

Abiding in the Presence

The primary definition for abiding is “Staying in a given place, state, relation, or expectancy.” It does not suggest charging ahead into battle or retreating to safety. It simply means staying still. It is a word that is used many times in the scriptures. Two such instances involve the shepherds in the story of the birth of Christ and the other is of a teaching that Jesus gave His disciples.

The story of the shepherds is found in Luke chapter two. The focal verse for this teaching is Luke 2:8 KJV.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

The Shepherds were doing two things in the verse. They were “abiding” and “watching over their sheep.” Abiding is “resting” but it is not the absence of Kingdom responsibility. While the shepherds were abiding they were still responsible for the welfare of their flock. However, I want to suggest that “abiding” has nothing to do with “doing work.” The result of abiding is not “doing something,” it’s “being.” They were not “doing Shepherd stuff,” they were “being shepherds.” There is a difference.

The other example is the Teaching of the Vine found in John 15:1-10.

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 bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither {can} you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples. 9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also 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.

There are many things we can learn about abiding in Christ from this passage. Abiding in Christ speaks of intimate relationship because abiding is the process of becoming like the company we keep. The other truth discovered is that the result of God given “rest,” abiding, is fruit. The only work a fruit tree can do is produce fruit. Even then the work is out of “being a fruit tree” not “trying extra hard to make an apple.” Therefore this passage in a nutshell states that abiding is not the “absence of work,” it’s a focus on relationship. It’s growing closer to God and fruit coming as a result.

First John is loaded with truth about abiding in God. In this book God went to great depths to attempt to convince us a simple truth. He wants us to know that if we abide in Him then he will abide in us and He will abide through us.

He gives us many assurances of this:

- 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.
- 2:5-6 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.
- 3:10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.
- 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

God even gives us the reasons for our need of this revelation in our life:

- 3:19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him
- 3:24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.
- 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;
- 4:6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
- 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.
- 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

First John teaches us that as we receive God's love and as we abide in Him, we love others which causes us to receive God's love. The extent to which we can experience God's love is the extent to which we can abide in Him. The extent to which we can abide in Him is the extent to which we can love others.

As the Church, we love one another by inviting the Holy Spirit to manifest the Kingdom through our hands. As we experience this process of abiding, we find ourselves not trying to love others but simply being the manifestation of a God-given impartation of agape love. When we recognize this, abiding becomes “waiting to see what Daddy is going to do next.” Jesus abided in the Father, but never did He slow down for very long. He simply abided and did what He saw His Father doing. This is so because Jesus’ actions could not be initiated by himself but through relationship (John 5:19, 20, 30)

19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless {it is} something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. 20 "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and {the Father} will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. 30 "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

In closing, the solution to “being” is “abiding.” The solution to “abiding” is “relationship with the Father.” The fruit of relationship with the Father is a mature church ministering from the right motivation and from the right source of power continually speaking life into others as others speak life into us. It is those words of life that produces life in us.