depends on the quality of your love relationship with God. If this relationship is not right, nothing in your life will be in order."

John 15:5 - "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.***

Bullpen:

Closing:

Compare your hunger for God with the hunger of Wilbur Reese, who wrote a book back in 1971 called \$3-Worth of God. He said:

- "I would like to buy \$3-worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine.
- I don't want enough of Him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant worker. I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth.
- I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack, please. I would like to buy \$3-worth of God."

Center for Bible Engagement – Power of 4 - [Link](#)
State of the Bible - [Link](#)

Quotes:

Andrew Murray, "If, in our orthodox Churches, the abiding in Christ, the living union with Him, the experience of His daily and hourly presence and keeping, were preached with the same distinctness and urgency as His atonement and pardon through His blood, I am confident that many would be found to accept with gladness the invitation to such a life, and that its influence would be manifest in their experience of the purity and the power, the love and the joy, the fruit-bearing, and all the blessedness which the Savior connected with the abiding in Him."

It is through Abiding in Christ that we become like Christ – "...no longer I, but Christ lives in me..."

- At the moment of Salvation, Christ's Spirit comes to indwell us, empower us to live out the Christ's life
- Fruit is evident – Gal. 5:22-23 - ... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control;
- Jesus points to 3 evidences later in John 15
 - **Loving Obedience – (v.9-10) - Complete Joy – (v.11) - Answered Prayer – (v.7-8)**
 - **John 15:4-5 – You cannot bear fruit without abiding in Christ**

John 15:2 - Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes...

John 15:6 - If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

John 15:8 - By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Possible Opening Illustration

As we begin this morning, I want to ask, How long can you hold your breath?

- Anyone longer than 30 seconds? 1 minute?
- The average person can hold their breath anywhere between 30 seconds and 2 minutes.
- I know we would all agree that breathing is important to living
 - It's so important, we do it without thinking – It is a ***natural rhythm of life***
 - Humans are not made to go without air – Bad things happen when we do not breath

Abiding in Christ is like Breathing – Really two parts right? Inhale & Exhale

- Inhale – We breath in God's Word as we read, study, memorize, and mediate
- Exhale – We breath out through prayer and praise
- The Word of God and Prayer must become second nature to us - It is a ***natural rhythm of Spiritual life***

The Application of the Series - What are being asked to Do (based on theology...)

Every quality relationship requires *Time*.

There is no growing relationship apart from time spent together. Therefore:

GOD TIME: an intentional pursuit of God daily – Ps. 84:10-11; Mark 1:35

GATHER TIME: a love for God's family in gathered worship weekly – Col. 3:16; Heb. 10:25

GROUP TIME: a commitment to consistent growth and accountability with a community of believers – Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:24

GIVE TIME: a resolve to steward the gifts God has entrusted to me – I Peter 4:7-11

GO TIME: Time spent regularly seeing the gospel spread locally and globally

John 15:2 - Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

- Can a person who is truly regenerated (saved) by the power of the Holy Spirit lose his salvation?
- John Piper says, "Given what Jesus clearly teaches in the Gospel of John, can a person be born again (as in Jn. 3) and then lost? Can a person be child of God through faith (as in John 1:12) and then lost? Can a person be one of Christ's sheep (as in John 10) and then not his sheep?

The answer is no.

- Jesus labors to teach the *opposite* especially in this Gospel — namely, that God has chosen a people for himself, that he gives them to the Son, and the Son keeps them infallibly forever. Jesus said, (Jn 6:37) All that the Father gives Me will come to Me
- But there is a kind of attachment to Jesus — a kind of disciple, a kind of believing — that is not saving. And the difference between the ***two is abiding and fruit-bearing.***

- The key is to realize that in the Gospel of John there are *believers* who are not true believers (2:23). And there are *disciples* who are not true disciples (6:66).
- And there is the chosen twelve, and one of them is a devil...that was Judas... and Jesus knew it from the beginning when he chose him (6:64).
- And in the same way there are branches who are not true branches.
- They are "in me," but not truly "in me."

Warren Wiersbe said of Our Union with Christ

- The branch cannot produce its own life; it must draw that life from the vine. It is our communion with Christ through the Spirit that makes possible the bearing of the fruit.
- Many of the images of Christ and the believer given in Scripture emphasize this important concept of union and communion:
 - the body and its members (1 Cor. 12), the bride and the Bridegroom (Eph. 5:25–33),
 - and the sheep and the Shepherd (John 10). A member of the body cut off from the body would die.
 - The marriage creates the union, but it takes daily love and devotion to maintain the communion.
 - The shepherd brings the sheep into the flock, but the sheep must follow the shepherd in order to have protection and provision.
 - The sooner we as believers discover that we are but branches, the better we will relate to the Lord, for we will know our own weakness and confess our need for His strength. (Wiersbe, *Be Transformed*, Loc.765)