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Discipline 3: Abiding in Christ

“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.” John 15:5

Obedience and Surrender are essential to be a fruitful follower of Christ. This discipline is not a task to do and check off a list. It is a sincere decision that you are surrendering your will to God and commit to obeying what He says. It is central to all the other disciplines in the Christian life. Without abiding in Christ--Bible reading, study, prayer, worship, serving . . . are all simply habits or behaviors powerlessly unconnected to our faith. The result of sin is death. The only way to life is connection to God who gives us all we need to grow and thrive in our new life in Christ.

A relationship with a loving and just God is at the very foundation of following Christ. Without that relationship, the rest of the spiritual disciplines are meaningless. Your religious activity is not a substitute. Faith is intertwined with works to lead us to Christian maturity (James 2:22). Reading or studying by itself will give you only head knowledge. Be sure you have that relationship that is formed in your heart and includes knowing, understanding, and obeying so that you experience the Christian life as it is meant to be lived “A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance” John 10:10.

In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” That abundant life doesn’t just happen or work itself out. You have to run from sin actively and intentionally choose the path to abide in Christ. That correct path is not easy or without problems. But God sends us the Holy Spirit to help us (John 15:26-John 16:1).

The word *abide* is not one used a lot these days. But with the analogy of the vine and branches in John 15, it is clear that *abide* means connected to Christ, the source of our faith and in whom we trust. To abide means to obey, yes—but remaining in that obedience to live all of life—not a bouncing back and forth but a continuing commitment or staying strong in Christ. The branch (you) cannot produce spiritual fruit without the vine (God).

Abiding in Christ is not only getting baptized, church attendance, or doing a Bible study—although all those things will help you abide in Him. It is a vertical relationship between you and God that survives even when you cannot meet in your group or worship corporately as a church. That relationship is healthy because it is nurtured by the time you spend with God in prayer, mediating on scripture, dealing with sin by repenting, and otherwise investing in your relationship with God. What if you joined a sports team, yet didn’t keep yourself in good physical condition, rarely attended practice, and couldn’t be bothered with reading or studying the playbook? How effective would you be as a team member? What if all the players did the same as you? Would the team be any good?

Imagine a church that is filled with people abiding in Christ every day, working toward holiness in their personal lives and worshipping together as they work to reach the world together? That is a power that can make an impact for the kingdom of God. Do your part by abiding in Christ every day.

Here are some ways to check up on your abiding relationship?

1. Am I reading the Bible every day (Psalm 119:11)?
2. Am I searching myself for sin so I can confess it and turn away from it (1 John 1:9)?
3. Am I praying for others to know Christ and looking for opportunities to share Him?

Continue your Bible reading and study as you surrender yourself to Jesus Christ.