

Abiding in Jesus

John 15:5

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According to a new study most Americans are lonely. And contrary to what we might expect, the older you are the less lonely you feel. In fact, loneliness is greatest among young people. Great Britain has recently created a "minister for loneliness" to tackle modern public health problems associated with social isolation. Recent data indicates social isolation and living alone had a significant and equal effect on the risk of premature death ... one that was equal to or exceeded the effect of other well-accepted risk factors.

Why are we so lonely? There are a lot of reasons. Some aren't new, but go back a long way. What's the first question God asked Adam and Eve? "Where are you?" A relationship question. An estrangement question. An abiding question.

"And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27) The Bible, God's Word to us, is ALL about a Person. Relationship.

Beginning with the books of *Moses*, Genesis through Deuteronomy, what's God doing? He's calling lost people back to Himself. Providing a way for them to be with Him, to abide with Him - for that's why He created us in the first place. That's why you were created ... to abide with, to be in relationship with God. And in the books of the prophets, what's God doing? Calling out. Seeking His lost and lonely sheep - who don't even know they're lost. Who are even running away from God.

Today God's doing the same thing. Calling lonely, lost people back to Himself. Calling *you* back to Himself. How? Through Moses and all the Prophets and the Apostles. Through the Bible, which is all about abiding in Jesus.

How does Jesus say it? *"I am the Vine, you are the branches."* What's the context of Jesus' words? The upper room, on the night He was betrayed, with those closest to Him. Abiding with Him. What was the danger they faced? The same danger you face. The danger of *no longer* abiding in Jesus, of leaving Him, of no longer remaining. And what happens to us if we become detached from Jesus, no longer abiding in relationship with Him? *If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*

And so, in John 15, Jesus warns those abiding with Him, so that they might *continue* abiding in Him. John 16, *"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away."*

Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. And the fruit of the Spirit always turns where? Outward - toward God and others. Loving God and loving our neighbor. We see this in Galatians 5.

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. What's the focus in all of this? Turned inward. It's all about me getting something. And in the end, it ruins us. *I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Before Jesus physically left, what did He say? It was a statement of relation; of abiding. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:19-20)

John 15:7 *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* When you're reading your Bible, what are you doing? (Luke 24:27) You're abiding in Jesus. When you're having your devotional time, what are you doing? Abiding in Jesus. When you attend worship service, what are you doing? Abiding in Jesus. When you're meditating on the cross, what are you doing? Abiding in Jesus.

What interrupts your abiding? What gets between you and Jesus? What pulls you away? Martin Luther's barber struggled with his abiding with Jesus. Luther's advice to Peter the barber? *"It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business of the morning and the last at night. Guard yourself carefully against those false, deluding ideas which tell you, 'Wait a little while. I will pray in an hour; first I must attend to this or that.' Such thoughts get you away from prayer into other affairs which so hold your attention and involve you that nothing comes of prayer for that day."* He could have said the same thing about reading your Bible. Being pulled away from abiding in Jesus isn't such a modern problem, is it?

And so, as Jesus said to His disciples, he says to you and me. *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.* And how do we abide in Jesus? *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* (Colossians 3:16) Abiding in Christ means allowing His Word to fill your mind, direct your will, and transform your affections.

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ... If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. That's your future. That's your destiny apart from Christ.

*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. God gives to us all that we ask - as we bear in mind our relationship to him, as a branch remaining in its life-giving source. We ask, not for things which threaten our abiding, but for all that will aid and benefit our *remaining* with Jesus.* (Brad Pribbenow)

"Where are you?" God's asking you the same question He asked Adam & Eve. The question He's asking in all the pages of the Bible. "Where are you, in relation to Me?"

The answer? Lost. Lonely. The answer? Found. Abiding. In relation - the reason you were born. The reason Jesus came down. The reason He died. The reason He rose. The reason He ascended. The reason He's coming again. That you might abide with Him, forever!

The Christian life is about abiding in Jesus. Not leaving, but abiding with Him - through His life-giving Word. *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.* (Colossians 2:6-7)

"And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself." Himself ... the offspring of Eve, who crushes the head of Satan - for you. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world - your sin. The High Priest, who intercedes to a Holy God on your behalf. The New Covenant, made on better promises than yours. The Prince of Peace - your Peace. The Bread of Life. All that is said in the Scriptures concerning Himself, that you might abide in Him forever! Stay in Him. Remain in Him. Abide in Him ... and He will abide in you!

