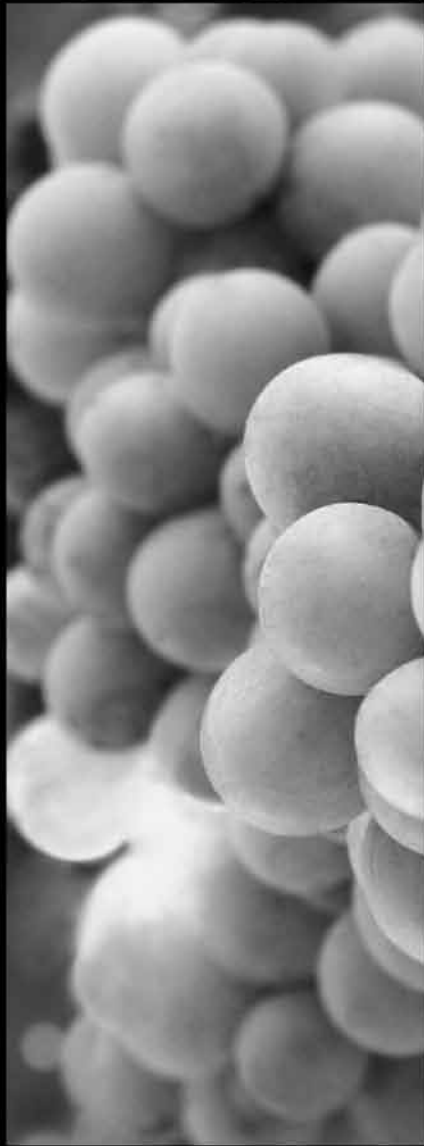
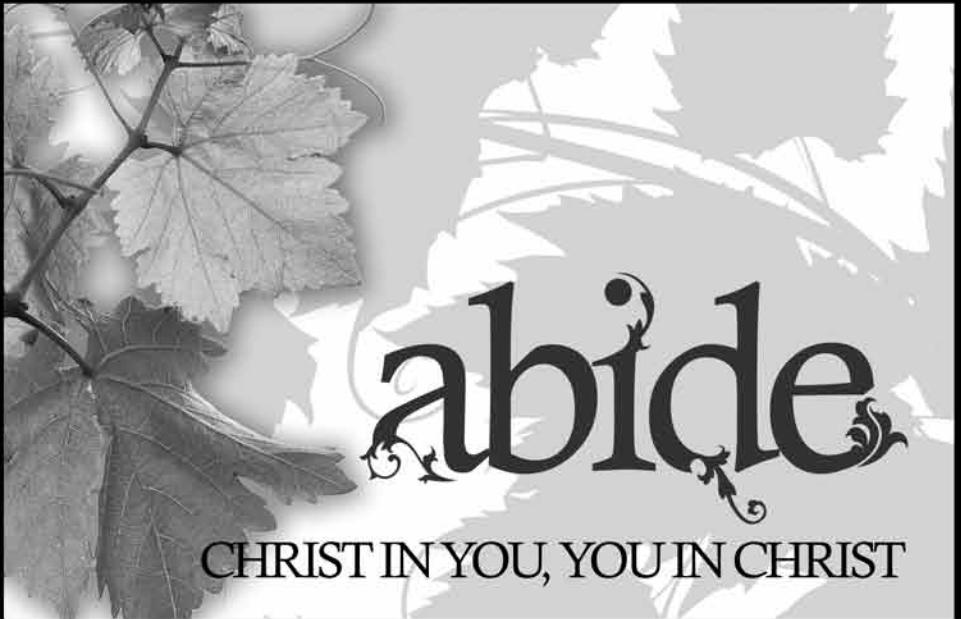




GOD'S WORD IS GOOD

SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY



LESSON 2

Embrace Christ's Vision

Key Passages: John 15:4-5; Philippians 3:7-11

Review and Introduction

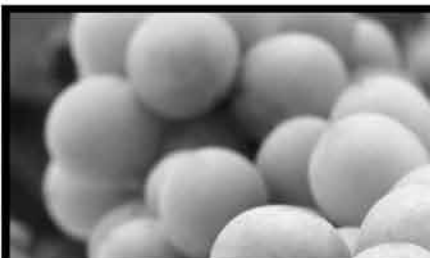
Last week, we began a study on the Parable of the Vine in John 15:1-17. In this parable, Jesus gave His disciples an example from nature that illustrated how their relationship with Him should be. Jesus taught that God is the gardener, Jesus is the true vine, and His followers are the branches. Last week's lesson focused on a believer's position "in Christ," and how John 15 illustrates this position because God has "grafted" all believers into the Vine. We also learned that Christ commanded His followers in John 15:4 to abide in Him so that they would bear fruit. As we remain (abide) in Christ the vine, He produces fruit that we, the branches, will bear (demonstrate) in every area of our lives.

Understand and Obey

Our study this week will focus on God's vision for our lives—to know and become like Jesus. We will see that in order to embrace and live out this vision, we must understand and obey this command in John 15:4-5 to abide in Christ. As we saw last week, Scripture teaches that this command does not pertain to gaining or losing salvation. A believer's position in Christ is eternally secure. So how do we "abide" in Christ if our position in Him is secure? What does Jesus mean? What is abiding in Christ? That is what we will begin to uncover in Scripture throughout this lesson.

Before you begin today's study, lead your group in a quick review (5 minutes) of last week's lesson to refresh their memory and lay a foundation for those who did not study Lesson One. Below are some questions to help you review.

1. Who are the key "characters" in John 15:1-17?
2. Who produces fruit?
3. Who bears fruit?
4. What is the difference in producing and bearing fruit?



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5. What does it mean for someone to be “in Christ?”
6. What is God’s (the gardener) role in fruit being produced in the Vine and borne through the branches? How does He “graft” the branches into the Vine?

Opening Activity

Explain to your group that this week we are going to uncover God’s vision for every believer’s life as we dive deeper into Christ’s command in John 15:4-5 to “remain (abide) in Me and I will remain (abide) in you.” As we learned last week, “abide” does not refer to our position, because we are secure in Christ if we have placed our faith in Him and surrendered our lives to His lordship. “Abide” refers to the intimacy of our relationship and fellowship with Christ. It is a word that calls believers to stay connected in deep intimacy with Christ.

A practical way to illustrate this point is the marriage relationship. Lead your group in a discussion of marriage (or a close friendship if marriage doesn’t apply to your group) using the following questions. Be sure to focus on how a marriage (or friendship) is strengthened and deepened.

- 1) How would you describe a healthy marriage?
- 2) Does going through the wedding ceremony guarantee a close, intimate marriage? Why or why not?
- 3) Once two people are united in marriage, what would happen if they just stopped spending quality time together? Would they cease to be married? How would their relationship be affected?
- 4) What are some specific ways that people deepen a relationship?
- 5) Do you think it is important that couples “remain” or “abide” with one another in order to grow in their love for one another? If so, how do people do this practically?
- 7) Which do you think is more important in a marriage, the things you do for one another, or the intimacy and deep community that you build together?
- 8) Do you think it is possible to follow all of the “rules” of marriage but still not build a deep and intimate connection?
- 9) Do you think building a foundation of intimacy and relational oneness will likely lead to behavior that strengthens the marriage?

Explain to your group that just as spending time together strengthens a marriage or friendship it also strengthens your relationship with Christ. Healthy marriages grow over time as two people communicate regularly and do life together, becoming one in every part of life. There is no “checklist” of things to do in order to have a great marriage. It is the same with your relationship with Christ. There is no list of things to do for Jesus that will automatically bring someone closer to God. It is a relationship that grows as we “abide” in Christ—daily living life with Him.

Spiritual disciplines like Bible study, prayer, and biblical community are ways to help us abide in Christ—but these things in and of themselves do not automatically produce fruit in our lives. They are only tools to help us grow in our intimacy with Christ. Remember, Christ (the vine) produces the fruit. And the only way we will bear that fruit is if we remain (abide) in Him.

Opening Prayer

Begin your time in study of God’s Word by praying for your group. Pray that God will open the heart of every person and reveal Himself to you all in a new way as you study and discuss His Word together. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you into the truth and show you all how to apply what you learn to

your lives in a practical way. And pray that God will be glorified through your discussion today.

Key Study

God's vision for all believers is that we know Christ intimately and experience life-transformation by His Spirit to become like Him. This is why Christ commanded His disciples in John 15:4-5 to "remain (abide) in Him"—so that they could know Him more every day and become like Him. Romans 8:29 says that it is God's will that everyone He saves be conformed to the image of His Son.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 says that Christ followers reflect the Lord's glory as we are being transformed (changed from the inside out) into Christ's likeness. And Romans 12:1-2 commands believers to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God so that we will no longer be conformed to the image of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. God's will is clear in these verses. He wants those He saves to look like His Son.

Notice how all of these verses teach that being changed into the image of Christ is an ongoing process, not an overnight change that happens when you place your faith in Christ. Also notice that being transformed is something that God is doing in us, not something that we can do ourselves. Romans 12:1 makes clear again that the believer's job is not to produce this change, but merely to relinquish control and offer ourselves to the One who can change us. Doesn't this truth fit exactly with Jesus' parable in John 15? We don't produce the "fruit" of change, we abide in the Vine and the Gardener will produce the change, which will be borne through our lives as we continually offer ourselves to Him.

First Learn to Abide

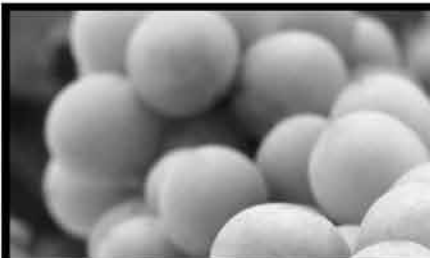
God's vision that we know Christ and become like Him cannot happen unless we learn first to remain (abide) in the vine (Christ). Jesus gave His disciples this parable in John 15 as a picture not only of their position "in Him," but to show them how He would produce His character in and through them. God receives great glory as we bear (demonstrate) His character in our lives, because only He can produce the life-change in us that shows His character to the world. His power and presence is revealed as He transforms us.

"Abide," or "remain," is used 11 times in this parable. Most of the time, it refers to our need to "remain" in a close relationship with Christ. The word means, "to stay connected" in a relational sense. We cannot know Christ in an intimate way without abiding with Him. Just as we saw in the opening activity that our relationships with others grow and deepen when we spend time together, so it is with Christ.

We can know about Christ from a distance, but we can only know His heart, passions, desires, and purposes by spending time with Him. And we cannot live out God's vision to become like Christ if we do not know His heart, passions, desires, and purposes. So we see that abiding in Christ is the only way to embrace God's vision for our lives, and the purpose for which we have been saved—to bear fruit through us for His glory.

Paul understood the importance of knowing Christ above everything else. His life is an excellent example of what it means to remain (abide) in Christ. Toward the end of his life Paul wrote in Philippians 3:7-11, *"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may*





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gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

In this passage, we see a perfect picture of abiding because Paul’s focus is not on “doing” certain religious things, but simply on knowing Christ and becoming like Him. And here we see that Paul wants to know ALL of Christ, not just the “easy” parts. He wants to know Christ’s suffering, becoming like Him in His death. We see Paul’s desire to “die” to his way of life, and to spend his life in a pursuit to know Christ and become like Him in every way. This is abiding.

Using the commentary above, explain to your group God’s vision for every believer’s life. Have your group turn in their Bible to the following verses as someone reads each one aloud. Using the following questions, lead your group in a discussion of how these verses show us God’s vision - that we know and become like Christ.

Romans 8:29

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Romans 12:1-2

1. According to Romans 8:29, what is God’s will for every believer?

Leader Note: The word “predestined” in this verse is the Greek word *proorizo*. It is a verb that means, “To ordain; to pre-determine; to decide beforehand.” The word “conformed” is the Greek word *symmorphos*. It is an adjective that means, “Having the same form as another; fashioned like unto.” Sharing these definitions with your group may help them to understand what the verse means.

1. How does 2 Corinthians 3:18 describe the process of becoming like Christ in a believer’s life?

Leader Note: The word “transformed” in verse 18 is the Greek word *metamorphoo*. It is a verb that means, “To change into another form; to transfigure.” This is where we get the word “metamorphosis,” which describes the change that occurs in the cocoon for a butterfly. Sharing this definition with your class may help them to understand the change that is God’s vision for our lives. Just as a caterpillar is changed into another form in the cocoon, God wants us to abide with Christ to experience a spiritual transformation.

1. What does Paul urge his brothers in Christ to do in Romans 12:1?
2. What is his command to them in Romans 12:2?
3. Describe the “pattern” of the world that we live in today.
4. What are some ways that we can conform to this pattern?
5. According to Romans 12:2, how are we transformed?
6. The word “renewing” in the Greek means, “To renovate; a complete change for the better.” Based on this definition, how does someone “renew” his mind?
7. According to all three of these verses, what is God’s pre-determined vision for the life of every Christ follower?

Have your group turn in their Bible to Philippians 3:7-11 and have someone read the passage aloud to the group. Using the commentary and the following questions, lead a discussion of these verses.

1. How does Paul describe his life in Christ in verses 7-8?
2. Paul mentions two different kinds of "righteousness" in verse 9. What are they and how does he describe each?
3. Which "righteousness" does Paul desire to have?
4. Who is this righteousness from and how does a person get it according to the end of verse 9?
5. How deeply does Paul desire to know Christ according to verse 10?
6. Is Paul more focused on "deeds" for God or on "intimacy" in his relationship with Christ? How do you know?
7. How do these verses demonstrate "abiding" in Christ?
8. Based on what you know of Paul's life, what "fruit" was borne through his life as a result of his focus on knowing Christ?
9. What does this tell you about the importance of intimacy and constant connection with Christ?

Grafted In

In our first lesson, we discussed how a branch is grafted into a vine by the gardener. This is the example given to us by Christ in John 15:1-17. When a branch is grafted into a vine, there are two things that must happen in order for the new graft to survive. The first takes place in the wood. The new graft (branch) must shoot its little roots into the vine, so the vine can grow up into the new graft.

The branch must give up its individual identity and independence and be willing to take on the identity of the vine as one organism. As the branch abides there, it becomes one with the vine. There is also a second process that must occur. The sap of the vine must enter the new branch. The vine can then use the branch as a passage through which sap can flow in order to produce fruit.

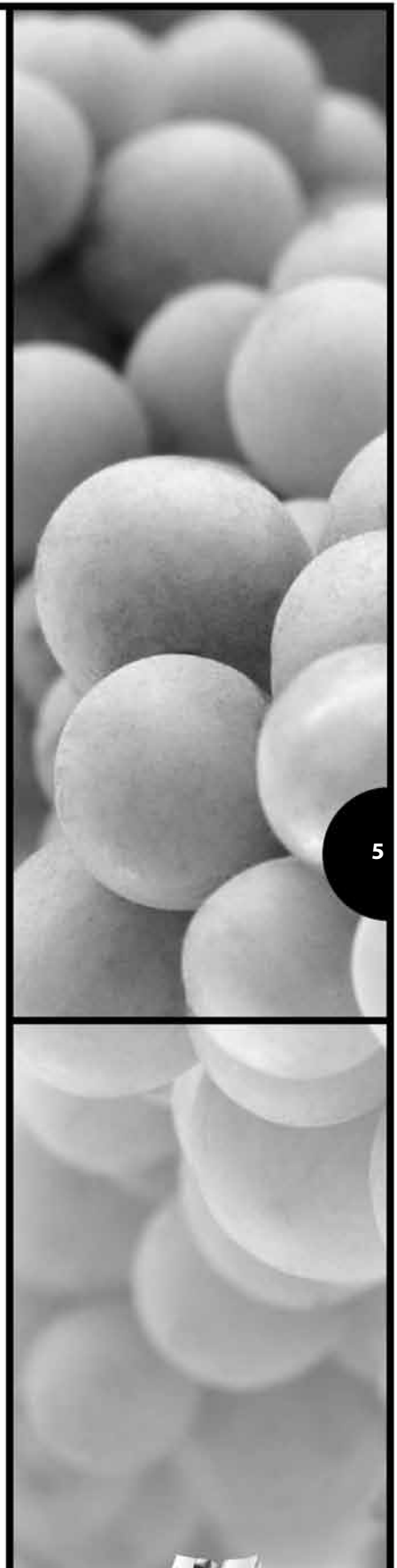
When Christ says in John 15:4, "Remain (abide) in Me, and I will remain (abide) in you," it is the same two-fold process that we see in a vine and branch. "Remain in Me" refers to our part in the process. We have to surrender control and independence, trust and obey Christ, detach ourselves from everything else and "shoot our roots" deep into Him. As we do this, our heart and character are prepared for the next part of Jesus' command, "...and I will abide in you."

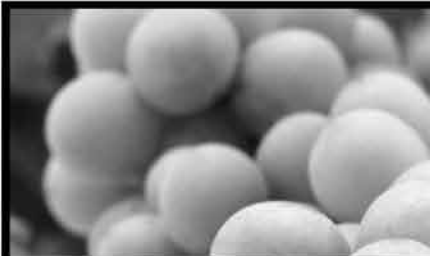
Intimately Connected

Notice in John 15:4 that the "abide in Me" comes before the "I will abide in you." Remember, this does not refer to salvation, but to the intimacy and community in your relationship with Christ. The "I will abide in you" will not come if the "abide in Me" is not maintained. Ephesians 4:4 says, "There is one body, and one Spirit." Before the Spirit will fill us and bear fruit through us, the body must be prepared. The new graft must have grown into the vine and be abiding in it before the sap will flow through it to yield fruit. As we deny ourselves, offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1) and abide in Him, we will be able to receive the "I will abide in you" promise of Christ.

Sap of the Spirit

The "sap" that flows from the Vine to us, the branches, is the power of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 28:19-20 when Jesus commanded His disciples to "make disciples of all nations," He made them a promise in verse 20. He promised them that He would be with them always, "Even to the end of the age." The Holy Spirit is how Jesus would be with them always. Acts 1:4 tells us that Christ had commanded His disciples to go to Jerusalem after His ascension to heaven and "wait for the gift My Father has promised,





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which you have heard Me speak about." In John 14:16-17 Jesus says to His disciples, *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you."* The Holy Spirit is the "sap" of the vine that transforms us into the image of the vine (Jesus). As we abide in Christ, we become the passageway through which the Holy Spirit flows to produce fruit that is demonstrated through our lives.

Using the commentary above and the following questions, lead your group in a discussion of the presence of Christ in our lives through the Holy Spirit. Begin by explaining the two-fold process of a new graft surviving in the vine and how this process relates to John 15:4.

1. According to what you learned about the grafting process in nature, why does "abide in Me" come before "...and I will abide in you" in John 15:4? What is the significance of this order?
2. What are some practical ways that believers "shoot roots" deep into Christ the vine every day?

Read Matthew 28:19-20.

1. What is Christ's promise to His disciples in verse 20 of this passage?

Read John 14:16-17.

1. According to these verses, what did Jesus ask His Father to do for His disciples?
2. How long would the Holy Spirit be with them?
3. According to verse 17, what would their relationship be like with the Spirit?
4. Where would the Spirit dwell?
5. So, how did Christ keep His promise in Matthew 28:20 to be with His disciples always?

Read Acts 1:4 and Acts 1:8

1. According to Acts 1:4, what did Jesus command His disciples to do?
2. Based on Acts 1:8, what would the disciples receive when the Holy Spirit came on them? Why?

The "sap" of the Holy Spirit brings the power of God into our lives. But if we are not "abiding" deeply rooted in the Vine, then we will not experience the "...and I will remain in you" promise of John 15:4. In order for the Holy Spirit to freely flow through our lives, we must abide in Christ. As we abide in Him, He abides in us as the Spirit of Christ flows freely in and through us, producing fruit in our lives. Only as we spend time in His presence can we receive the strength to bear fruit—the fruit of Christ-like character and the fruit of more Christ-followers.

How Do I Abide in Christ on a Day-to-Day Basis?

This brings us to the practical question, "How do I abide in Christ on a day-to-day basis?" As we ask ourselves this question, it is important that we remember the example that we studied earlier in this lesson of Paul's life in Philippians 3:7-11. The question is not "what to do" for God, but "how to abide." It is not a question of position, but of relationship. The gardener (God) has grafted us into Christ. Our position is secure. The practical question for

us is how to remain deeply rooted in the True Vine, cultivating a surrendered heart and mind that is daily being changed to look more like Jesus. Remember, that is God's vision for our lives—that we know and become like Jesus.

Answering the Question

In the remainder of this lesson we will look at several Scriptures to help us answer this question. As you lead your group through a discussion of these verses, remember to continue to focus not on “doing,” but on “abiding,” developing an intimate connection with Christ. The practical things we “do” are a means to an end, not the end itself. The goal is to abide in Christ, not “do a quiet time” or “Bible study” or even “do church.” The spiritual disciplines of the Christian life do not produce fruit, but they help us to learn to abide in the Vine. As you guide the discussion, help your group members to begin to change their mindset from “doing” to “abiding.”

Each cross-reference will be listed along with a brief commentary on the verse, followed by some discussion questions for your group. You do not have to use all of the verses if you do not have time. This would also be a great opportunity to divide into smaller groups for deeper community building and discussion. If you choose to do this, assign each group one verse to read and discuss. Print the verse and applicable discussion questions on a card for each group. After a few minutes, bring everyone back together and allow each group to share what they learned.

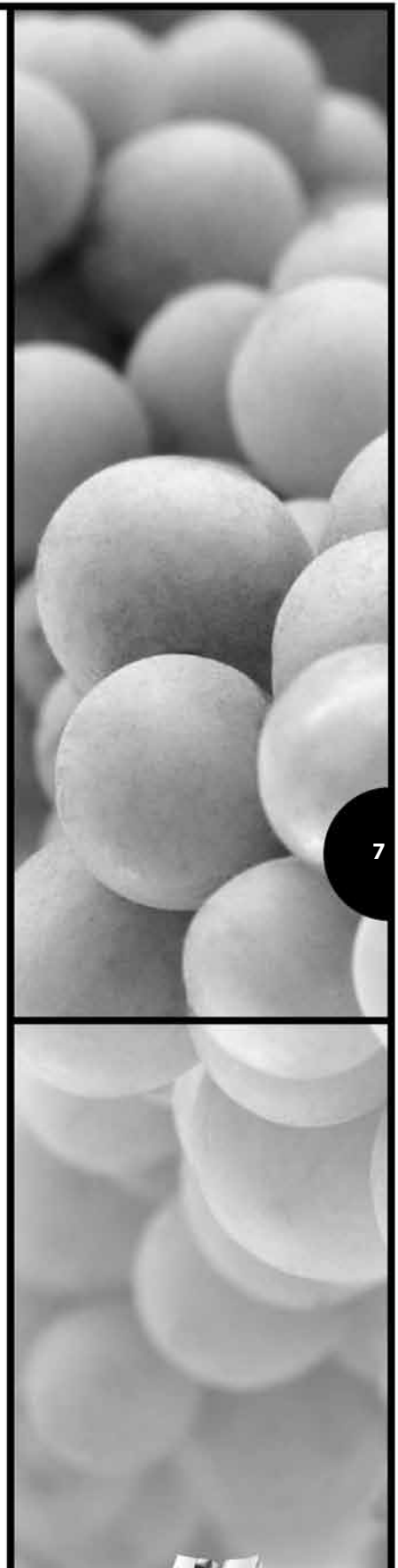
Romans 6:11-14

“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

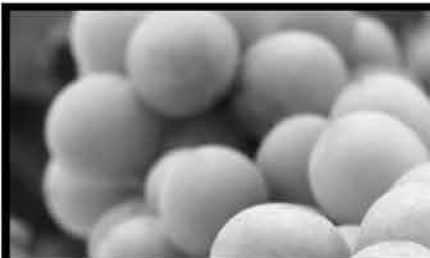
In this passage we see Paul reminding the Roman believers of their position “in Christ.” That position is “dead to sin, but alive in Christ Jesus.” Throughout the passage, Paul is urging them to live in this truth. We must choose to live in a way that reflects our position. We are dead to sin. Notice that verse 12 begins with the word, “therefore.” Whenever the word “therefore” is used at the beginning of a sentence, it tells us that the words that follow are based on the previous thought or verse. In this case, the instructions in verses 12-13 are based on the truth (that we are “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”) that is presented in verse 11.

Paul says we must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies. This means that we can choose what controls us. Will we let sin control us, or will we abide in Christ and let His Spirit control us? We cannot serve two masters. Either our sinful nature (the flesh) or the Holy Spirit will control us. Notice again in this passage (like in Romans 12:1-2) how Paul is telling us to offer our bodies to God. Here again we see the choice to surrender control (“die to self”) of our lives to God in Christ Jesus. Just like in John 15:4-5, this passage is not telling us how to gain the position of “alive to God in Christ Jesus,” but how to live in the reality of that position. It is by continually offering ourselves to Christ and abiding in Him.

1. How are believers to “count” (or consider) themselves according to verse 11?
2. What does it mean to be “dead to sin?”



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3. According to verses 12-13, what is the practical way that we “count” ourselves “dead to sin but alive in Christ?”
4. According to verse 12, what happens if we let sin reign in our bodies?
5. What are some ways that we can let sin reign in our bodies?
6. What choice does Paul lay out for us in verse 13?
7. What do you think he means by “offer?” How do we “offer” ourselves either to sin or to God?
8. According to verse 13, what is the result of offering your body to sin versus offering your body to God? What is the “fruit” of each choice?
9. How does verse 14 confirm our position as “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus?”
10. Discuss some ways that we are used as “instruments of righteousness.” How does this phrase compare with the parable in John 15:1-17? (Hint: Do instruments produce the music, or are they vessels through which music is played?)

Galatians 5:16-25

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

In verse 16, we see again the choice that every believer faces each day... “Who or what will control me today?” In verse 16, Paul states the natural result of abiding in Christ and living by the Spirit—you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Many times our focus is not on “living by the Spirit” (abiding), but rather on “not gratifying the flesh.” We concentrate and try so hard “not to sin.” But where does this place the focus of our attention, on Christ or on ourselves? In this verse lies a wonderfully practical and life-changing truth. The key is not in what we do, but Who is controlling what we do. Once again we see how abiding in Christ, by surrendering to His control daily, will produce fruit in our lives.

Notice Paul’s language in verse 19 as he begins to list the acts of the sinful nature. He writes, “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious...” It’s almost as if he is saying, “Don’t focus on this. This is obvious.” In these verses we see two different “fruits.” Paul isn’t giving a “list of do’s and don’ts.” In verses 19-21, he is simply listing the results of gratifying the desires of the sinful nature (which occurs if we aren’t living by the Spirit according to verse 16). Then, in verses 22-23, he is simply listing the fruit of living by the Spirit. The “fruit” our lives bear will be the result not of what we “do,” but of where we are “abiding.”

The Conflict

In this passage we see a great conflict, and a great choice. In verses 24-25 Paul reminds us that if we have placed our faith in Christ then we have “crucified” the sinful nature. Notice how this lines up with what we just saw in Romans 6:11—that we are “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” It is wonderful and practical advice that he gives in verse 25. If we have crucified the sinful nature (also called the “old self”), then we can live by the

Spirit (the “sap” that brings life to the branch). Paul is saying, “You are alive in Christ through His Spirit, so live like it!” How do we live like we are “alive in Christ?” By daily abiding in the vine and receiving the life-sustaining sap of the Spirit. This is where we will receive the power to choose to be controlled by Him instead of by sin.

1. What are we commanded to do in verse 16?
2. What is the result of “living by the Spirit” according to verse 16?
3. What conflict does Paul lay out for us in verse 17?
4. How does this conflict play out in daily life?
5. According to verses 19-21, what is the “fruit” of NOT living by the Spirit?
6. According to verses 22-23, what is the “fruit” of living by the Spirit?
7. Look carefully at verses 19-23. Is there a command to “do” or “not do” any of these things?
8. What is the command associated with this list, according to verse 16?
9. Based on what we have studied in John 15, how do you “live by the Spirit?”
10. According to verse 24, what has every believer done to the sinful nature and its desires?
11. Based on this truth, what is the command in verse 25?
12. What are some ways that we can “keep in step” with the Spirit of Christ in our lives?

Ephesians 4:22-24

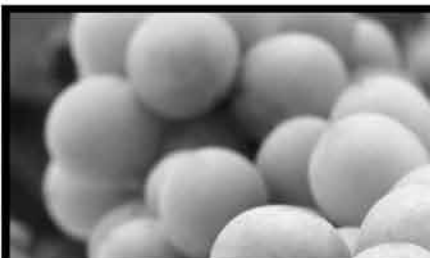
“You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Notice the parallels in this passage to what we have already seen in Scripture throughout our study. We see here a contrast between the “old self” and the “new self.” The “old self” is life outside of Christ, when we were “in Adam,” dead in our sins. The “new self” is life grafted into the True Vine, living by the Holy Spirit through our new position in Christ. Sin reigned in our bodies in the “old self,” but in the “new self,” sin is not our master. Again in this passage we are presented with a daily choice. We must choose to “put off” the old and “put on” the new.

Again this is not in reference to our position in Christ because our salvation is secure. It is the choice to abide or not to abide in Christ. According to verse 23 if we choose to abide, the “fruit” is a change in the attitude of our minds. Remember what we saw in Romans 12:1-2? As we offer ourselves to God by abiding in Christ, choosing not to be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world (putting off the old self), we will be transformed by the renewing of our minds, trusting the Vine, not self. And verse 24 of this passage describes again God’s vision for this “new self.” It is “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

1. According to this passage, what are believers to “put off” and “put on?”
2. What is happening to the old self according to verse 22?
3. What happens when we choose to “put off” the old and “put on” the new according to verse 23?
4. How important is the attitude of a person’s mind in how he lives?
5. According to verse 24, what is God’s purpose for the “new self?”
6. What are some ways that we “put off” the old self?
7. What are some ways that we “put on” the new self?
8. Do you think this “putting off” and “putting on” is a one-time act, or a daily choice? Explain your answer.





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Conclusion

The only person who can produce the character of Christ in us is Christ Himself. It is God's vision for each of our lives that we be transformed into the image of His Son Jesus so that others can see God's glory. But we must "abide" in Him for that vision to become a reality. As we surrender our lives to the will of God, He grafts us into Christ. And as we abide there, the Holy Spirit flows through us producing the fruit of the Vine. We are all "abiding" in something. Where we choose to "abide" determines the fruit that our lives will bear. The question isn't "if" we're abiding, but rather, "Where are you abiding?"

Application

If your attendees have not yet developed the discipline of time alone with God every morning as they prepare themselves for the day, now would be a great time to begin "abiding" in Christ each morning so they can continue "abiding in Him" throughout the day. A suggested beginning time might be 15 minutes each morning alone with God. A suggested plan for the 15 minutes is provided on the attached handout.

Leader's Note: You can distribute the available handout to help everyone begin the discipline of time alone with God in the morning, so they can learn to "abide with Him" throughout the day.

Additional lessons and information are available at www.godswordisgood.org.

Time Alone with God

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. Mark 1:35 NIV

Many prominent biblical personalities including Jesus developed the habit of solitude—spending time alone with God (like Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Paul and others). Sometimes we need extended time alone with God, especially for new direction in life, but all of us need *daily* time alone with God in order to experience consistent spiritual transformation and to fulfill God's mission for our lives each day.

What should happen in our daily time alone with God?

We should spend some time *talking* to God in prayer and some time *listening* to God from His Word, gaining strength and direction for life.

*"Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths."
Psalm 25:4 NIV*

Your daily time alone with God is a time to:

- **Consider your way:** *"Consider well the path of your feet." Proverbs 4:26 AMP*
- **Commit your day:** *"Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him and he will help you." Psalm 27:5 (NLT)*

How do you have a meaningful time alone with God?

(1) Select a specific time each day. Schedule it, like a date on your calendar. Choose a time when you can:

- Be at your best.
- Be alone.
- Be consistent.

There are many good reasons to choose a time at the beginning of the day:

- The example of many in the Bible, including Jesus
- It helps you get spiritually prepared for the day.
- It demonstrates that meeting with God is your highest and first priority.
- It gives you the opportunity to "meditate" all day on what God is showing you.

(2) Choose a specific place. Find a place where you can relax, be quiet and be free from distractions to meet with God.

(3) Gather the resources you will need. In addition to your Bible, you might want to get a pen and notebook or "spiritual journal" where you can write down things God is saying to you each day.

(4) Begin with the right attitudes:

- **Humility.** *"...humble yourselves before God..." James 4:7 NLT*
- **Expectancy.** *"In the morning you will hear my voice, O Lord; in the morning I will prepare [a prayer, a sacrifice] for you and watch and wait [for you to speak to my heart]." Psalm 5:3 AMP*
- **Sincerity.** *"You will seek Me and find Me when you search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13 NAS*
- **A Willingness to Obey.** *"If any man's will is to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God..." John 7:17 RSV*

(5) Follow a simple plan. Plan your time alone with God by spending time in prayer and reading your Bible. A simple 15 minute format might look like this:

- **Approach God.** Spend your first moments focusing on God. Worship and praise Him for this new day and the opportunity, through Christ, to fellowship with Him. Ask Him to speak to you through His Word.
- **Bible Reading.** Read through a book of the Bible in a systematic way. (Start with the Gospel of John.) Read a chapter or a few verses twice—first for information, then for inspiration. Ask God to speak to you about the issues of life for that day.

After reading John, go back and read through the other Gospels and then through the rest of the New Testament. The Psalms are also great reading for your time alone with God.

- **Journal.** Write down what you think God is saying to you through the verses you've just read.
- **Pray.** Ask for God's strength to accomplish the things He has shown you to do. Confess any sin He has shown you that you need to turn away from and ask for the conviction not to fall into those temptations again. Thank Him for His forgiveness, guidance and direction. Yield your heart and mind to Him to accomplish His will through you today. Pray for others' needs as well.