

JOHN 15:1-17

Union with Christ: We Are Saved Into a Relationship with Jesus

Memory Verse

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.

John 15:4

Real-life Problems

Disconnection—As sinners in a fallen world, we naturally are disconnected from others. Christ brings us into intimate relationship with Himself through the gospel. Through that connection with Christ, we come into closer connection with others, as well.

The Good News

We are saved out of isolation and into an intimate relationship with Christ in which God transforms our lives.

Gospel Definition

God's grace and **redemption** for sinners **through** the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus transfers sinners from isolation into an intimate relationship with God. Through this close relationship, His people bear fruit for the glory of God the Father.

Some Key Definitions

Abide—To dwell in and have very close, intimate relationship with someone or something else.

Fruit—The evidences of God's character flowing out of a person. In particular we think of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

I. Introduction:

OPENING QUESTIONS

Idea #1: When was a time or a season when you felt disconnected from relationships?

Idea #2: When was a time when you felt very close to God?

Idea #3: How would you describe the feeling in your heart when you were close to the Lord?

PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

What does gospel mean?

Good news.

What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins.

Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever.

What is grace?

God's undeserved love for sinners.

THE BASICS

1) Who wrote the book of John?

The apostle John, who was in Jesus' inner circle, wrote the Gospel of John.

2) Who was the original audience of this book?

John wrote this book to both Jewish and Gentile Christians. If you'll study the whole book, you will see how he uniquely engages both audiences.

3) Why was the book of John written?

John 20:31 captures the purpose of this book: "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." John wrote his Gospel so that his audience would truly believe that Jesus was the Messiah and that, by believing, would have life in relationship with Him.

What's going on?

REMINDE:

In the previous lesson we learned about how we receive forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of Christ as a gift through faith.

TODAY WE'LL LEARN:

- 1) Jesus calls us to abide or dwell in intimate fellowship with Him.
- 2) If we abide in Christ, we will bear fruit and thereby glorify God.
- 3) Out of this intimate relationship with Christ, He calls us to love others and obey His commands.

Read

Read **John 15:1-17** aloud in your group.

II. Questions for Discussion

The Hedgehog: The Power of Simple Focus

Great thinkers and leaders often capitalize on simple ideas. In his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins looks at themes in the practices of the greatest business in the world. Collins uses the term "Hedgehog" to describe some of these businesses. What he means by this term is that great companies identify one thing—and only one thing—that they can be the best in the world at and that they will relentlessly focus on, for focused companies tend to thrive.

The Christian life can seem complicated, but Jesus simplifies it in John 15: Abide. Abide. Abide. Dwell in intimate fellowship with Jesus, and He will transform you and use your life for God's glory. Abide in Christ, and you will bear much fruit. If we focus on dwelling in intimate fellowship with Jesus first, the rest of the Christian life falls into place.

A. WHAT?

1) In John 15:1, who does Jesus identify as the vine? Who is the vinedresser?

Jesus is the vine. The Father is the vinedresser.

2) In verse 4, what does Jesus say is the necessary ingredient for bearing fruit?

Jesus says that we need need to "abide" in Him. This means that we must dwell in intimate relationship with Him to bear much fruit.

3) What does Jesus say glorifies the Father (v. 8)?

Believers bearing much fruit glorifies the Father.

4) What kind of love does Jesus say He has for us in verse 9? How does He say we should respond to that love in that same verse?

Jesus says that He has loved us in the same way that God the Father has loved Him. He calls us to abide in His love in response to this love.

5) What does Jesus say is the reason He has spoken these truths to us (v. 11)?

Jesus says He has spoken these things so that His joy will be in us and so that our joy may be full.

6) What is the second major commandment that we see in John 15:12-17?

Jesus calls us to love one another.

7) In what ways does Jesus describe His relationship with us in verses 12-17 that show the personal, close nature of the relationship He has brought us into with Christ? Cite specific phrases.

Jesus refers to us as friends. He has made known to us what He knows of the Father. Jesus says that He chose us, meaning He pursued us first out of love for us.

B. SO WHAT?

1) In the metaphor, Jesus says that God prunes branches so that they may bear more fruit. Do you think "pruning" is painful? How do you think that informs the ways that Christian growth occurs? (Hint, if needed: How do painful experiences of failure and suffering shape us into more fruitful Christians?)

The image of pruning seems to be painful. Things are being cut off, which seems like it would hurt. The Christian process of sanctification, whereby God transforms us more and more into His image, involves struggle and difficulty. Being convicted of sin and repenting can be painful. Growing in character often involves suffering. The hope is that during those experiences, God changes us into people who abide in Him and bear more godly fruit.

2) What kind of relationship does Jesus call us to in verse 4, when He says, "Abide in me, and I in you"? Justify your answer with the words in the text. What kind of spiritual practices cultivate this type of close relationship?

Jesus calls us to a very close, intimate relationship. The idea that we would dwell in Christ and He in us speaks to the level of closeness. Prayer, Bible reading, confession of sin, praise and thanksgiving, and worship all contribute to drawing us closer to God.

3) Why do you think abiding in Christ (having close fellowship) inherently leads to experiencing joy?

We are made for close relationships. It's the very thing that satisfies our hearts. We feel joy when we spend time with a close friend, beloved family member, or boyfriend/girlfriend. Being close to God brings us that much more joy.

4) We are saved completely by grace. There is no sin that can make the Father stop loving us once we have repented and believed in Christ. What about obeying God's commandments, though? How does this passage about having a close relationship with Christ—thanks to His gift of salvation—help us understand obedience?

This passage shows that we are saved to live in relationship with God. Because He saved us, we love Christ. Obeying His commandments is a way to express love for Christ.

C. NOW WHAT?

1) How does the love of God and the friendship of Jesus better enable you to abide in Christ?

When we know that a person is for us, we naturally want to draw near to them. When Jesus, who is so good and kind, identifies us as His friends, it makes us want to be closer to Him.

2) How is obeying God's commandments related to abiding in Christ? What effect does sin have on how close we feel to God?

Sin naturally draws us away from the Lord. When we are living a life of unrepentant sin, we tend to drift away from the Lord and feel distant. When we are close to the Lord, we naturally have greater strength to resist sin. When we resist sin by God's grace, it draws us closer to God.

3) What are regular spiritual practices that you can incorporate into your daily life that help you abide in Christ?

Main takeaway

Jesus saves us into a close, intimate relationship with God, a relationship in which we abide in Him in order to have joy and bear fruit for God's glory.

III. Closing

REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS:

We are saved out of isolation and into an intimate relationship with Christ in which God transforms our lives.

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, please send Your Holy Spirit to draw us close to the Son. Bless us with intimate relationship with Christ that we may have deep joy in Christ and bear much fruit for Your glory.

GOSPEL BUILDING BLOCKS:

Building Block #8: Jesus saves us into a close, intimate relationship with God, in which we abide in Him in order to have joy and bear fruit for God's glory.

Building Block #7: When we, through faith, receive the righteousness of God as a gift, Jesus forgives our sins and makes us perfectly acceptable before God.

Building Block #6: To receive the gospel, God calls us to repent from being our own savior and god and to instead trust in Jesus to be both for us.

Building Block #5: As sinners, we need a mediator between a holy God and us. Jesus is our mediator who advocates on our behalf before the Father.

Building Block #4: To satisfy God's justice for our sins, Jesus served as a substitute. He took the punishment for our sins on the cross in our place.

Building Block #3: Every person, Christian and non-Christian alike, must answer to God for their lives. Non-believers answer for their sin at Judgment Day; Jesus answered for believers' sins on the cross, saving us from His judgment. Christians still go before the judgment seat of Christ to present their lives as an offering to God as an act of loving worship.

Building Block #2: Mankind has broken that relationship through sin and thereby created separation from God.

Building Block #1: A holy, loving God made us to live in blessed relationship with Him.

Supporting Resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some challenges and obstacles you face in abiding in Christ?
- 2) How does it make you feel to have Jesus refer to you as a friend with whom He chose to be in relationship?
- 3) How does being a friend of Christ's influence or shape your view of obeying God's commandments?

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS:

- 1) What does it mean to abide in Christ?
- 2) Why do you think abiding in Christ tends to lead to joy?
- 3) What things could we as a family do to help you cultivate deeper intimacy with Christ?