

D-Up: A Series on Discipleship
Abiding in Christ by Abiding in His Word
John 8:30-32

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Text Introduction: This morning I am continuing a new preaching series on discipleship. We are calling this series of messages “D-Up!” For those of you who might be basketball fans, you might be familiar with that phrase. This might be a phrase that the coach yells out to the team when it is time to get more intense in their defense.

We began our journey three weeks ago by asking the question, “Am I Even on the Right Road?”

We have focused also on baptism and the church. . We simply said that if you are a believer in Jesus, you should be baptized as a way to identify with Jesus. Baptism is a beginning step of our discipleship. If we resist here, we will resist in other areas. Likewise, becoming part of a church should not be viewed as an option.

Now, we want to advance our investigation on discipleship to other important areas beginning with this idea of abiding in Christ. Now, this language of abiding is the language of John 15. This is the passage that gives us the analogy of the vine and the braches. In this passage, Jesus is the vine, God the Father is the vinedresser, and we are the branches. We are taught in that passage to remain in Him. We read in that passage that to remain in Him includes remaining in His word. Let’s talk about that today.

Let’s visit John 8 today.

Text: As He was saying these things, many believed in Him. ³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, you really are My disciples. ³² You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Introduction: If you were to visit with me privately about a sin area in your life, let me tell you how that visit would go. First, I would let you talk. I would let you tell me as little or as much as you wanted to tell me. At the appropriate place in the conversation, I would then ask you about two things. First, I would want to know about your salvation experience. I would want you to know for certain that you have been born again. Without that new birth experience, there is nothing else I have to offer about overcoming sin. Then, having you establish your salvation, I would then ask you how much time you have been spending in God’s Word.

I would help you to draw an imaginary picture in your mind. I would ask you to think about your sin patterns as a graph. Unfortunately, that line would probably have some ebbs and flows, some peaks and valleys. Then, I would suggest for you that you chart out the same kind of graph indicating your habits/disciplines of being in the Word of God. I would then suggest that those two graphs mirror each other. Here is why that is true.

Spending time with God in His word has a way of keeping you from sin. Conversely, and adding to our predicament, engaging in sin has a way of keeping us from His Word.

One of the most simple, but important habits of our discipleship is to abide in Christ. How do we abide in Christ? One way is to abide in His Word.

“As He was saying these things, many believed in Him.” They believed. What did they do next?

³¹ **So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, you really are My disciples. ³² You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”** Once they believed, Jesus gave them a direction to follow to grow that relationship. He instructed them to continue (abide or remain) in His Word. Jesus then indicated how that would even verify their status as disciples and then He gave them a couple of promises related to that condition of remaining in His Word.

Let’s look at that for a moment.

There seems to be a logical sequence here.

The Logical Sequence of Abiding in Christ by Abiding in His Word

The Pattern of Remaining

Again, notice the sequence or the pattern. First, we believe. Then, as His disciples we are to look like His disciples. That doesn’t happen automatically. Remember the John 15 text. “I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit.” Don’t miss the most important truth of this text. We are not commanded to bear fruit; we are commanded to abide in Jesus. If we fail to abide in Jesus, we will fail to bear fruit. If we succeed in abiding in Jesus, we will bear fruit.

That seems to be our trouble. We are forever trying to bear fruit. We focus on bearing fruit. We strive to bear fruit. Instead of the oftentimes “fruitless” effort, we should instead focus on abiding. How do we do that? We remain in His Word.

The Proof of Relationship

Look, don’t misunderstand this. This is not a works based salvation that Jesus is talking about here. He is certainly not saying, “Everyone who reads the Bible is a true disciple.” Or, “you become a disciple by reading the Bible.” But, He is saying that His disciples are going to read the Bible.

Somebody said, “There’s only one time when we read something for all we are worth—when we are in love.” I happen to know that is true. My wife and I traded letters back and forth, before the invention of e-mail, for nearly two years while we were dating. The happiness of my day was determined by whether I had a letter from her or not. Well, the Bible is a love letter. The Bible is God’s special letter of love just to you.

The Promise of Revelation

“You will know the truth.” I love this promise right here. In God’s Word, He speaks. This is Divine revelation. We do not read the Bible for devotion alone. We do not read the Bible for encouragement alone. We do not read the Bible for inspiration alone. Now, the Bible may do all those things—but we ought to approach the Bible as Divine Revelation.

I remember hearing Henry Blackaby say years ago, “What if the God of this universe want to speak to you, but you fail to open and read your Bible to receive it?”

God reveals Himself to us in His Word. If you want to hear God speak, read the Bible.

The Protection from Rebellion

Those to whom Jesus was speaking did not even recognize they were slaves of sin. We don’t often recognize this either. So the Bible, as we remain in it, protects us.

Psalms 119 is a rather important place of the Bible to illustrate this truth.

How can a young man keep his way pure?

By keeping Your word. (8)

I have treasured Your word in my heart

so that I may not sin against You. (11)

Your word is a lamp for my feet

and a light on my path. (105)

So What?

Discipline yourself for daily reading and reflection on God’s Word.

Depend on the Lord for understanding.

Decide now that you will obey any instruction from the Lord.

Here’s what I am trying to say today. Do you want to grow in your relationship to Jesus? I mean really grow. Are you ready to stop settling for an ordinary, distant relationship to Him? Begin abiding in Him by abiding in His Word. Are you tired of the same sins tripping you up over and over again? If you are not a believer, you must be born again. You must surrender yourself to Jesus and His Word. But, if you are a believer, start spending time with Him in His Word. Read it, meditate on it, memorize it, study it, and decide to obey.

Remember that graph of your discipline in abiding in His Word. Where are you right now? The question is not where you want to be or where you should be or where you know ought to be or where were you last year? What about today?