

# How God Makes Men

## Jesus: the principle of abiding in Christ

*John 8:31-32, 15:1-11*

Good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study where we always have room for one more! Why are we here? Why are you here? We are here because we want to both become and make disciples. We want to become the men that God created us to be. We want to help other men become the men that God created them to be. The way we go about that, the way to express that, reaching its success, would be to say that we have a vital, vibrant relationship with Jesus. Success in Christianity is a vibrant relationship with Jesus, because Jesus Christ is Christianity. That being said, we have a problem. As much as you want it, as much as I want it, you will leave here today and you will go out into a world where all day long you're going to be tempted to exchange this truth for a lie. Paul said in Galatians 5:7 you were running a good race! Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? Then, two verses later in the first instance I'm aware of in the history of mixing metaphors, he says here's the problem. The problem is that a little yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough. So how he goes from race to batch of dough, I don't know, but that's what he says is going on, that's what he says is the problem. Some of us struggle with this all the time, and all of us struggle with this some of the time. That being said, that is what prompted the Holy Spirit to include the texts that we're going to look at today. You should be at John 15.

Before we get going, let's go ahead and do a shout out. We have a new group of guys that are joining us. They're with Kingdom Impact Global Ministries in Atlanta, GA. They're a group of 8 meeting on Sundays at 6:00. Not sure if that's pm or am, sorry. Their leader is Robert Rogers and they're using the video Bible Study, so would you join me in giving a warm welcome to them? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we are very glad to have you with us!

This text is going to answer the question what one thing will most lead to a vibrant relationship with Jesus? Doesn't that seem a little bold to you? What one thing? Like, is there really one thing? Wow! That seems grandiose! But there is absolutely one thing that more than anything else will lead to a vibrant relationship with Jesus, and that's what this text answers. Just to preview what's ahead, we're going to talk about this topic today, Jesus: the principle of abiding in Christ. We're going to talk about what happens when we abide, and we're going to answer the question what does it mean to abide? Then, I'm going to give you six ways that you can abide in Christ.

### **What happens when we abide?**

First up, what happens when we abide? John 15:1-4, I'm going to skip these first four verses. Here's why; in our series Hanging Out with Jesus, we're going through the Gospels one story at a time. There's this great metaphor here of the vine and the branches, and we're going to look more deeply into that other series. Today, let's begin at verse four, he's already said I am the vine, you're the branches:

Remain and I will remain in you.

Wow! Now, that's the NIV. Some versions will say abide in me and I will abide in you. Does anyone have a version that says something else? Remain united from the good news version. Make your home in me? That's nice. The Message version. Eugene Peterson is always going to make it very visceral, very concrete, very visual. Make your home in me!

What I would encourage you to do is to underline this word remain or whatever word is used in your translation, and just see how often this text is used. Remain in me, and I will remain in you, there's two times.

No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine (there's three). Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me (one verse, and there it is four times!).

"I am the vine; you are the branches (there it is again). If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me (there it is again), you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you (two more times), ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love (there it is again). If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love (you will what?), just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

There are a number of benefits to abiding or remaining in Christ. What happens when we abide? The uber idea here is the very first one in verse 4, remain in me and I will remain in you. If we abide in Christ, we get Christ himself. What more could you want? What could be greater than having Christ himself in me? But that's not all! In verse 5 you see that it says you will bear much fruit. Who doesn't want to lead a fruitful life? In verse 7, it says ask for whatever you wish and it will be given to you. By the way, that doesn't mean that you can pray for whatever you want and get it, but it does mean that when you are in him and he is in you, great things can happen! It's the Psalm 37:4 kind of thing where it says delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. It's the same thing! It basically says that you are so in connection with God at a particular point that you're not even asking your own will, you're asking what he has put in your heart to ask. God is not giving you whatever you want, he is giving you what he wants that he has put into your heart to want it. That's not just a little philosophical mind trick either, that's all through the Bible. In verse 9 and 10, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. That is to me the most precious thing! I've talked about this before and I'll talk about it again, but it's worth noting now. However much it is that God the Father loves his son Jesus, that's how much Jesus loves you! That's too much to comprehend! Reading on, now remain in my love. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love! Another benefit of abiding, we experience the love of Jesus. Then, in the next verse, I've told you this that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. Who doesn't want to have joy, to have genuine authentic happiness? We get Christ himself, we bear much fruit, we get our prayers answered, we experience the love of Jesus, and we experience the joy of God! And just to throw one more in there, turn back a few pages to John 8:31-32. To the Jews who had believed in Jesus, he says this in verse 31:

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

So we abide in his teachings and we experience truth! Just these benefits! Can you think of anything in life that you would like more than these benefits? These are clusters, there are other benefits that go along with it that we could look up, but just in what we've seen today, Christ himself, bearing a lot of fruit, getting our prayers answered, experiencing his love, experiencing his joy, experiencing his truth, and being set free! Set free from the race that cuts in on us! So the question this text puts to us is what can we do to have a vibrant relationship with Christ? Abide! We've seen it 11 times in these verses alone! It's the Greek word meno. This is worth remembering. It's the word men with an o. Here's the thing, what this text is saying is meno, abide, and the vine does the rest. Do you see it? Meno, and the vine does the rest. That doesn't mean that it's all passive! There are lots of active things that we can do, but when we are in the vine, and as Gentiles we are attached to the vine, the vine does the rest. It's the vine that has the roots that look around for the nutrients. It's the vine that pushes life into the branches. So the Big Idea today is this: **Meno is the one thing that will most lead to a vibrant relationship with Jesus.** Abiding is the one thing that will most lead to a vibrant relationship with Jesus.

Some of you are way down the road in your spiritual journey, and this is all precious to you. You've already experienced this. Others of you, maybe are more at the front end of your journey and you're wondering how do I calibrate my life? Where do I go? What do I look for? What do I do? This is it! A vibrant relationship with Jesus, that's what Christianity is about! Some of you are here and you don't have this relationship yet and you're wondering what Christianity is all about. This is it! It's about a vibrant relationship with Jesus! It's about his salvation and all the things that it implies! You can't say everything every time, right? But a vibrant relationship with Jesus and all that it implies.

### **What does it mean to abide?**

What does it mean then to abide? We heard some of the different versions, and here are some synonyms: remain, dwell, continue, live, reside, live with him. There's this sense of being united with Christ, not united into one thing, we're still distinct, but united. There is a oneness. I'm not getting into any of this pantheistic kind of stuff, but you know what I'm saying.

Let's take any relationship. What is it that will determine the depth and quality of your connection in that relationship? It could be your wife, we could be talking about children, could be talking about parents, siblings, friends, coworkers, members of your small group, etc. What is it that determines the quality and depth of connection that you have with them? There are lots of things. Time, spending time with that person, your availability to that person, your transparency, your willingness to be vulnerable, that you feel like they're for you and you're for them, there's a give and take in the relationship. When those and other things are present, there's this sense of closeness that comes and the relationship becomes vibrant! For those of you who are married, how many of you feel closer to your wife today than you did on your wedding day? Rhetorical question here, no need to raise hands! How many of you feel like you are about the same closeness as that day? How many of you feel like you are less close, more distant from your wife? You see how this thing works? If you are married or maybe it's someone other than a spouse, but the closeness you have with that person is reflected in how much you are investing in each other in that relationship. So abiding is all about the dynamics of a relationship. You get that? A relationship with Jesus. The Big Idea today: **Meno is the one thing that will most lead to a vibrant relationship with Jesus.**

### **6 ways to abide**

Let's turn our attention to 6 ways that you can abide. Let's look at the handouts. In the third question, that's what we'll be referring to. Now, obviously, there are some things that you should not do, that will prevent you from abiding, but you already know what those are, don't you? You already know what your sins are, what your temptations are. You know how you are getting cut in on so that you're not running the good race. You know how that yeast works its way through the whole batch. You know those things, but on a more positive note, let's talk about the things you can do to abide. These are taken from Gordon MacDonald. He calls these the leading instincts of the soul, and he used them to identify six different worship styles. They are so transferable to what we're talking about here. It's so good that I wanted us to use them here.

The first is the aesthetic instinct. The aesthetic instinct seeks to be overwhelmed by the majesty of God. You might want to underline that. This person is happiest when the worship environment includes beauty, order, tradition and artistic integrity. This is one of mine, and you're going to have two or three of these that you'll most identify with. This is one of mine, probably number three for me, but I love abiding in Christ. I am overwhelmed by my relationship with Christ when I observe him in his role as the creator of creation.

My wife and I live in a bird kingdom, and this is the time of year where the cormorants fish our lake, and the herons and the egrets which are very territorial come out, too. We live on a lake that's 640 acres, and so these 50 herons and egrets are equidistant from each other around the lake all year except when the cormorants come. The cormorants heard the fish to shore and go and catch their dinner. Well, all the herons and egrets put aside their differences during this free feeding season. We'll look down at our dock and literally have 50 herons and egrets! So one time we were in the keys on our anniversary vacation a couple of weeks ago, and there was one lone white egret on top of a mangrove while we were out on this glass bottom boat with 150 people. They all rushed to the rail, taking pictures and saying how beautiful it was. We have 50 of them on our dock! We just yawn and say let's go get a coke! But we love that!

Yesterday there was a pileated woodpecker out in the yard. We hadn't seen him for 10 years. I guess it's a different one. These birds are magnificent! They're that deep black with the deep red crown and they grow up to a 19 inches with a 24 inch wing span so they're big birds! We saw one yesterday and we worshipped God! I felt just a welling up in my relationship with Jesus at the sight of this wonder! So that's the aesthetic.

The experiential instinct. The experientialist wants to feel the presence of God. Underline that. And then respond with the full range of emotions including clapping, singing, dancing, prayer, weeping, laughing, and more. I don't do this. This is not me. We go to Northland which has some of the best worship music in the world, and it just doesn't move me, it just doesn't do anything for me. I know it's good, because everyone else acts like it's good, but this just doesn't do it for me. This may do it for you, so this is what might help you to abide.

The activist instinct. This is the guy who's always running out to help some widow hook up her refrigerator. The activist sees everything through the lens of service. Underline that. The world needs to be changed and this man feels closest to God when making a contribution to the Kingdom. So this is the guy who's up on the widow's roof, pounding nails going BAM praise Jesus! BAM praise Jesus! Just really feels like they're most abiding when doing something to serve God.

The contemplative instinct. This is probably my number two. The contemplative cherishes the inner life, opening up to God in the quietness of his own soul, and sensing his presence. This person is impressed by the mystery of God. Underline that.

The student instinct. The student loves truth! Underline that. Studying the Bible is the core of this person's worship style, this is number one for me. Happiness is found in a church which emphasizes the preaching and teaching of God's word. I just love it, in fact I'm addicted to the Bible! I'm addicted to God, I'm addicted to Jesus, I'm addicted to the Holy Spirit. I can't get enough! I need a fix! The reason that it means so much to me is that when I read the word, every time the Holy Spirit will take something I've read and quicken it to my heart. It's the most sublime high I've ever had!

Finally, the relational instinct. The relational finds God most present when people are bonded together in fellowship. Underline that. This person is torn when there's conflict, and lifted high when the walls come down. This is the person that is the last person to leave the small group on Tuesday night, first person to come. They just really love to be with others. They really find their relationship to Jesus at its peak when they are in the presence of other likeminded people.

You've heard of the five love languages? These are the six abide languages, these are the six meno languages. Find yours! You probably have a good idea or at least suspect what it could be and maybe you already know, but do that. Why do we do this? Why do we look for how to abide? Because we want a great relationship with God! Who doesn't want that? This is how you get it!

My wife and I went on this anniversary trip as I mentioned, down to the keys. Patsy's parents used to have a place in Key Largo, and when they retired they would meet new friends and go on a little three day trip down through the keys with their friends and show them all their favorite places. When I heard about this, I had the thought why don't we retrace their footsteps and go to all the places they went. So that's what we did. One of the places that my father-in-law wanted us to go and stay was the Casa Marina in Key West which is this grand old Flagler hotel that was used as the military command center in the Cuban missile crisis. Big facility! We couldn't get in, but we decided to walk through it. Why did we do that? There's a very big difference between feeling like you need to do something to make someone happy and wanting to do it because you have such a great relationship that you want to make them happy. Do you see this? This is no small difference. I had this very thought as we were leaving Casa Marina. I told Patsy I so want to do this to make your Dad happy. It's interesting because I didn't want to do it as something I had to, else he might be displeased. It was something I wanted to do as a response to how much I love him and because of how vibrant our relationship is. It's the difference between grace and law. So that's what this gets us to, abiding in Christ gets us to grace, it gets us to Jesus. The Big Idea today: **Meno is the one thing that will most lead to a vibrant relationship with Jesus.** That is such a prize! Let's pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Our dearest Father, Lord, we come humbly to you today. Each of us have the desire to experience the fullness of your love, your joy, your truth, to bear much fruit, to have our prayers answered, and then this idea of making our home with you. So Father, I pray that this word meno, this concept, would become for each of us very central in our lives and we make this prayer in Jesus' name, amen!