

The Map Maker's Guide

Map 22 - The Power of Abiding

Spiritual Exercise

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

Matthew 7:24-25

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1John 1:9

As the days are becoming more evil, trial, tribulation and persecution are increasing. Christ warned that the only people who would stand are those that hear and do what He taught. Great will be the fall for those that hear only. These are sobering thoughts. Who among us understands what Jesus requires? Who then can say they are confident that they are prepared? How desperate must the times get before we get serious about our preparation, and our discipling of those in our spheres of influence?

Prayer

Father God, we confess that we have been poor watchmen. We have wandered from our post, turned a blind eye, or refused to consider the warning signs. We invite your rebuke, chastening and whatever else it takes to make us ready; and make us responsible participants in the Bride's preparation for Your Son's return. Have mercy on us. Forgive us our sin. Deliver us from all unrighteousness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

Through our exploration of The Power of His Life, we have discovered the depth and height of our participation in the life of Christ. From our death in Him, through burial and resurrection, and all the way to ascension, the supernatural power of God manifests itself in the transformation of His children. Understandably, you may have come away with the impression that such consideration is "too heavenly minded to be any earthly good". Perhaps you are one of those (like me) that need to know what it looks like and what can be done to lay hold of it.

As we explore further into the life of submission to His power, we will examine the keys and the power of the life that abides in the resurrected and ascended Christ. We will discover and experience the power of His life, by abiding in it. We will uncover the treasure of His precious and great promises for those who will abide.

Definition

Abide (*menō*): To remain; in reference to place, to sojourn, tarry, not to depart (to continue to be present, to be held, kept, continually); in reference to time, to continue to be, not to perish, to last, endure (of persons, to survive, live); in reference to state or condition, to remain as one, not to become another or different; to wait for, await one.

BlueLetterBible.com Outline of Biblical Usage

“Abide” contains a depth of meaning beyond the capacity of our minds to understand. It references place, time and, perhaps most importantly, state of being. As we will discover, it is one of the greatest mysteries of the kingdom of God.

Like all of the kingdom mysteries, we must first let the truth of it become faith in our hearts. Belief precedes understanding and revelation. It is only then that the truth will make us free, renew our minds and transform us.

So, invite the Holy Spirit to speak the meaning of abide into your heart. The Lord promises that if we seek, we will find. Let Him know you are seeking a deeper revelation as you search out this matter.

Searching Out the Matter

(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; footnotes and headings excluded)

The Importance of Abiding

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. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. John 15:5-8

Every Christian should be familiar with this passage. From it, we know that the life of the vine flows through the branches to produce its fruit. Branches don't produce fruit. They transport the life that produces the fruit. They are blessed in this limited but important function. At least four very important things are promised to those that abide in Christ:

First, “He...bears much fruit... without me you can do nothing” - We are promised to be neither barren nor unfruitful. Our fruitfulness in God's kingdom is dependent on and directly related to our abiding with His Son. There is no other way to be productive in God's kingdom. Christ said the same thing about Himself (John 5:19). He then sent His disciples in the same way that His Father sent Him (John 20:21). It is the abiding life of Christ that does what He did.

Second, “...you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” - The meaning of this verse goes back to Psalm 37:4. It is the will of God to give us the desires of our hearts. As we abide in Christ, we discover those desires, ask for them, and they immediately become the purposes of God that will not be denied Him (Job 42:2).

Third, “My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit...” - This is the physical manifestation of the power of abiding. The fruit that glorifies the Father are the greater than works of John 14:12; something greater than the works He did through Jesus. These are the good works of Matthew 5:16 - works that others will look at and say, “Isn't God awesome!” As we abide in Christ, God's supernatural work becomes the fruit of our life. This is the life for which we were created: To glorify our Father in heaven.

Lastly, “...you will be My disciples.” - This abiding, fruit producing, Father glorifying life is the requirement of every disciple of Christ. A sobering thought: Those that are not abiding, are not producing; and they are not glorifying; and they are not His. Therefore, we must discover how to abide, and how to disciple others into an abiding relationship with Christ.

Keys to Abiding

Now that we understand the gravity of abiding in Christ, let's continue searching to find the keys we need to partake of that life.

But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. John 5:38

The word of God did not abide in the Jewish leaders because they did not believe that Jesus was the Christ. It is not surprising that our belief in Jesus is the beginning of the abiding life. But it is only the beginning. Don't be like so many who have neglected to go on to fullness in Jesus Christ.

Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. 1John 2:24

All that we have heard from God contributes to our abiding in the Son and the Father: Through the teaching, preaching, and reading of God's word; through reading Christian literature; and through the direct words that come from God in prayer, meditation, dreams, godly counsel, etc. This is great news!

But we must remember that anyone who is "a hearer of the word and not a doer, is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was." (James 1:23) His faith dies for lack of the work thereof.

My point here is that there is more to the abiding life than just hearing and believing. We must obey what we hear.

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1John 2:5-6

We must walk as Christ walked - in perfect obedience to the Father.

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. John 15:9-10

As Jesus kept His Father's commandments and abides in His love, we must do the same in Jesus. By keeping His commandments, we will abide in His love; and the love of God will be perfected in us. In this we can be confident that we abide in Him.

As you can see, our part in abiding is not complicated: Hear, believe, and obey. It is a blessing to know that our loving Father has made it simple enough for children to understand. The faith of a child, with a heart to respond, is all that is required for us to find the power of abiding.

As we submit to the abiding life, the Father draws us deeper into the mystery. He reveals more of His kingdom, we hear more clearly, and the faith of Christ grows. As we respond in obedience, our abiding is strengthened and the cycle of increased maturity continues (from glory to glory).

The Sacrament of Communion

There is another way - a supernatural way - that we come to abide in Jesus Christ: Through the sacrament of communion. As with all the sacraments, communion is a sacred moment; a moment in God's presence when we have the opportunity for God to do something supernatural in each of us.

Very early in His ministry, Jesus had some profound things to say about communion. Here are a few excerpts from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel:

Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him. v. 27

Jesus is encouraging them to think beyond what they have seen - the feeding of the five thousand.

Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" v. 28

Still, their minds are stuck on the miracle - the physical evidence of His power. Without chastening (because the works are important), Jesus encourages them again to think beyond that which can be seen.

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." v. 29

Interestingly, here we see again the first step of abiding: Belief in Jesus.

But their confusion continues, and they ask Him for a greater sign, something like the manna given in the desert (vv. 30-31). In response, He makes this profound statement:

For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. vv. 33-35

The mystery deepens as Jesus reveals that He will not only give them "the food which endures to everlasting life" (v. 27), but that He is that food. With passion, He encourages them to come and believe. Then, He pushes them beyond their capacity to understand:

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. vv. 53-56

Rather than reject this word of Jesus (as so many did), or pass over it because we cannot grasp its meaning with our natural minds, let's pause to let the Holy Spirit speak. Just to be clear, I am suggesting that stop here until you have asked the Holy Spirit for revelation into this mystery. Don't miss this great opportunity to hear for yourself.

Now, with the limitations of mind and pen, recognizing there is a part I cannot put into words, let me share what these verses mean to me (at this time):

The supernatural work of God in communion is our being abided, by God, in Jesus Christ. When a follower of Jesus takes communion in faithful reverence, God strengthens their abiding in His Son.

This is why it is so important to approach communion in reverence and faith. Nothing less can abide in Jesus Christ. To come any other way is to waste the sacred moment of communion. Paul put it this way:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32

In response to our working out our salvation with fear and trembling, God works in us for His good pleasure - abiding us in His Son; and thereby giving us His kingdom.

Furthermore, in strengthening our abiding in Christ, the Father also strengthens our fellowship with each other. This is why we take communion with the community of believers. Our communion is with Jesus and with the Jesus in each other. In communion, the power of abiding is also the power of community.

Conclusion

Abiding in Christ is one of the greatest mysteries of the kingdom; and one of the most powerful. Not only does abiding release the power of God in our lives, but it marks us as a disciple of Christ. If we abide, we will be fruitful - and assured of an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. Abiding requires a "believing into" Christ. It comes by faith, not by mental exercise. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

Leaders in the Workplace, our gracious Father has made it simple; and the return on our investment so very great. For the one that will hear and do, searching out the truth of abiding will be the most fruitful adventure of their life.

Application

Searching out the mysteries of God is best done in community. Jesus is with us when we are together; and He always has something to say. Recognize that you do not have to have all the answers to lead others into the mysteries of God. In fact, you will not. Don't let this deter you. Take the lead in humility. Let others know you need them to help you hear from God. This alone will be one of your best disciple-making moments.

Reckoning

The power of abiding is for those who will hear, believe and obey.

Assignment

1. Review your notes and the Scripture passages from this week's module. Share the ones that are most meaningful to someone you are discipling.
2. Search out the matter of abiding by reading and meditating on the definitions and Scripture references found in Vines Expository Dictionary.

Devotion

To Know My Ways

TGIF Today God Is First Volume 2 by Os Hillman

"That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest'".
Heb 3:10-11

Technology is supposed to make our ability to accomplish things easier and make us more productive. I love the technology gadgets available to us today. In twenty years these will seem as old and archaic as the eight track player. (See, some of you don't know what that is.)

Research reveals that the average person is working much longer hours today because we literally can work from anywhere. Our technology allows us to stay in constant contact with others, which means we are always on call. Unless we intentionally set boundaries, we will never rest from our work.

God got angry with the people of Israel because they did not know His ways. They failed to recognize the boundaries He had set for them that would ensure a spiritual and physically successful life. They chose to disregard His ways. This disobedience led to their inability to enter God's rest.

God's rest means that we can actually do our work and still be refreshed through His Spirit in our inner man. It is the opposite of sweat and toil. It means that the fruit of our work comes as a result of abiding in the vine of His grace and power. Jesus said you can do nothing (worthwhile) unless you are connected to the vine.

In order to do this you and I must do two things. We must understand His ways and we must do His ways. When we follow these two things, we will begin to experience His supernatural rest in all of our endeavors.

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