

Simple Faith – Pt3

Abiding In Christ

I. The Gospel Invitation: A Life of Intimacy with God

1. The way Jesus unfolds New Covenant faith in the Upper Room Discourse has everything to do with the uniqueness of humanity's place in creation. He calls us to a lifestyle that magnifies the testimony of the wisdom and kindness of God in His perfect design and His sovereign story for the image bearers who are forever to worship Him in spirit and in truth.
John 4:23 “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
John 17:3 And **this is eternal life, that they may [experientially, intimately] know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
2. Jesus says our life is about **believing**, because we were made to encounter and have revealed to us the Person of God; **abiding**, because we were made not just to understand from a distance but to experientially know from a place of relationship; **loving** as He loves, because our worship is meant to come from a place of union as the two become one; and **asking**, because He intends through us to make a great display of the kindness and mercy of God.
3. It's all one in the heart of God. **We must not set believing and abiding in competition with loving**. The fear that we'll become unbalanced in our pursuit of knowing and loving God is simply not real – it's a distraction. In fact, **the idea of “balance” has no place in the kingdom**. We're not called to seek a **balance** of many good things, we're called to seek **fullness** in the only One who is good. **“Balance” makes sense if we're talking about some things we do, but the biblical call is “fullness” because we're talking about Someone we are one with**.
4. Our glorious call is **to be one with Jesus** forever, and that oneness **is** believing, abiding and loving – not three parts exercised in turn, or three steps that make it happen, but three continual realities that describe what oneness and intimacy is. We at all times know Him and carry the knowledge of Him as treasure in our hearts. We at all times commune with Him and celebrate Him being Him and Him being near. We at all times agree with Him and choose for our lives to be filled with the expression of His beautiful Person.
5. Jesus never changes topics throughout the whole discourse, **He simply takes the time to clarify what loving union is meant to look like**. From the very beginning and the command to love to His prayer at the very end, Jesus is talking about the Father's delight in Himself that makes it His delight to see the earth filled with the image of Himself delighting in Himself. The glory of Union with Christ is that **love is not primarily something we choose to do in order to please God, but Someone we choose to become because God pleases us; it is not primarily about a testimony of our love for Him in giving our lives, but of His love for us in giving us Himself**.
John 13:31 So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. 32 If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately... 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
John 17:22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

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6. Jesus takes love out of the realm of fair treatment, human rights and common courtesy, and puts it squarely in the realm of **faith** – our thoughts, words and actions towards others are to reflect and agree with the truth of God's heart toward them. We love others out of the place of friendship with God – He has shown us how He feels and what He desires, and now we love as He loved.
*John 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.
Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is **faith** expressing itself through love.*
7. We're to love because we believe His love toward **them** and because we believe His love toward **us**. In His love toward us, He chose us to have the glory and honor of being carriers of His love – for our own joy. This is eternal life. In the New Covenant we don't love out of a duty towards our fellow man or even towards God. We love as the embracing of what it was that we said yes to when we accepted the covenant – **union with the One who is Love**.
John 15:9 “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 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. 11 “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full... 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another.
8. That's the only place such a love can flow from. Jesus loves as He loves because He knows how He is loved. God calls us to mercy – to unconditional love – because His love depends not on them and what they deserve, but on who He is, and likewise ours depends only on who He is and who we are in Him.
John 13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

II. The Simplicity of Abiding

1. Jesus hedges us in to the place of intimacy with Him – He makes the reality of abiding non-negotiable. All fruitfulness comes from intimacy, “*without Me you can do nothing.*” It's right and reasonable and necessary for us to focus on being One with God, rather than doing the right things. The promise of God is if we're feeding from the vine we will bear fruit.
*John 15:1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 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.** 6 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.*
Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

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2. Paul warns the Galatians – it's impossible to produce the fruit of the Spirit by the flesh, and exhorts them to walk in the Spirit. He's not warning them against openly pursuing the lusts of the flesh and sinful compromise – the whole letter is about not entering into bondage to the law and religion again. The warning is, if you exercise your flesh in the pursuit of godliness rather than walking in the Spirit, you're empowering a nature that is at war with the Spirit.

***Galatians 5:16** I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish... 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries... 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control... 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

3. Likewise, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount warns that bad trees can't bear good fruit. It seems an intentional callback to the garden of Eden – those focused on doing the right things and not on feeding from the right Source are gathering from the wrong tree. If there is one thing that is most opposed to the ways of God, it's independence – God wants us to do everything in relationship.

***Matthew 7:15** “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”*

III. Believing and Abiding

1. There is only one condition: God chooses to make His home in us and not in the world because of one distinguishing factor – love. He dwells in our hearts because we want Him there.

***John 14:22** Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”*

2. **The evidence of a love that beckons Jesus to come and abide, is we keep (lit. to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard) His word.** We treasure the revelation of Jesus, which means not only that we search it out like treasure, but that we insist upon laying hold of what we find – and that looks simply like **asking** and inviting.

***John 15:7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

3. **Abiding** is simply an act of faith in response to **believing**. Jesus speaks of **believing** and then promises the Holy Spirit **will** come and abide with us. Living in an active faith in Him – who He is, what He's like and what He's done – **is** abiding in Him. We come to know and treasure the One who lives in us and that He **is** in us and we let Him be Himself in us.

***John 14:16** And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you... 20 At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.*

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4. It is, first and foremost, an act of faith in the desire of God for humanity that we would be with Him where He is. Jesus grounds His call to **abide** in Him on the declaration that He has loved us as the Father has loved Him, and invited us to the same kind of closeness He as a Man knew with the Father. He invites us to live in His love as He lived in the Father's love.
John 15:9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."
John 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am..."
5. It is, secondly and critically, an act of faith in the revelation of God and where He has said intimacy can be found. There is a critical connection between obedience and intimacy, but it is not what it's often conceived to be. **Intimacy is not a reward for obedience; intimacy is found in obedience.** In faith, we accept union as God's provision for intimacy – He chose to live in us and for us to, in daily life, experience Him in and through us. That, then, is where we say yes.
John 15:10 "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. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."
6. The obedience that God is looking for is not motivated by the hope of a reward for good behavior. It's an obedience motivated by faith that God **is already** our reward and by the desire to fully experience the glory of being wrapped in His Person. **It's a faith-filled expression of an abiding we believe we have been given and we long to experience the fullness of.** The distinction is, **we're not pursuing an intimacy we don't have, we're treasuring a union we've already been given.**

IV. Standing in Faith

1. The odd thing about the call to abide is to **abide** simply means to **remain**. We **are** in Him and He in us because of what He has done. Under the New Covenant, **we are the dwelling place of God** – the temple of His Holy Spirit. By divine choice, He dwells in us regardless of whether we acknowledge His presence or not, and regardless of how our walk is going – He will not leave us or forsake us.
2. While Union with Christ is clearly spoken of as a process throughout the New Testament, it is at the same time a finished work. We **have** been given every spiritual blessing in heavenly places **in Christ Jesus**. We **have** been seated in heavenly places **in Him**. As many who have believed **are in Christ Jesus**. That's why Jesus describes the process of oneness as simply "abiding" – literally: remaining – in Him. Just don't move from where I have seated you.
John 15:3 **You are already clean** because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 **Abide [lit. remain] in Me**, and I in you...
3. The process, then, is about our soul (mind, emotions and will) coming into agreement with what Jesus already accomplished at the Cross and we entered into when we believed in His salvation and received His Spirit. **We are also the New Covenant priesthood** – charged with the task of rightly honoring God's presence by tending to the place of meeting. Faith produces a **keeping** of His word that orders our lives around staying connected to the truth of who He is and what He's done. Our pursuit of abiding, then, simply means living in a way that keeps us connected with the truth of His nature, His nearness and our union with Him.
Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.