

From Pastor's Desk...

ABIDING IN CHRIST: FELLOWSHIP AND FRUITFULNESS

Jesus Christ used the analogy of wine and branches to bring more clarity to his teaching (Jn.15:5). This is to be understood in the context of the upper room discourse where disciples got confused and discouraged (Jn. 13:22f, 14:5, 16:17ff). Jesus Christ is the true wine and disciples are the true branches. It teaches us that there is a relationship of complete dependency between the branch and the wine. To abide in Christ means to live, continue or remain. It includes obedience to Christ's commandments (Jn. 15:10, 1Jn. 3:24), following Jesus' example (1Jn. 2:6), living free from habitual sin (1Jn 3:6), and the awareness of divine presence within one's life (1Jn 4:13).

The abiding relationship is natural to the branch and the wine but it must be cultivated in the Christian life. Warren Wiersbe writes, "Abiding in Christ demands worship, meditation on God's word, prayer, sacrifice and service- but what a joyful experience it is." 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. Abiding in Christ involves relating in love to the community of believers, Christ's body (Jn. 15:12).

There are different kinds of spiritual fruits mentioned in the Bible. We bear fruit when we win others for Christ (Rom. 1:13). As we grow in holiness and obedience, we are bearing fruit (Rom 6:22). Christian giving is reckoned as a fruit (Rom. 15:28). The fruit of the Spirit of God (Gala 5:22-23) is the matured Christian character which makes Christ real to others. Our good works grow out of our abiding life (Colo 1:10). The praise that comes from our hearts and lips is fruit to the glory of God (Heb. 13:15).

In the metaphor wine and the branches, we learn that Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning: (1) Separating and Cutting back branches. Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. God sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith. But branches that don't bear fruit are cut off at the trunk because not only are they worthless but they often infect the rest of the tree. The unproductive are those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment- will be separated from the wine. Let us abide in Christ for growing in fellowship and fruitfulness as marks of Christian discipleship.

God bless you.

In His Glorious Ministry,

Rev. K. P. Mathew

(Senior Pastor, IPC Hebron, Los Angeles)

A.B.I.D.E.

(Br. Biju Yohannan)

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:5)

The fundamental truth of being a Christian is that one must be connected to (abide in) Jesus. As the true vine (John 15:1), Jesus is the source of all life. In John 6:35, Jesus declared, "I am the Bread of Life". Abiding in Christ is a beautiful and essential part of being Christian. Like the vine-branches depend on the vine to get water and minerals, we need to abide in our true vine (Jesus) and look to him to supply us our daily needs and find perfect peace.

Jesus Christ will not only supply all our needs but he is our resting place, a strong refuge in times of trouble, a living stone, a precious cornerstone, and a sure foundation (Philippians 4:19, Matthew 11:28, Psalms 46:1, I Peter 2:4, Isaiah 28:16)

What can we do without Christ? Nothing. What can we accomplish when we abide in Him? Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). What, then, does it mean to abide in Christ?

"A" stands for absolute surrender. We have to come to Him just as we are, confessing our sin and saying, "You are the potter and I am the clay."

"B" stands for believe. We have to trust Him completely to do with us, for us, and around us what is very best while we stand on His promises.

"I" stands for insight. We have to pour ourselves into His Word each day, learning His ways and gaining His insights for living.

"D" stands for dedication. We have to persevere over time, separating ourselves from sinful habits and from people or places that may hinder our purity.

"E" stands for enthusiasm. We go about His work in the power and energy He provides.

Nothing takes the place of abiding in Christ, for everything depends on Him.

"Let the Word create around you, create within you a holy atmosphere, a holy heavenly light, in which your soul will be refreshed and strengthened for the work of daily life."-- Andrew Murray, author of Abide in Christ.