



gracefellowship

Stay The Course
July 1, 2018
Abide in Christ

:: Isaiah 30:8-11 (don't read)

Intro: We are starting a new series called "Stay The Course." Our vision and mission is constant and unchanging. When you know your mission it is easier to keep on track, moving in the right direction. Things which are constantly changing have a more difficult time keeping people invested because there is no long-term mission.

Our Mission: Go and Make Disciples.

But sin has a way of messing up even the most well-intentioned churches because as people who are messed up by the effects of sin we can easily get sidetracked. In the OT, Israel was notorious for this type of flip flopping between obedience to the plan of God and disobedience and rebellion against Him.

:: Isaiah 30:8-11

8 Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness.

9 For these are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the LORD's instruction.

10 They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions.

11 Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!"

The people of Israel knew what God was about and what He expected, but they wanted to hear anything else! They were tired of His message and His ways- they wanted to carve their own path and get off the path God had established for them. But it wasn't just Israel; in the NT we see the same problem. Paul warns us about how society (and even Christians) will act as the end draws near.

:: 2 Timothy 4:1-4

1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and

the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:

2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

In order to not get dragged off course and away from our central mission we need guardrails to keep us moving in the right direction. The Church has been commissioned by our leader- Jesus- to make disciples. But we often want to move in other directions away from the mission. To keep us from drifting off course we have 7 essential practices we follow to maintain our focus on the mission Jesus has called us to.

Illustration: My truck sliding in the snow

Where there is no traction- nothing to guide us- we can easily start drifting off in dangerous directions.

The 7 Essentials of Disciple-making Churches

- 1. Abide in Christ**
- 2. Reach the Lost**
- 3. Chase the Strays**
- 4. Shepherd People Toward Spiritual Maturity**
- 5. Identify, Equip and Release Leaders**
- 6. Function as a Team**
- 7. Connect the Unconnected**

If you have been through our Discovery Experience recently you have heard about these 7 things. Or if you're one of our Life Group Leaders, you should know about these 7 things. But as a church it's good for all of us to understand what we mean by these things and how they help us stay the course in being a church that is committed to being disciples and making disciples of Jesus. These are not just things that our Staff and Elders are committed to, these are things we believe are helpful practices for anyone who wants to follow Jesus and help others follow Him.

Abide in Christ

Go ahead, if you have your Bibles, and turn to John 15- that's where we will spend the rest of our time this morning.

Every step toward making disciples must be rooted in our personal walk with Jesus.

:: John 15:1-17

- 1 **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.**
- 2 **He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.**
- 3 **You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.**
- 4 **Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.**
- 5 **“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**
- 6 **If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.**
- 7 **If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**
- 8 **This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**
- 9 **“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.**
- 10 **If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.**
- 11 **I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**
- 12 **My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.**
- 13 **Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.**
- 14 **You are my friends if you do what I command.**
- 15 **I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**
- 16 **You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.**
- 17 **This is my command: Love each other.**

You haven’t studied this passage this week, but just from reading it together what do you think is the most important message Jesus is trying to communicate to us from what He said in those verses? **REMAIN/ABIDE IN ME!**

10 Different times we see the word “remain” in that passage alone.

Verse one tells us why Jesus says this:

1. I am the **TRUE** vine, and my Father is the gardner.

The vine is a familiar symbol for Israel in the prophets and Psalms. In fact, in its historical life Israel was often depicted in the OT as a vine or vineyard. Strikingly, though, in Scripture every reference to Israel with that symbol in mind was set under the judgment of God for its corruption, sometimes explicitly for it’s failure to produce good fruit. (Moody Gospel Commentary: John, J. Carl Laney)

Jesus comes along and calls himself the true vine. Unfruitful, unbelieving Israel isn’t the hope of humanity, Jesus is! Jesus fulfilled the expectations of God in a

way Israel never did, nor could they have.

We need to be rooted in Jesus in order to bear fruit for Him.

No other vine you try to connect yourself to will end up helping you live as a disciple of Jesus or bear fruit for Jesus by making other disciples.

- Religion isn't a fruit giving vine
- Scripture knowledge isn't a fruit giving vine
- Charity or Generosity isn't a fruit giving vine
- Morality isn't a fruit giving vine.

The list could go on and on. Jesus said, "I am the true vine..." We must connect to Jesus if we want to be fruitful disciples.

But then Jesus says that His Father is the gardener.

The gardener provides the opportunity for growth, He plows, plants, waters, and prunes. God inspects the branches growing on the vine and Jesus describes...

Two types of branches: fruit-bearing and fruitless.

Two types of action: pruning and cutting off.

When Jesus describes God cutting off branches that aren't fruitful that is does not mean people lose their salvation because they aren't bearing fruit, so God gets rid of them. He's talking more of people who hang around Jesus as "interested listeners" who never really buy in. In John 6 Jesus is telling the crowds who he is through an illustration by talking about being the bread of heaven. But listen to what happens as he goes into more detail about what accepting Him as the bread of heaven means:

:: John 6:51-69

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

53 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.

57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

59 He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.
60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”
61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”
62 Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!
63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.
64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.
65 He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”
66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.
67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.
68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.
69 We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Jesus isn't really saying we should be cannibals in order to follow him- it's not literally eating his flesh. But some who followed him up until that time left him and never followed him again. They were people who enjoyed being around Jesus but they had never fully committed to him. Notice how his true disciples responded when Jesus asked if they were going to leave him: “You have the words of eternal life. We have come to BELIEVE and to KNOW that you are the Holy One of God.”

Here's what true disciples of Jesus know- to remain in Him is an active process, not passive.

The word remain is a verb. To remain or abide in Jesus is not to just sit there and do nothing! You put forth effort every day to abide in Christ- to be with Jesus. As we learn to actively be with him we can't help but to pour into others what we know of Jesus so they can know Him and abide in Him as well!

Question: Are you committed to following Jesus or are you standing on the edge, watching but not graphed in?

Two types of response: Bear fruit or be burned up.

This is when the rubber really meets the road, right? You need to be sure you are all in with Jesus and abiding in Him, dependant on Him for everything in your life. That's what a branch does, right? A branch depends on the vine for nourishment. Look at John 15:4-5 again.

4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in

me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

The alternative is not being 100% committed to Jesus, not abiding in Him, and being outside that life-giving relationship. Jesus says those branches that aren't committed to Him and don't bear fruit of a relationship connected to Him get cut off and burned up. It's not that God is cutting you off a vine you're already grown into, He is allowing you to go your own way

6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As we abide in Christ we experience God's pruning so we can be even more fruitful. This throws a lot of Christians for a loop because pruning can be painful. As a fruitful Christian God looks at your life and finds the places you still need to let him cut out of your life so you can be even more fruitful. When God prunes things in us it's always to make us more productive followers of Jesus. Removing things can be painful, but it's for our good:

- Jealousy
- Greed
- Hate
- Foul language
- Arrogance/Pride

In verse 8 Jesus tells us all of this is for his Father's glory! When we bear fruit in our relationship with Jesus, God is glorified.

What is this fruit we are producing as we abide in Christ and how do we do it?
John 15:9-17

9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I

learned from my Father I have made known to you.

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

17 This is my command: Love each other.

We remain in Jesus when we keep his commands; and his command is to love one another like he loves us. We can't love each other when we are far from God. Abiding in Christ is the only way to live out the commands of Christ.