

WEEK 2

2. The Relationship He Longs

The fall of men was not simply caused by the disobedience of Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruits, but by the abuse of their free will and desire to be like God. With this action, they wanted to be independent, rejecting the authority of God and replacing God as the centre and source of order. Adam was a free man under grace, able to worship and love God, but rebellion confiscated this privilege and unlocked a passage for evil. The purpose of intimate relationships with God was lost when sin was committed. They were banished from the Garden of Eden. Hence, Adam and his descendants have to face the consequences of living under the superiority of flesh, death, alienation from God & disequilibrium. The fall of man also causes people to be unable to reflect on God's divine calling and recognise its limitations. In this distressing situation, a divine approach through Christ is required to rescue people and rebuild the broken relationship.

As mentioned earlier, John used the word abide, which is *Mane* in Greek, many times, particularly in chapter fifteen. Abide means that as disciples of Jesus, we must dwell in Him intimately and abide by His instructions. Then, continue to live in obedient fellowship with Christ. Therefore, His transformative works in and through us will lead to a fruitful life. Although God initiates the intimacy process, God leaves the decision for us to make. From the beginning of creation, God always wanted intimate relationships, but God gave us free will to choose. The relationship between the vine and branches is a natural process that disciples must have. However, this is not an involuntary action but a voluntary decision with the conscious mind.

An intimacy with God is one of the greatest privileges that every believer can have. Since God constantly and continuously wants to communicate His heart to us. He wants to be known by His people. The Father sent Christ to build this bridge and the Holy Spirit to guide us. However, many take this for granted and choose different ways. Knowing God is not the same as knowing about God. People may know the facts about God through tradition, history or reading books, but it does not mean they know Him. To know Him is more than just acquaintances. It involves dwelling, trusting, and continuously communicating since, in abiding, people can recognise His voice and feel His presence regardless of any circumstances. Therefore, people understand that He is trustworthy.

14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. **15** No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

We are no longer servants but friends of God when we abide in His words 'Commands'. Since He will pour His heart onto us and guide us in order to bear much fruit. Notice His words: "For all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you". This statement came from the mouth of Jesus. It was not half or ninety-nine per cent, but Jesus revealed all to the disciples. What a special

thing to be a friend of the creator of the universe. I encourage us to open our hearts and pay attention to the words He will communicate to us.

Five simple ways to deepen our relationship with God

1. Know God by abiding in His words - Read the Bible

Nothing is permanent in this world. Seasons change, people come and go, and even ministry at church is altered from generation to generation. However, according to Isaiah, there is one thing remaining the same: "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever (Isiah 40:8)." Paul emphasised this by saying, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrew 13:8)." Therefore, to know Him is to understand His words through reading the bible.

2. Spend time with Him in the quietness - Pray.

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

Abiding is not stagnant but an active act of communicating with Him. This process can be called prayer. Abiding is also a two-way process where Jesus initiates the first one, and we respond to Him by letting His words do transformative work in and through us. Notice two big lines in this verse.

- 'Ask whatever you wish'. This statement of Jesus illustrates an instruction for us to present our desire to Him actively. He longs to hear our voice of requests as His children. However, the second line has to be followed in this prayer.
- 'It will be done for you'. It does not say it will be done according to our time, wants or will. But it will be done for us by Him, in His time, ways and will. Our part is abiding in His words, requesting and trusting His mighty power.

3. Walk on the words that He reveals personally - Obey

Abiding is not simply an instruction but a command. Jesus commanded disciples to remain in Him and let His words dwell in us. It requires many aspects to be able to accomplish His commands. The biggest one is obeying. We cannot obey if we do not trust. We can not trust if we do not know Him. To be obedient, we must know Him first through His words (Reading the Bible and Praying). Therefore, we can recognise the gentle voices of the Holy Spirit to guide us.

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

"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (John 14:21)

4. Walk on the words that He reveals for others - Serve

Abide is not merely about inward but also about outward, extending our hand to others. It is called serving. The core of serving is born from abiding in His words. As John 15: 5 says, '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.'. Branches are only fruitful when they abide in the vine. Nothing will happen other than death or lifeless when they are away from the source. Hence, we can learn that serving is the fruit of intimacy with Him.

- In serving, we extend the radiant of His love to others.
- In serving, we exercise our trust in Him and His trust in us.
- In serving, we expand the talents He gave to us.
- In serving, the result is glorifying Him and finding satisfaction.

John wrote the statement of Jesus.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (John 15: 12-13)

"Even as the son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28, ESV)."

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies— so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4: 8-11)"

5. Enjoy every moment with Him - Gratitude.

"Having fun 'joyful' and moving in the spirit' is the motto that I decided more than fifteen years ago in doing the ministry or life. This motto is not for show off, but it is simply a reminder for me to be aware of His presence and be joyful in serving Him. Therefore, I can be humbly grateful for everything that He has done in my life.

Abiding is not about seeking more but about satisfaction in Him as the result. In other words, gratitude becomes the way of life as we are satisfied only by His words. He is the true vine, the only source, and nothing else is valid. Last year, I studied what Paul said in Philippians 4:12-13 since I was fascinated with these verses.

"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:12-13 NIV

It is impossible to be satisfied outside of Him. Nothing is as good & strong enough as the power that enables us to become content in any situation. Everything from this world is only temporary strength that will fade due to age. But His love endures forever. Absolute satisfaction is only found in His love that will lead us to know the real purpose & meaning of Experiencing His love equals having the perfect peace that enables our heart & mind to stand in Him in any circumstance. As Paul says, "And the peace of God, which surpasses understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7, NRSV). This sense of content can not be replaced since it is beyond anything else, such as knowledge and experiences. Achievements, possession & connections. This content comes from the perfect peace that was offered by Jesus Himself before departing from this world. "Peace I leave with you; (perfect) peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." John 14:27 AMP

Finally, let us be satisfied in Him, abiding deeper in Him & continuing to "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4 NIV). Since "Now to him who is able to immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21, NIV).

Beware The Opposite of Gratitude

- Bitterness
- Apathy
- Pride
- Greedy
- Discontent, Ingratitude, thanklessness

If this continues, the result may be denying God as the supreme source.

By Abiding His words this week, let us understand the authority of His God and encounter it personally by applying 3 C (Comment, Commands and Consistent)

Day 1

C1. Reading John 15: 12- 17

What is the significant thing that you notice from this reading?

C2. Mediate the word by asking personal questions to yourself:

What do I notice personally in the words of God for the first time in this reading? What things are I reminded of that need to change or repent from these words?

What commands does God want me to do from this reading?

Write Down your reflection and be creative.

C3. Consistent

Obeying what God instructs you personally by applying it daily

Discuss with others in your Oikos what you experience with God.

Day 2

C1. Reading James 4:8 & Proverbs 3:32

C2. Apply the same questions as explained.

C3. Apply the same steps as explained.

Day 3

If people do not abide 'trust' in Him, they will abide in other things. Discover what they are and the consequences of each action in Jeremiah's message.

C1. Reading Jeremiah 17: 5-10

C2. Apply the same questions as explained.

C3. Apply the same steps as explained.

Day 4

Jesus explained to Samaritan women the revolution of worship to have an intimate relationship with God. A few years ago, I wrote this line in my Journal: “If worship is the most interesting thing to God, I must find the most pleasure to do it for Him”.

C1. Reading John 4: 1 - 43

C2. Apply the same questions as explained.

C3. Apply the same steps as explained.

Day 5

Piper wrote that “worship is not an act of duty, but it is a way of gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of His worth”.

C1. Reading Psalm 42: 1-2, Psalm 73: 25-26, Psalm 63:1 and Psalm 27:4

C2. Apply the same questions as explained.

C3. Apply the same steps as explained.

Day 6

During my time reading the book, John Piper's Desiring God around 10 years ago. I wrote about praying in my journal. I sum up praying as

1. Acknowledging His glory and my helplessness
2. Finding my satisfaction and delight in Him
3. A decision to continue serving while waiting. In this, I let Him do his work and intervention.

Prayer is my act to seek His glory while finding joy in conversing with Him.

C1. Reading John 14: 3, John 16: 24 & Isaiah 64:4

C2. Apply the same questions as explained.

C3. Apply the same steps as explained.

Day 7

Desire is a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen. Delight is to take pleasure in or satisfaction.

C1. Reading Psalm 37: 4, 1 Samuel 15: 22 and Psalm 1: 1-2

C2. Apply the same questions as explained.

C3. Apply the same steps as explained.