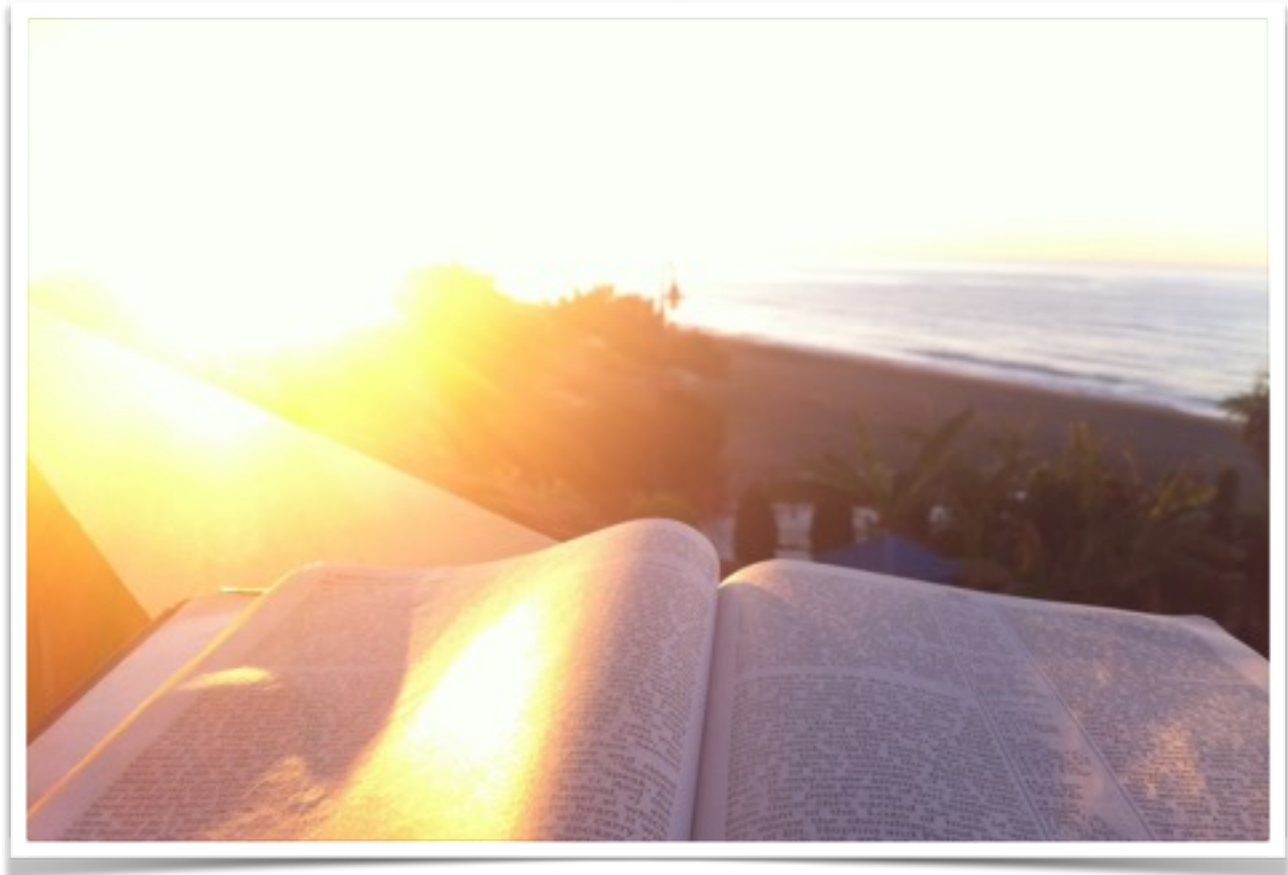


Sermon Series: *Jesus Said What?*



## "If You Abide In Me..."

**(John 15:1-11 ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever

you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

## Introduction

There's a connection between this morning's message and last week's message. The connection is the stunning words of Jesus on the topic of prayer. Last week we considered John 16:24, where Jesus says,

**John 16:24** (ESV) "*Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive that your joy may be full.*"

Jesus was instituting a new way of praying. For the first time in the history of humanity, a man was teaching his disciples that the way to pray prayers that would get answered was to pray them in his name, that is, in the name of Jesus. Jesus was commanding his disciples to offer their prayers to God the Father in his name.

Nothing like this has ever happened before. No one in the history of the world has ever made such a claim. No one has ever said that God the Father will hear and answer your prayers if they are offered in a particular name. Yet this is exactly what Jesus is saying. "If you ask the Father in my name, then you will receive what you are praying for."

And that makes me want to say, "Jesus said what!"

What does it mean to pray prayers "in Jesus' name?" It means to pray according to his authority, his character, his life mission, his will, and for the glory of God the Father. And Jesus says if you pray like that, if you pray in accordance with his name, then the result will be that you will receive answers to those prayers and the result will be "**that your joy will be full.**"

Last week, I said that was my goal—your fullness of joy. That is still my goal this week. I'm still aiming for your joy to be full. How does that happen? According to Jesus, the experience of fullness of joy comes through persistent<sup>1</sup> prayer. So I'm striving to help you pray like this. I'm striving toward *magnifying your personal experience of joy in Jesus by awakening within your soul a fervor for persistent prayer.*

If that goal is according to God's will, then it will be answered and you will be filled with joy. I'm praying this is what happens in your life in 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> Lk 18:1.

So the question we were left with last week, which needs to remain at the forefront of our minds is this, "Are my prayers in accord with the name of Jesus?" That question is important because the prayers that are according to his name are the prayers that he answers.

The text before us today, offers another insight into the kind of prayers he answers and Jesus once again make the connection with answered prayers and fullness of joy. Jesus fleshes this theme out a little bit fuller in something that he said to the disciples just a little bit earlier that night. We see these words in John 15:7-8.

**John 15:7-8** (ESV) <sup>7</sup> *"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."*

Again we see the connection with glorifying God. We saw this last week as well (see Jn 14:13-14). In this passage, the way in which God is glorified is through the disciples of Jesus being fruitful. The fruitful disciples are the ones who **prove to be Jesus' disciples**. Fruit-less disciples are not true disciples. The key (i.e. the means) to being a fruitful disciple is prayer.

The purpose of prayer is to enable you to **bear much fruit**. God wants you to be fruitful. God intends to answer the prayers of his children. God intends, through our prayers, to bring about much fruit bearing. It is God's will to answer the prayers of his children—when they are prayed in accordance with the name of Jesus.

Notice in verse seven that Jesus uses almost the same words here as he did in John 16:24. Here (in Jn 15:7) he says, "...ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." There in John 16:24 he says, "Ask, and you will receive.." There Jesus instructed his disciples to pray *in his name*, here (in John 15:7), he explains more fully the condition upon which this promise will be answered. He says,

**John 15:7** *"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, [then] ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."*

The end result is the same. Look at verse eleven.

**John 15:11** (ESV) <sup>11</sup> *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

**Jesus wants his disciples to experience fullness of joy.** How does that happen? It does **not** happen apart from him. Apart from him nothing joyful happens.

**John 15:4-5** (ESV) <sup>4</sup> *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. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you*

*are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

Fullness of joy and abundant fruitfulness only comes to those who abide in Jesus. And this is the connection with prayer. We receive joy when our prayers are answered. But Jesus says there is a condition for having our prayers answered. And what is the condition that must be met in order to have our prayers answered? We already know that part of the answer is praying in Jesus' name. Here we discover that another part of the answer is abiding in him and allowing his words to abide in us.

So what does this mean? What does it mean for us to abide in Jesus? And what does it mean for his words to abide in us?

## Abide

What does 'abide' mean? The word in Greek is *menō*. It means "to remain in the same place over a period of time; to remain, stay, or to reside."<sup>2</sup> The opposite is "to go away."<sup>3</sup> To 'abide' means 'to not go away.' It means to stay put in a place or a location.

Jesus is saying, "*if you remain in me, then ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.*" To remain in Jesus means to **keep on believing** in him. It means you **keep on** putting your faith in him and **keep on trusting** him; to continue with him.

## True Disciples Abide in Jesus' Word

Jesus helps us understand this by something he said during the Feast of Booths. On the last day of this feast, Jesus stood up and cried out,

**John 7:37-38** (ESV) <sup>37</sup> *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. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*

When Jesus said this, many people "believed" in him.<sup>4</sup> But Jesus knew that not all belief is saving belief. Some believed he was a prophet, while some believed he was the Christ. There were levels of the "belief." So Jesus says to those who had "believed" in him,

**John 8:31** (ESV) <sup>31</sup> *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples..."*

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<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 728.

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 574.

<sup>4</sup> See Jn 7:40.

What does he mean by “abide” in his word? He means if you *remain* in his word. *He means if you continue to be obedient to his teaching, then are you truly his disciple. Jesus knew that some of the people who “believed” in him would not remain with him. Jesus knew that some people would truly believe and remain with him, while others—who were not truly his disciples—would eventually go away from him.*

This happened when he taught that his body and his blood would be a kind of sacrifice that was necessary for eternal life (Jn 6). Jesus taught that he was “the living bread of life that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:35, 41, 51). He said that the only way to have eternal life was to believe in him and receive his broken body and blood (Jn 6:47, 51, 58). Many who had previously “believed” in him, walked away from him after hearing him say this.

**John 6:60** (ESV) <sup>60</sup> *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”*

**John 6:66** (ESV) <sup>66</sup> *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*

They went away from him. They did not **abide** with him. They did not continue in his word. They no longer walked with him. They did not **remain** with him. They could not **stay** in his teaching. They could not abide his teaching. To abide in Jesus means to believe and receive his teaching. **To abide in Jesus means to obey him.** The apostle John explains this.

**1 John 3:24** (ESV) <sup>24</sup> *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him.*

**To abide in Jesus means to obey his commands.** Whoever keeps his commands abides in him. You cannot abide in him, if you will not obey him. If you will not obey him, then you will not abide in him. If you will not obey him, then your prayers will not be according to his will, his mission, nor will they be for his glory. If your prayers are not for his will, his mission, or for his glory, then they will not be answered. And therefore you will not be full of joy. What you will be is full of frustration and discouragement. And you may even believe that the problem lies with God and not with you. Hear these words of Jesus,

**John 15:7** *“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, [then] ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”*

Abiding in Jesus and having his words abide in you, is not some etherial, mystical experience. It’s simply *obeying his instruction*. Abiding in Jesus and having his words abide in you, means *obediently living in accordance with his teaching*. Abiding in Jesus and having his words abide in you, means *knowing his commands and then acting upon them*.

## How Do We Abide In Him?

How do we do this? First, you must know his words. *His words cannot abide in you if you do not know them.* We cannot obey commands we've never heard. The first step toward experiencing fullness of joy in Jesus is knowing the words of Jesus. You must read your Bible or listen to it. Make time to read. Download an app (like the free [ESV app](#)) which will read the Bible to you. When you're driving, listen to the Bible instead of the radio.

## Know His Words, Then Act on His Words

First you must know his words and second you must act on his words. Jesus said,

**John 7:37-38** (ESV) <sup>37</sup> *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*

Are you thirsty? Does your soul yearn for something? The words of Jesus invite us to go to him to have our thirst quenched. When your soul is empty, where do you go to have it filled? It's one thing to know that Jesus promises to satisfy the longings of your soul, but it's another to obediently act upon that knowledge.

When your soul is thirsty, do you sit down and tell Jesus what you lack? Do you get alone and pour out your soul to him? Do you share your grief with him? Do you plead with him remove the darkness and restore the joy of hope?

Or do you run to the internet, or to food, or go shopping, or turn on the TV, do you run to pornography? Or do you run to another person and expect them to satisfy the longing in your soul? Jesus says,

**Matthew 11:28-30** (ESV) <sup>28</sup> *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Abiding in Jesus means knowing his words, believing them, and then obediently acting upon them.

## Forgive So That You Will Be Forgiven

Jesus also said if you want your sins to be forgiven then you must forgive others. And if you do not forgive others of their sins against you, then your heavenly Father will not forgive you of your sins against him.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The sins we commit against one another are immeasurably small when compared to the magnitude of the sins that we commit against God. See Matt 18:20-35, the parable of the unforgiving servant.

**Matthew 6:14-15** (ESV) <sup>14</sup> "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

**Simply obeying the commands of Jesus is abiding in him.** When you know his words and you obey his words, then he pours out his blessing upon you.

**John 13:17** (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

## Memorize & Meditate on His Word

One very practical way to abide in him and allow his word to abide in you is to memorize and to mediate on his word.

**Jeremiah 17:7-8** (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> Blessed the is the man who trusts in the Lord,  
whose trust is the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> He is like a tree planted by water,  
that sends out its roots by the stream,  
and does not fear when the heat comes,  
for its leaves remain green,  
and is not anxious in the year of drought,  
for it does not cease to bear fruit.

This passage nourished my soul for several months. Allow the roots of your soul to go down deep into the word of God. There's no better way to abide in Christ than to have his word abiding in your mind. Memorizing his word is a very obvious way to abide in him. And it will be strength to your soul. Find a verse or a passage and grab onto it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Rejoice in it. Believe it. Don't doubt it.

If you memorize and mediate on his word, it will affect your prayer life. You will then pray according to his word, which is in accord with his will.

**To abide in him, is to obey him.** To abide in his word is to allow his word to direct your life. It means you obey his word. Obeying his word brings the promise of his blessing because through our obedience we experience his love. To obey him is to experience his love.

**John 15:10-11** (ESV) <sup>10</sup> "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. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

Abiding in his love sounds really sweet. That experience comes through obedient living. Obedient living yields the promise of a fruitful prayer life. A fruitful prayer life yields the promise of fullness of joy.

Make it your intention today to obey him at all costs. If you want to experience fullness of joy in Jesus, then abide in him, and allow his words to abide in you.

If you want your prayer life to be different in this year, then make up your mind to abide in his commands. Make up your mind to obey his commands. If you want to experience being able to ask God for whatever you wish and then see it happen, then fill your mind with God's word<sup>6</sup> and his word will govern your wishes. If his word governs your wishes, then your prayers will be in accord with his will and these prayers will be answered and you will rejoice with fullness of joy. It is only by being in Christ and allowing his words to be in us that we experience his love and his joy.

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<sup>6</sup> The words of God are the words of Jesus. "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me" (Jn 7:16).