Determined & Intentional in 2024

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Thriving in Perilous Times

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Lesson 1

John 15- Abide

We are living in dark days. Every believer has been called to thrive, no matter how dark! The darker the night, the brighter the light!! If we plan to thrive in 2024, it will be because we are determined and intentional in our walk with God! What does that mean? What does that look like? That is what we will be looking at in the days ahead!

1. Relationship
2. Readiness
3. Response
4. Results
5. Retain

**Relationship**- Jesus is talking throughout this chapter. He is talking to His disciples. For 3 yrs. they have done life with Jesus. The Trinity is all about having a relationship with us. Rules without relationship only give birth to rebellion. Fruit is not born out of a list of rules and regulations. Fruit comes from abiding.

The word “abide” in the Greek is men-o and this is how it is definedWe learn here that abiding is not something we do on Sundays, or something we do when we read our Bible or pray. Abiding is a complete address change! We have moved out of our old life and into our new life! We have unpacked everything and thrown away the moving boxes because we have no plans of moving out again. Abiding is inclusive! Every area of our life should be about abiding in Him, bringing glory to Him, communing with Him! If we can’t invite Jesus into all areas of our life then we must examine our lives….something is wrong!

We are the branch - Our purpose is to bear fruit for the glory of God

Jesus is the Vine - In Him we live and breathe and have our being

God is the Vinedresser- He cast out the fruitless and prunes the fruit bearing branches. He tends to the Vine and the branches for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

It is a vital relationship - the branch is completely dependent upon the vine for EVERYTHING.

“Without me you can do nothing”

It is a never ending relationship - from the day we are saved until the day our faith is made sight, we have this vital relationship! That alone is a “Selah” moment - “Stop and think about that!”

Heading

**Readiness** - Jesus was preparing His disciples for something they could not yet comprehend. He was going to die. He was going to be leaving them, speaking in the physical sense. Jesus was assuring them that He would still be with them, in fact, they would abide in Him and He would abide in them. The physical distance would have no bearing on their relationship. We can take the same lesson from these verses. Sometimes in frustration people say “I just wish Jesus were was sitting here right now, I have so many questions!” Like the disciples back then, we often fail to live out our faith in this area. We fall into the trap of walking by sight, not faith.

**Response -** The readiness demands a response from us. And understand that no response is still a response! Abiding is a matter of our will. It is a choice. Are we willing to surrender our plans in order to abide? Can we truly say, “Not my will, but Thine, Lord”? This is a critical time- we can’t afford to get this one wrong. Here’s why…..

**Results -** Responses bring results. Choices have consequences.

**Rejection -** If we don’t fruit, then the Vinedresser will cut away and cast out. You can’t belong to God and never see fruit! Jesus said by their fruit we would know them. A barren disciple needs to examine their life and see if they ever were a true disciple.

**Reproduction -** When we choose to abide in the Vine then we will bear fruit. And that fruit will reproduce and we will bear more fruit. Psalm 1 says we will bear fruit in every season. Reproduction takes 2 people. And so it is here, apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. So, if we don’t abide, there is no possible way we can produce and reproduce fruit. A sure sign of a true disciple is fruit.

**Remain -** We are called to bear fruit….fruit that remains - Fruit bearing comes to the one who abides and it is a process that is worked in us through Holy Spirit. When we first see fruit on a tree, it is not ready to eat yet. It has to ripen. The fruit is present and visible but needs to go through the process.

**Retain** - There is also fruit that remains- meaning this should be ongoing- we should never stop bearing fruit. There is no age or circumstance that would permit a believer to not be a fruit bearer.

**Becoming a healthy “abider”**- It’s not about a list, it is about a lifestyle. As we yield to the Holy Spirit and become sensitive to His voice then our lifestyle falls in line with a godly, holy life that bears fruit that remains and is retained.

* Pruning - The Father is the Vinedresser- Don’t run from the pruning shears of the Father. Like a tree, 1. 1. Pruning- Pruning a tree is considered the best way to encourage new growth. Pruning exposes all part of us that weren’t receiving proper sunlight (for us we could say “Sunlight”- pruning exposes the hidden things of the heart - things perhaps only us and God know about and He wants to deal with them- don’t run. Pruning makes room for more growth Seek out the experts - People seek out experts when it comes to their health, their finances, their psychological well being, their marriage/children, their career. Yet how often do we seek out seasoned Christians that are trustworthy and faithful? How often do we seek out the Holy Spirit’s guidance?
* Mulch- a protectant- Mulch can attract beneficial organisms and repel pests. Mulch can boost a trees immune system, helping build a resilience and resistance. It decreases competition from the grass. Have we set up protectants- do we care about our spiritual immune system?
* Water - Can a dry tree recover? It is possible but very difficult. So for us, water is cleansing, it is a symbol of Holy Spirit, it refreshes and revitalizes us, it is a symbol of eternal life.
* Fertilizer- Food- provides nutrients, (potassium, phosphorus, and nitrogen, which allow crops to grow bigger, faster, and produce more food, feed more people. As we feed on God’s supply, we open our lives to be used in greater ways, including how God can use us to help others.
* Protect from pests - We take vitamins and exercise and eat right to prevent health problems- but how concerned are we with taking care of our spiritual health through proper diet of the Word of God, friendships that are edifying, cutting out the things that do not promote good spiritual health.
* Monitor for diseases- We will go and get an annual physical (mammogram, colonoscopy, PSA levels), but are we allowing God to examine our lives for those things that bring sin, which is conceived in a thought and gives birth to death.
* Remove grass- these things though may seem to not be that bad compete with the tree for water and nutrients causing the tree to thirst and hunger. What things is our life, that may not seem that bad, are in reality competing for our time and attention and as a result our spiritual life is left hungry and thirsty.
* Protect the trunk (foundation) - The trunk is the foundation of the tree. If the trunk is not healthy then the whole tree and any fruit that might come of it will suffer and not be healthy. How is our foundation. Everything can look great on the outside. But just like a house with a faulty foundation, that house is a ticking time bomb. So are we, if we know all the right words, songs, phrases etc. but our foundation is flawed. How is your foundation?
* Annual tree care plans- If you look in stores today, more so than in my childhood and younger years, planners are popular and expensive! We can buy them, we have them on our smart phone, our computers, hanging on our walls….We plan for college, marriage, having a family, buying a house, retirement and even death……but do we pay that much attention to planning spiritually, a ministry, a spiritual discipline that we want to incorporate into our lives or improve on, have we planned for our own eternity and the eternity of those we love so dear. Or get with God and let Him speak to you in the stillness of your own heart, as we learn to abide.

Becoming An Abiding Disciple