

## Abiding in Christ!

Joh 15:1-11

**Please join me in prayer:**

**Sermon introduction:**

Have you ever tried sailing without wind?  
How about flying without wings?  
How about snowing skiing without skis?  
How about sunbathing in a snowstorm?  
How about holding your breath underwater for 60 minutes?

What do all these things have in common? They are impossible.

Attempting the impossible is utterly futile.

Yet many of us attempt the impossible all the time. What do I mean?

We try to forgive others in our own strength.  
We try to kill anxiety in our own strength.  
We try to put to death fear of man in our own strength.  
We try to read the Bible and pray in our own strength.  
We try to parent in our own strength.  
We try to kill coveting, lust, and greed in our own strength.

Pretty soon we get discouraged and we want to quit the Christian life all together. We think, "this is way too hard. No thanks!" Can you relate?

This brings us to this morning's text. This morning's text has one simple point...

***Bearing fruit apart from abiding in Christ is impossible (repeat).***

This raises the question—what does it mean to abide in Christ? We will look at three aspects of abiding in Christ this morning.

***The necessity of abiding in Christ***  
***The essence of abiding in Christ***  
***The result of abiding in Christ***

**First, the necessity of abiding in Christ**

**What is abiding in Christ necessary for?**

**Abiding in Christ is necessary for bearing fruit.**

**John 15:1–5 (ESV) — 1** "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 does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. **3** Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **4** 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. **5** I am the vine; you are the

branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

### **Illustration:**

*Many years ago, the apple tree next to our old house was totally out of control. There were branches going everywhere. I had not been pruned in years. So, I googled "how to prune an apple tree."*

*I grabbed my pruning shears, a saw, and a ladder and got to work. In just a few hours I cut off hundreds of branches (literally). Then I stacked all the branches in a huge pile by our garbage cans. They sat in that spot for several days. Those days turned into weeks. A few weeks later the branches and leaves were brown and brittle.*

*What if I told you my pile of brown, decaying, and brittle branches started producing apples? You would probably think I had lost my mind. Why? Because everyone knows that apples will not grow on branches unless the branches are connected to the tree. It is impossible. Branches must remain connected to a tree so that the branches can get the nourishment they need to stay alive and produce fruit.*

*It is absolutely necessary for a branch to remain connected to a tree otherwise they will not bear fruit. Since dead branches can't bear fruit, they serve one purpose? They serve as fuel for the fire.*

**John 15:5-6 (ESV) — 5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

Some of you have attended church for years, but if you don't bear fruit, it proves that you were never a Christian, which means that you will be fuel for God's fire at the end of the age, unless you repent.

Objection—How could they be connected to Christ and then disconnected to Christ? Can one lose their salvation? No. But it is possible to be connected to the visible church (i.e., the body of Christ) but not the invisible church. In other words, we are not meant to push every single detail of Christ's metaphor.

Here is the point...

*Abiding in Christ is necessary for bearing fruit. In addition...*

### **Abiding in Christ is necessary for obeying Christ.**

**John 15:4 (ESV) — 4** 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 15:9 (ESV) — 9** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

Christ commands us to abide in him at least twice in these passages. Abiding in Christ is not a nice but unnecessary extra bonus for super spiritual Christians. No, every Christian is commanded to abide in Christ. Therefore, abiding in Christ is necessary for obeying Christ.

This is something that we must do! If we don't abide in Christ, it will be impossible for us to bear fruit (v. 5).

While it is true that Jesus Christ is united to every believer, every believer has the responsibility to abide in Jesus Christ. At this point, theologians make a distinction between our legal union with Christ and our vital union with Christ.

Others use the language of objective union verses subjective union.  
Or our federal union with Christ verses our spiritual union with Christ.

Our legal union with Christ can't be broken. It is insoluble. It is true of every Christian everywhere. Every Christian is in Christ.

Yet, we can be in Christ legally, federally, objectively, and not live out of that vital union.

In John 15, Christ is talking about living out of our vital union with him. Our vital union is what gives us strength to bear fruit.

*But what does that mean? This brings us to the next point...*

*First, the necessity of abiding in Christ.*

## **Second, the essence of abiding in Christ**

The word abide is mentioned 11 times in John 15.

**What is the very essence of abiding in Christ? The essence of abiding in Christ is cultivating our relationship with Christ.**

Like any good relationship our relationship with Christ needs to be cultivated! How strong would your relationship be with your spouse if you never spoke to each other?

**One commentator says,**

"Abide In' means to continue in a daily, personal relationship with Jesus, characterized by trust, prayer, obedience, and joy." (ESV Study Bible)

**Another commentator says,**

"This abiding relationship is natural to the branch and the vine, but it must be cultivated in the Christian life. It is not automatic. Abiding in Christ demands worship, meditation on God's word, prayer, sacrifice, and service - but what a joyful experience it is!" (Wiersbe, 355)

**The essence of abiding in Christ is cultivating a relationship with Christ! Which raises the question—how do we cultivate this relationship?**

**We cultivate our relationship with Christ through the spiritual disciplines!**

Look with me at verse 7- "If you abide in me, and my words (Scripture) abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

This is one of the keys to unlocking the first half of John 15. This one verse is a great description of abiding. Verse 7 describes a wonderful exchange. Christ words abide in believers

and then they pray Christ's words back to him. This is a great summary of the Christian life. We immerse ourselves in God's Word and then we talk to him in prayer. This is how we abide; this is how we cultivate our relationship with Christ. We hear from him in his Word, and we speak to him in prayer. Like any good relationship there is two-way communication.

If we are not reading our Bibles and praying, we are not abiding, and we will not bear fruit.

### **Illustration-**

When I was a brand-new pastor my boss, Vince Hinders, would often have me come into his office to watch him counsel people. I learned a lot about counseling in those early years.

Vince loved taking people to John 15:1-16. It seemed like this was the only chapter in his Bible and now I know why he turned there so often. I can specifically remember the conversation he had with certain young men. They often went something like this-

The young man would say, "I have been looking at porn several hours a week and I'm feeling more and more condemned and enslaved."

At this point Vince would say, "why don't you turn in your Bible to John 15".

The young man would turn to John 15 and then Vince would have him read it out loud.

Then Vince would say, "These verses are about abiding in Christ, or cultivating your relationship with Christ and they teach us that we can do nothing apart from this relationship with Christ."

Then he would ask the young man, "how often do you read your Bible and pray?"

The young man would say, "hardly at all."

Then Vince would sit back in his chair and fold his arms and pause for a long moment. Then he would very graciously say "there is nothing I can do to help you". I can't change you and pastor David can't change you. You will only change if you are cultivating your relationship with Christ. Change comes through a person, his name is Jesus, change does not come through the latest book, fad, technique, guru, or raw self-discipline. If you are not willing to read the Bible and pray, there is nothing we can do for you."

I heard Vince say something like this a thousand times. Here is the takeaway, no matter what issue you face, change only comes through cultivating your relationship with Jesus.

He is your power source.

We must abide in him.

Apart from the nourishment that he provides you can do nothing...

Change comes through abiding in Jesus.

### **Application:**

What sin are you currently fighting? Pride, anger, bitterness, gossip, slander, idolatry, sloth, lust, anxiety, or greed. Power to overcome these sins comes through cultivating your relationship with Jesus Christ, that is abiding in Christ. Change comes through a person!

What is keeping you from abiding in Christ or Cultivating your relationship with Christ! Maybe you think you are too busy? We always make time for the things that are most important to us. Ask God for the grace to make the Bible more important to you.

Maybe it is a lack of desire! Ask God to change your desires. Ask him to help you see your great need to commune with him. Ask him to help you depend on him more. Ask God to give you a passion for his word. Ask God to help you believe the truth that nothing will ultimately satisfy you like cultivating your relationship with him.

**John Piper writes,**

"My main spiritual sustenance comes by the Holy Spirit from reading. Therefore, reading is more important to me than eating. If I went blind, I would pay to have someone read to me. I would try to learn Braille. I would buy books on tape. I would rather go without food than go without books."

*We cultivate our relationship with Christ through the spiritual disciplines!*

In addition...

**We cultivate our relationship with Christ through obedience!**

**John 15:9–10 (ESV) — 9** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

A critical component of cultivating our relationship with Christ (i.e. abiding in Christ) is obedience.

When we keep Christ's commands, we abide in his love. In other words, we experience more of his love. In one sense God loves us unconditionally. Yet in another sense, we will probably not have many experiences of his love if we continue to disobey his commands.

But here is the key- His love is what motivates us to obey his commands.

Verse 9 says "As the father has loved me, so have I loved you..."

In other words, Christ is saying that he loves us the way that his father loves him. Did you catch that? Christ loves us as much as the Father loves Christ. This love is demonstrated in the gospel where Jesus laid down his life for us. Here we see love that defies words. Here we see love that explodes all human categories. Here we see that Christ loved us so much that he was willing to be crucified in our place.

When we see this love and understand this love it motivates us to obey. We don't obey to get Christ to love us; we obey because Christ already loves us.

Here is the point—we cultivate our relationship with Christ through grace motivated obedience!

**Illustration-** Imagine this scenario,

I take my son to froyo earth and buy him a pound of frozen yogurt. After froyo I take him to Game Stop and buy him a brand-new Xbox, four controllers, five new games, and a 100-inch projection system. After all this I take him to wonderland for a few hours of minigolf, pizza, go carts, and more video games.

After spending the whole day together, I take him home and kindly ask him to take off his shoes and hang up his coat. In response he throws his body on the floor and screams. His face is red, his fists are clenched, and he is writhing on the floor.

Do you think that he is doing a good job cultivating his relationship with me, his father? Of course not! This is how God feels when we disobey him. God has done nothing but lavish us with love. And then he asks us to obey him, which by the way, leads to happiness, and when we don't obey him it is like throwing a massive fit in front of him.

We cultivate our relationship with Christ through grace motivated obedience!

### **Application-**

If you are a Christian and there is unrepentant sin in your life you are not abiding in Christ!

Yes, you may still be a child of God, but you are not cultivating your relationship with Christ.

A few weeks ago, I read from the WCF on this, I would like to read it again,

"Although they never can fall from the state of Justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under their God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance." (WCF 11:5)

Let go of your sin, it will only enslave you! Repent of it and receive the sweet forgiveness and cleansing that only comes from Jesus.

*The essence of abiding in Christ is cultivating our relationship with Christ. But what is the result of abiding in Christ? This brings us to the last point.*

*The necessity of abiding in Christ*

*The essence of abiding in Christ*

### **Third, the results of abiding in Christ**

#### **One result of abiding in Christ is abundant fruit!**

**John 15:5 (ESV) — 5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

**John 15:16 (ESV) — 16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Those who abide in Christ will produce fruit...

**Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV) — 22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

God saves us from sins and from the Devil and from his wrath, but he also saves us to something. He saves us to bear abundant fruit. All for his glory!

Fruit trees only bear fruit if they are pruned. And pruning can be painful. Going back to verses 1-3 we see that the father is the pruner. Many Christians want to bear more fruit but are unwilling to go through the painful process of pruning. The father's pruning often involves the father's discipline, trials, tribulations, and pain. Pruning is essential for the growth of a fruit tree and absolutely essential for our growth as Christians.

### **One Commentator says-**

"Your heavenly father is never nearer to you than when he is pruning you. Sometimes he cuts away the dead wood that might cause trouble; but often he cuts off the living tissue that is robbing you of spiritual vigor. Pruning does not simply mean spiritual surgery that removes what is bad. It can also mean cutting away the good and the better so that we might enjoy the best. Yes, pruning hurts, but it also helps. We may not enjoy it, but we need it... The more we abide in Christ, the more fruit we bear; and the more fruit we bear, the more the Father has to prune us so that the quality keeps up with the quantity." (Wiersbe, 356)

If you are being pruned right now, God is at work.

*One result of abiding in Christ is abundant Fruit!*

### **Another result of abiding in Christ is abundant Joy!**

**John 15:10–11 (ESV) — 10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. **11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Abiding in Christ, obeying Christ, and loving Christ are not meant to rob joy, but increase joy. What kind of Joy? That joy that is in Jesus. This is perfect joy.

Do you want joy? Do you want fullness of Joy? Isn't this really what everyone is after? People look for joy in so many places-

More money,  
More power,  
More prestige,  
More status,  
More sex,  
More hobbies,  
More clothes,  
More entertainment (more movies, more books, more television),  
nicer cars,  
bigger houses  
nicer vacations,  
time away from the kids,  
a better job  
a boyfriend

getting into the right college  
getting into the right career  
marrying the right person

None of these things will provide ultimate joy, they will only enslave us. Yet, abiding in Christ leads to abundant fruit and abundant joy. Who does not want that?

### **Conclusion-**

Sailing without wind is impossible.  
Flying without wings is impossible.  
Holding our breath underwater for 60 minutes is impossible.

Trying to bear fruit on our own, apart from abiding in Christ is impossible. Yet we attempt this all the time.

But as we abide in Christ, we can do the impossible. By abiding in Christ, we can produce fruit and experience abundant Joy. Let's pray!!!