

Abide in Jesus

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Getting and maintaining a relationship with God › Living with God

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If you have read the Bible or have a good memory for Bible verses, you may be familiar with Jesus' instruction to 'abide in Him'. If so, you will probably recognize this instruction as part of Jesus' explanation about the True Vine in John 15. This is a wonderful passage about how Jesus is the Vine to Whom the branches – His disciples (and believers in general) – must remain connected to bear fruit. But there is more to the concept of 'abiding in Jesus', and chapter 15 isn't the first chapter where John writes about this.

1. Dead branches do not bear fruit

You don't have to be a vine grower, farmer or gardener to recognize that branches that have been cut off from the stem or trunk of a plant or tree, will no longer produce fruit. Although it is true to say that some cuttings have the ability to grow new roots when placed in water and/or soil, the natural process is for cuttings to wither and die. And they will certainly never reconnect with the original stem

or trunk on their own. So if Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches, we need to remain connected to Him and perhaps even accept some pruning from God in order to bear more fruit. Bearing fruit is one aspect of our purpose in life. If, on the other hand, we allow ourselves to become detached from Jesus, our spiritual connection with Him will fade and our fruit will become a thing of the past. So, we must 'abide in Jesus' by continuing to study His words and put into practice what He taught. We must continue to pray, and seek to do God's will. According to Jesus, this is essential to ensure that we 'abide in Him' (John 15:10).

2. When and where do we become a 'branch'?

You will note that in John 15, Jesus does not discuss with His disciples how they are to 'become a branch'. Jesus makes it clear in verse 5 that they already are a branch. The only condition He seems to mention, is that they should be clean (John 15:3) but they are that, too.

In the previous chapter it doesn't mention cleanliness or branches, but speaks of the importance of keeping Jesus'

Word which Jesus says is the sign of our love for Him. This love for Him creates a bond that is confirmed by our keeping His words (and He says that they are not only His words, but also His Father's). Anyone who doesn't know Jesus will have no reason to keep His Word but Jesus takes this one step further and says that if people do not keep His words, they don't love Him (enough). This is certainly food for thought, for anyone struggling with Jesus' Word. In John 6, followers are so obviously struggling with Jesus' words that they decide to leave Him altogether. Clearly, these followers didn't become 'branches'. Let's look at John 6 to see what is happening there.

3. Abide in Jesus, and He will abide in you

John 6 describes a period that is relatively early on in Jesus' ministry. It is the first occasion that Jesus feeds the multitudes, walks on water, and speaks about being the Bread of Life. It is this – that Jesus is the Bread of Life – that we, His followers, must be hungry for: for Him, and His Word. The Israelites in the desert were sustained by

the bread – the manna – that God provided. Jesus' followers, however, are sustained by the Bread – His Word – that He provides. If we 'eat' His Word – in the sense that we consume it and allow it to edify us – and believe in Jesus, we have everlasting life (John 6:47). "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." So what is Jesus doing here? He promises in His Word to give His flesh (His body, given up for crucifixion) for the life of the world. His atonement for our transgressions ensures that we can look forward to eternal life in God's presence. His blood that was shed on the cross is the 'currency' that buys our eternal freedom, which is what He refers to in verses 6:53-56. It is verse 56, in particular, that connects this section of John 6 with John 15, as Jesus says: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." This means that abiding in Jesus starts with accepting His sacrifice on the cross at the moment we were saved, according to His Word. We then grow into a branch by keeping all His teaching. Consistently abiding in His words will produce fruit and

lots of it: “those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”
(Mark 4:20)

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