

John 15:1-8

Abide and Abound

Image Church // Abide and Abound Initiative Week 1

Introduction

Image family, I hope you're doing well!

If you're a guest with us, we're so glad that you're here... I want to invite you to stop by the **Connection Center**...

Also, if you're **new around here** and you want to join in or find out more about what we have going on- the **Connection Center** is also the place for you!

Alright, well I am excited about today as we kick off a **brand-new series** that's going to set the trajectory for where we're going over the next year...

I've told you this before, but **the church is not just an organization, it's an organism** that's alive and that moves together to bring about spiritual, emotional, and physical restoration unto the glory of God...

The problem for so many, is that they don't experience the God-given benefits of the **organism**, because they view the church as just an **organization**...

When you view the church as an **organization**, there tends to be a disposition where you feel as though you **exist outside of the church**, and it just becomes something you **go to**, rather than a **group of people that you belong to** that are on a journey after Jesus together...

Listen, it's when you jump in on the journey together with a local body of believers that you get to experience the life-giving power of the organism **that is the church**...

This morning I am going to lay out where we're headed as a church... And I don't want you to see this as something that's happening **outside of you**, I want you to see this as something that you're a part of...

I want to invite you to come on a journey after Jesus at watch what God does in your life!

And now is a great time to join in as we kick off this 6-week series that's going to set our focus over the next year...

The name of this series is **Abide and Abound** based off of **John 15:4-5** which is the text that I am going to be preaching this morning in order to lay the foundation that we will be building on over the next year...

This **Abide and Abound** series *is all about orienting our hearts around the goodness of God allowing the gospel to take root in us and work through us locally, nationally, and internationally.*

In order to see this happen, I want to hold this up for you in the form of **two primary goals** that we're going to be orienting around over the next year...

1. Abide: We want to abide in the riches of the gospel in order to take us deeper in our knowledge and love of God.

2. Abound: We want to abound in the gospel by bearing fruit that expands our impact locally, nationally, and internationally.

So, those **two goals** are going to be our two focuses over the next year that we're going to be orienting ourselves around and mobilizing to as a church...

Now, as a part of orienting ourselves around these goals, and to help fuel our efforts, I want to challenge you to give toward these goals...

So, during this 6-week series I'm going to be holding up what we're calling ***The Abide and Abound Initiative***...

The Abide and Abound initiative will help give us the *financial means* to catalyze our efforts as we peruse these goals together over the next year...

You got a guide when you came in, I want you to grab it and turn to **page 6** so that you can see specifically what we would like to see this Initiative will fuel...

- ***Let's look at them...*** *Get out my book and talk through them...*

Here's the deal, every dollar that you give toward this ***Abide and Abound initiative*** will go toward, and enhance, our missional efforts locally, nationally, and internationally as you can see there on **page 6** in your guide...

So, here's what we want to see happen for this ***Abide and Abound Initiative***...

Together, we want to give above and beyond to see ***\$15 thousand dollars*** come over the months of ***November and December*** to fuel our missional efforts locally, nationally, and internationally.

Let me speak to this for just a second... I know for some of you, you're already giving... I want to challenge you to give ***above and beyond*** your normal gift to help us meet this goal \$15K.

For others of you, you're not giving- I want to challenge you to start! This is a great opportunity for to have an incredible impact through these different needs and opportunities...

- And anything that you give will be above and beyond and will help contribute to the expansion of the mission... And you will taste and see what God does in you as your take a step of obedience in generosity!

So, begin considering and praying through this... And then we're going to be having a ***Commitment Weekend*** on ***November 7th*** where we will come together and commit our ***above and beyond gifts!***

- And then you'll have the opportunity to give toward your above and beyond gift over the months of ***November and December***...

So, understand, this is not a yearlong initiative- this ***Initiative*** will end in ***December***, and it's designed to fuel our ***efforts*** and our ***focus*** over the next year...

I am really excited about what God is going to do and how God is going to use this!!

Ok, if you have your bibles, go ahead and turn to **John 15**... let's dive into our **chair text** for this series, as we lay the foundation for all of this...

We'll start in verse 1... Jesus is the one talking, and this is what He says...

John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

Let me stop here because you have to understand the imagery that comes with what Jesus is saying... We can't miss this because it's key to everything we're going to be looking at this morning...

All throughout the OT the vine is a very common symbol for Israel- Israel is God's chosen people- not because there was anything *special* about them, but because God chose them as the mean by which He would reveal Himself to the world...

And when this ***imagery of the vine*** was used for Israel in the OT it is always accompanied by the vines failure to produce fruit— **IOW**: It's used to point out the people's failure to ***obey*** God...

So, this idea of vine in the OT is used to highlight how Israel has failed to obey God rightly, and with that God's coming judgement as a result of their disobedience...¹

When you understand that, what you see here is that what Jesus is saying here is incredibly shocking... and yet it's very intentional...

Jesus is saying that He is the True Vine that produces the fruit that God requires... The fruit that Israel couldn't produce...

IOW: what Jesus is saying is that: ***I came to do what you couldn't do...***

This is true for Israel and for you and me...

Like Israel, we have failed to follow God and produce fruit... **our lack of fruit** is called **sin**... **Sin** is failing to live up to God's standard...

We chose to do life our own way, we chose our desires over God's desires...

- We have chosen the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) ...

I shouldn't have to convince you of this... I think the truth is we all know that we have sinned... *Phone a friend if you need help on this one...*

That sin severs our relationship with God... You have a perfect and Holy God, the creator on one side and a broken and sinful humanity on the other...

And we have to understand our sin for what it is... We tend to take sin so lightly, but sin is an act of rebellion against God... Which is why:

- **Romans 5:10** says we're enemies of God...
- **Eph. 2:3** says Children under wrath...

And God will bring judgment and execute perfect justice- otherwise He wouldn't be God because He would fail to be perfect in every way...

And there's nothing that we could do to change this... Counter to what our culture teaches, *Broken and sinful people can't fix themselves*...

No matter how hard you work to be a better person, you can't erase what you've done, there has to be **payment**, there has to be **punishment**...

Not to mention, you can't deal with the source of the problem which is your heart- sin is like an infectious disease at the core of who we are and there's not thing we can do to get rid of it- we can't cure ourselves...

****Any good things that we do no matter how genuine doesn't deal with our sin-disease, it just creates a façade that helps us cope...***

There is no hope for us... Unless God steps in...

GOSPEL: The True Vine comes and does that which we couldn't do... He produces the perfect fruit in our place...

- Deals with what was lacking...
 - Perfection in our place...
- But He also deals with the repercussions of our fruitlessness...
 - Goes to the cross...
- The He deals with our sin disease...
 - Resurrection... New life... *Flesh out*

When Jesus says here that He's the **True Vine**, He's pointing to the fact that **not only** would He come and do what we could never do by bearing the fruit that we never could, but that as the True Vine He would become the source of new life for us...

That Jesus takes our dead and fruitless hearts and brings it to life giving us the ability to produce God honoring fruit...

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 513).

Let's look at how this happens and how it all fits together and what this means for us... Keep reading in **verse 2**:

2 Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. **3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. *Jesus is specifically talking to His true followers who are made clean by believing the words He's spoken to them...* **Verse 4**

4 Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. **6** If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. **7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.

There's two major things here... **Remaining in Jesus**, and **producing much fruit**... **Abiding and abounding**... This is the essence of the Christian life...

And it's so important for us to understand... So, let's talk what this means and how it all fits together...

The first thing I want you to notice is that Jesus uses the word **remain**, or if you have the ESV **abide**, here 6 different times...

That word This word in the original language is **meno**: it means to stay or reside, to lodge... To continue in...

Anytime you see repetition in the bible it should clue you in on a point being made...

Jesus is driving home our need to **continue in Him**...

So this is more than a prayer that you pray, this is more than a religion... This is staying tethered to the person and work of Jesus...

Nothing in here says "**do**" ... Jesus specifically says "**remain**" or "**abide**" ... Implying that you actually "do" nothing, you just rest in what already is... The finished work of Jesus...

I know this may feel weird, and sounds weird to us because we're so "**works driven**" always looking for things that we can do... Ways that we can be a good person...

And so many times the church has failed us, because for so long it has held up a rule book and said: "**DO THIS**" ... **for the record we call those "Dodo Sermons"** ...

- **Example**: Stapling roses on a rose bush

Religion says "**DO**" the Gospel says "**DONE**"

The issue is when we focus on what we need to "do," we're assuming that we can fix ourselves, **minimizing the gospel and missing the root of the problem**... Our hearts...

We don't need behavior modifications, we need a heart reconstruction... And the only way that can happen is by believing in Jesus...

The change is a by-product of the gospel...

- Fruit is not something that you manufacture on your own it is the result of the work of Jesus that you are remaining in and the result of you remaining in Him produces fruit...

And here lies a big problem for many of us... **We flip this around**... I am guilty of this as well...

How much should I be doing? How much is enough... **What if it was more about being with a Jesus than doing for Jesus?**

*When I focus on the doing, I get tired, and I never know when I have done enough, when I focus on being with Jesus I am refreshed and rejuvenated...

Example: Mary and Martha

Luke 10:41-42 Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her

Fruit should be the natural overflow and response to a healthy tree... the same is true for us... the problem is we don't see it that way...

We are fixers, we're doers... but Jesus is saying abide, continue in me and watch the fruit come...

Let's talk about what abiding looks like:

Primarily: remembering and believing the gospel... **You remain in Jesus by remembering what He has done for you...** Posture not a prayer... This is why the gospel is not the start of the Christian life but the essence of it...

- And it's by abiding in the gospel, by dwelling in the gospel, by making the gospel the center of our lives..
- Time with God
 - o alone - speak to silence and solitude... time in the word, prayer...
- With others in community
- Corporate gathering

These should be your biggest priorities...all orient you around Jesus...

Help's us see where we are out of step with the gospel... Helps us see the goodness of God in the midst of our sin...

All of this leads us to walk in the Spirit: what does that look like?

- I NEED YOU JESUS!

- Abiding in Jesus releases the power of Jesus to work in your life through the Holy Spirit!

You can't be with Jesus deeply and it does not impact you and the way you live...

Here's what this means.... Your abounding problem is rooted in an abiding problem...

Speak to specific problem:

- Marriage...
- Problems at work...
- Sexual immorality...
- Temper, impatience, selfishness, pride, lack of compassion, lack of confidence, lust, racism, jealousy, anger, fear, lying, need to be more loving, lack of generosity...

Some of you wonder why you don't see more fruit... You're not abiding...

Some of you are hurting... God never wastes a hurt- He's doing something... He will produce fruit through this that you never thought was possible...

- But that means... you have to look to Him... you have to abide...
- Don't allow your pain to make you run from God, allow it to make you run to Him...
 - o He wept over brokenness...
 - o People often can't see what God is doing because they're not abiding... there not up in His lap...

I love how Pete Scazzero talk about this:

- Bearing fruit- quality of life that's coming out of us to the people around us...
- Comes from relaxing in Jesus, detach from the world and attach to him...

Listen, here's the place we have to get to...

Instead of looking in the mirror and **evaluating** the areas where you are weak, the areas of your life that need to change, you need to look in the mirror and ask yourself, is the gospel the center of my life and is it transforming who I am?

There's something else that Jesus talks about, and it may be the place where many of you are right now...

Pruning:

One of the ways that God works to bring about abounding in your life is through **pruning**...

Example: Think about a Rose Bush... If you don't prune it, it will grow to the point where it chokes itself to death... Even though it may not seem like it at the time, when you cut it back you are actually helping it become healthier so that it can grow...

God does the same thing with us... He cuts away idols in our lives.

What is an idol? Anything that keeps you from dependence on God.²

- These are not necessarily bad things, they could be good things that we make "god things" ...
 - Money, possessions, job, intimacy, your family, your spouse... **Anything that we are depending on more than God**...

This can be painful because we love our idols and we depend on them, that's why they are idols in our lives...

***Disclaimer:** God's not necessarily going to physically cut away your family or your spouse, but he is going to cut away your **dependence** on them away, and that's hard, when for so long you have looked to them to sustain you and to be your **everything**

Bottom line: when God reconstructs your dependence back on Him it will be difficult and often painful...

The reason why God does this is so that we can grow in our holiness, increasing our dependence on Him, that ultimately, we will **produce more fruit**...

I have said this before but **the goal for spiritual growth is not that we become morally better people, it's that we depend on the gospel more!**

We don't want to look back and see that we are better people we want to look back and see that we now rely on the gospel more

Gods purpose in the pruning process is rooted in love so that we would produce more fruit!

When you understand this, it changes your outlook on life where you begin to ask the what is God trying to show me in what I am experiencing?

- **Could he be cutting away an idol in my life??**

When you recognize the pruning process, you are expiring the love of God even though it may not "**feel**" like it because He is cutting away **things** that your dependent on to free you up to depend more on Him!

*The last thing that I will say on this is that **not everything that happen in your life that's painful is God pruning you**... The way that you can recognize pruning is by looking to the 3 key things that God has given you:

- The people of God (the local church)
- The Word of God
- And the Spirit of God

At the end of the day, the goal is Jesus... And the barometer, the litmous test for if that's true is revealed in the fruit of our life...

² JD Greear: Sermon. *Living above the ordinary: Real Power*

When we lack fruit it is a symptom of something greater... And it either leads to repentance or it reveals that we're not connected to Jesus...

Call for everyone to spend time reflecting... **Abiding**

There's a warning in here that we have to see as well...

Branch removal

God will cut away any branches that do not bear fruit... these are branches that are dead on the inside, they do not have the life of the True Vine running through them...

- *See with trees all the time... dead branches falling off the tree...*

Best example of this is **Judas Iscariot**... *Real contact with Jesus but didn't embrace Him...*

There's a persistent strand of New Testament witness that depicts men and women with some degree of connection with Jesus, or with the Christian church, who nevertheless by failing to display the grace of perseverance finally testify that the transforming life of Christ has never pulsed within them.³

If consistently don't bear the fruit of Jesus, then you do not have the life of Christ in you and according to this passage you are "dead wood,"

Proximity to the things of Jesus doesn't mean the presence of Jesus in you!

Conclusion [VAMP]

Appeal to the Christian

Appeal to the non-Christian

In this series ... I am going to hold up areas where we want to abound as an overflow of us abiding... I am going to press on areas where you don't have fruit to drive you back to abiding so that you can bear it!

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 515).