

## Message 2/3: "Trying Harder Isn't Working"

John 15:1-8

A Three-Message Mini Series: Religion Bad. Relationship Good.

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**What happens when your phone has no connection?** You raise it in the air, walk around, "Can you hear me now?" Maybe try restarting it (?)

**Some of y'all are doing all the right things to connect with God.** P.U.S.H. (Pray Until Something Happens), try harder, do better...

**Here's the deal.** You're not lacking effort. *Yet, you still find yourself lacking connection with God.*

**Which facet can you relate to \_\_\_\_\_ ?**

1. Intimately Connected      2. Lost Intimacy      3. Comparing      4. Never Experienced It

**Ever heard the following...** from someone or from a sermon or on your news feed... and wish it was true for you?

- "Every morning I just sit with God, and His presence fills the room."
- "Spent two hours with Jesus this morning. Nothing matters more than His presence."
- "I just feel God everywhere lately. Like He's so real to me right now."
- "God spoke to me so clearly this week. I know exactly what He's doing in my life."
- "I've been walking with God for years, and honestly, it just keeps getting deeper and better."
- "God met me in my darkest moment, and I've felt His presence every day since."
- "After all these years, my relationship with God is stronger than it's ever been."
- "I just feel so connected to God all throughout my day, even in the little moments."
- "God and I talk all the time—it's like He's sitting right next to me."

**For any of this \_\_\_\_\_ to be true for you is...** exhausting/discouraging/unsettling/depressing/guilt-driven...

**"Wow, Pastor, help me out."** Sure, happy to be of service. I have awesome insights in **John 15:1-8** that will set you free.

1. **VV 4-5a...** Jesus is the only S\_\_\_\_\_ of spiritual life.

- Jesus didn't just improve your life. No, He gave you life. Spiritual life, that is. (Eph 2:1-5; 1 Jn 5:12)
- This is a life that Jesus, "the true vine," is sharing with you.
- Everything you need, as a branch, comes from Him:

\* Life (nourishing sap)

\* Stability (you're held in place)

\* Identity (you're one with the vine)

2. **V 5b...** Your responsibility is to \_\_\_\_\_, not strive.

- As a branch, you becoming one with the vine is something the Gardener accomplished for you.
- Your only role in becoming one with Jesus was to believe, and that was in response to His grace! (Jn 6:25-37; Eph 2:8-9)

3. **V 4...** The evidence of your abiding is that you are producing \_\_\_\_\_. A peculiar kind of fruit.

- Fruit is not just love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and whatnot. Unsaved people can display that.
- Rather, Jesus is talking about the evidence of being made alive spiritually. (Eph 2:4-5; 1 Pet 2:9-KJV)

\* A heart that is broken for the lost, a holy discomfort over sin, a deep hunger for God's presence...

**The main point is SO GOOD. Ready?** *You don't get connected to God by trying harder—you live from a connection you already have by abiding in Jesus, and the evidence of that connection is fruit.*

#### **Calls-to-Action:**

1. When you wake up in the morning, pray, "Thank you, heavenly Father, that you are with me right now and that You won't ever leave me!" – Heb 13:5; Matt 28:20
2. Look forward to a new season of pruning! This proves that God favors you! It does NOT necessarily mean that you did something wrong. – Jn 15:2 Pruning seasons feel dry, yet God is testing/strengthening your faith. You can't stay in the honeymoon season or the mountaintop season forever. That's why they are called seasons.
3. The moment you feel guilty (which is the Holy Spirit convicting you) for what you said or did, or what you refused to say or do, confess it. "Father, I agree with You that what I just did was sinful. Please forgive me." Unconfessed sin distorts your perception, not your position. – 1 Jn 1:9
4. Don't let your feelings dictate whether you are connected to God or not. Rather, rest in what the Bible has to say (fact).
5. Think about what you're thinking about. How?



- a. The moment you feel like you're not measuring up spiritually, write down the specific thought. For example, "I'll never be able to understand the Bible" or "I'll never be used significantly by God."
  - b. THEN... ask, "What lie is driving this?"
  - c. THEN... write that down and rebuke that lie! Because that did not come from abiding but rather striving.
  - d. THEN... replace that lie with a truth from God's Word. A worship song. Celebratory prayers of thanksgiving.
6. Don't play the comparison game. That will destroy the reality that you truly are connected with God. – 2 Cor 10:12

***You're not trying to get close to God... you're learning to live like you already are.***