

The Branch Life #5  
"The Four D's of Abiding"

How many of you have put up shelves where you anchored them into a stud in the wall? DID THEY HOLD UP WELL?

HOW MANY have put up shelves where the stud didn't line up with where you wanted the shelves so you used anchors in the sheetrock? How did that work? Probably ok, IF YOU USED heavy-duty anchors designed to bear the load you wanted for the shelves.

But what if the anchors were not heavy-duty, and the items on the shelf accumulated over time. What happens???

Shawn Maust makes the great observation that

In hanging shelves, the anchors we use matter. The same principle applies to our lives as well. The worldview and presuppositions we have about life will be challenged at some point. And when they are, will they be able to hold up under the weight that life is bound to bring?

Life is complex. Life can be hard. Will the foundation you build your life on be able to handle the challenges that life can, and will, bring? Because if it can't, it'd be better to be proactive, strengthening (or replacing) the weak points now, rather than simply waiting until after the crash to figure out what happened.

<https://www.shawnmaust.com/2018/08/when-anchors-fail/>

If you are new to Highlands, or even new to church going, I want to welcome you and give you a heads up that our current series is a bit different from normal because we're continuing a series on Refocusing our Vision on why we are here.

You heard it during the earlier welcome – "We are a community of believers who seek to meet people where they are and help them in their journey of becoming maturing and equipped followers of Jesus.

Each year at the start of the new "ministry year" I like to revisit some aspect of that Vision. This year, our ReFocus is centered on the passage from John 15 where Jesus gives a series of truths about the Branch Life.

Jesus is showing us where the studs are so that our lives can bear the weight of what comes along.

Branches are anchored organically to the Vine, and as they remain in the vine they will bear the fruit no matter what comes along in their lives.

That term, "Branches", refers to our relationship with Jesus as described in John 15. We looked at it the last few weeks, but we'll pick up this week.

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 it so 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, so 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, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

8 By this is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also 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 so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

As we saw last week, Jesus is really into FRUIT, and fruit is the result of ABIDING

Today we'll consider the **FOUR D's of Abiding**:

**The Dynamic, the Dissonance, The Distractions, and the Dependence of Abiding**

Verse 7 gives us a clue as to what this DYNAMIC OF abiding will involve... listen for it...

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Did you hear it? "and MY WORDS ABIDE in You"

HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

Ex: DO WE put a bible on the coffee table, bedside table, or in the glove compartment and hope that it will somehow find it's way to our hearts and mind? Is it like Bluetooth where we sync up with it?

EX: OR IF we have a bible in proximity, we'll just sort of know it when we need it

OR do we just pray that God would bring to mind some pearl of wisdom or truth to us when we need it, even if we've never read it?

Ex: "IT WAS AMAZING, I've never read Titus, but today God just brought a verse from Titus 3 to my mind"

NOT GONNA HAPPEN.

I'M NOT saying that God could not do that, but that He doesn't work that way.

**Principle: God DOESN'T BRINGS TO MIND SCRIPTURE THAT WE'VE NEVER READ.**

I'll go out on a limb and say that God RARELY brings to mind a scripture that we've RARELY read.

He could, but that's not the ordinary way in which God shows us how He works.

**Having our minds and hearts renewed by the Word is the key DYNAMIC of Abiding.**

How are we doing as a whole in our American church culture? IN OUR OWN LIVES? According to the Barna group's 2018 State of the Bible Survey, here is what we can learn: Do we recognize ourselves in these result?

<https://www.barna.com/research/state-of-the-bible-2018-seven-top-findings/>

**Half of Americans Are "Bible Users"**

Overall, about half of Americans are "Bible users"—that is, they engage with the Bible on their own by using, listening to, watching, praying or using Bible text or content in any format (not including use at a church service) at least three to four times a year (48%).

I think it is safe to say that the bar is set pretty low if "Bible User" means to engage with the Bible, outside of church, 3-4 times a YEAR.

To be fair, Jesus does not specify what abiding looks like, but he does indicate that it involves an engagement with His Word. To be fair, the metaphor would indicate that a branch that is abiding in a vine is engaged with the vine more than 3-4 times a year.

Ex: your workplace or school. If you only show up 3-4 times a year, what happens?

EX: GNTC ATHLETIC ORIENTATION 8/7/18- if you don't come to class the first week, you will be dropped, and you may not be eligible to compete.

**People Think that Reading the Bible Positively Impacts Spiritual Growth**

More than half of monthly Bible users report that reading the Bible has resulted in a perceived willingness to engage in their faith more (56%) and to show more loving behavior toward others (54%). More than half of Bible users (57%) contend that when they use the Bible, they have a greater awareness of how much they need God all of the time.

Imagine the results if the MONTHLY BIBLE users became WEEKLY or daily bible users

There seems to be a correlation between more regular bible use (Monthly) and faith engagement, love for others, generosity, and an awareness of their need for God. That is called FRUIT, and this echoes what Jesus says about abiding and bearing fruit and “apart from me you can do nothing.”

**THE MORE YOU KNOW THE WORD, THE MORE YOU ARE AWARE OF YOUR NEED FOR Jesus. (Dependence)**

### **Six in 10 Americans Believe the Bible Has Transformed Their Life**

Overall, almost six in 10 U.S. adults (58%) believe that the message of the Bible has transformed their life, including three in 10 (28%) who agree strongly with this statement.

A study from 2002 showed the impact of regular Bible engagement on the behavior of believers.

**APPLICATION: The POWER OF FOUR**

“A point of importance is the fact that we find no statistically significant differences between those who read or listen to the Bible only one to three days a week and those who do not READ IT at all. “(p.14)

When you engage in an activity 4 days per week, it is part of your life.

Again, we see the benefit of the Word – it is instrumental for life change. Jesus didn’t come to simply make us better, more moral, more acceptable, etc. He came to make us NEW.

In John 17 Jesus prays for his followers and says, “Sanctify them in the Truth; thy Word is truth.”

**ABIDING MEANS Hearing and DOING the Word of God even, or ESPECIALLY, when it goes against what we want to hear.**

**This is the DISSONANCE of Abiding.** (dissonance is the opposite of harmony)

The real test of abiding isn’t when it is easy to obey. Anyone can do that. We know that we are abiding IN Christ when we do, or refrain from doing, something simply because God says so. If we DISOBEY what God says, then we are abiding in whatever it is that we are obeying.

If we’re honest, we must remember that there are things that distract us from abiding.

**There are DISTRACTIONS to Abiding.**

**“You can’t overestimate the unimportance of practically everything” John Maxwell**

If we’re not careful, we can easily be distracted by the urgent but unimportant.

The word distraction means to be pulled apart it's like the old French understanding when people were tortured and they were tied arms and legs and pulled in four different directions.

Consider the story of Mary and Martha. Jesus comes to visit (unannounced??)

Martha was “distracted”(dragged around) with her preparations, but Mary “chose the good part” by sitting at his feet.

If you were to talk to those two ladies a year after that event and ask them about that special time when they had Jesus in their home how would they respond and what would they remember about that event?

The new sophisticated word for distraction is “multi-tasking”.

Stanford study showed that heavy media multitaskers are more susceptible to interference from irrelevant environmental stimuli than light media multitaskers. Heavy multitasking may encourage even heavier multitasking because it leads to a “reduced ability to filter out interference.” Could the part of our brain that is processing deeper cogitative thought actually be atrophying in the process?

In The Quality Control Handbook, Joseph Moses Juran refers to "The Law of the Vital Few." His observation was that you could massively improve the quality of a product by resolving a tiny fraction of the problems.

Warren Buffett, "You only have to do a few things right in your life, so long as you don't do too many things wrong."

Jesus understands that a few basic principles and disciplines will have a huge impact, so he tells us, "Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself; Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and here in John 15, Abide in Me, and let my Word abide in you." Walking in line with those 3 basic principles would resolve a lot of the issues we struggle with.

This word about ABIDING is not simply good advice- it is the imperative form – a command and it is the natural bent of one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of knowing the Word is to have our HEARTS tuned to God.  
Matt 15:8 / Isaiah 29:13 "Honor me with their lips, but heart is far from me."

One way to know what our hearts are tuned to is to examine our thought life, our calendar, and our wallets.  
**We will easily give our time, thoughts, and money to the things we love.**

EX: fairly early in dating Linda    October 22, 1977 I faced a dilemma: Go see Linda (her birthday weekend) or stay in Athens to see James Brown and Prince Charles at the UGA game??? Driving to her home I remember thinking, "I must really like this girl" (19 yrs old)

Journal entry one month later on Nov 30, 1977 (21; Christian 3 ½ years)–

"God's thoughts of me are more in number than the sand. He thinks of me more than I think of Linda Jo (a lot). He longs for me as I long for her. Why? Who can understand his love? By His love we are brought out of the domain of darkness and sin, death, and destruction and into the kingdom of light, love, peace, and joy. It cost God the life of His Son for me to be freed. God knew the penalty of sin and loved me enough to deliver me from it.....So why do I struggle so with sin?"

**Finally, THE DEPENDANCE OF ABIDING**

"Apart from ME, you can do nothing."

THIS IS THE WALK OF FAITH because we don't see it with our natural eyes.

There is dissonance with the world's mantra of "You can do or be anything; just trust your heart. You've got what it takes; just trust yourself."

John 15:5 is not a happy clappy "positive self-esteem" verse, but a deep conviction of the truth of this word lies at the very root of a strong spiritual life.

Even Jesus admitted that He was dependent on the Father.

John 5:19,20

**In everything the life of the branch is to be the exact counterpart of that of the Vine.**

Of Himself Jesus had said: "The Son can do nothing of himself." As the outcome of that entire dependence, He could add: "All that the Father doeth, doeth the Son also likewise." As Son He did not receive His life from the Father once for all, but moment by moment. His life was a continual waiting on the Father for all

Apart from Christ -- I can do nothing.

VoV Resting on God (from pm service 8/26/18)

**The Lord God omnipotent reigns.  
I come to thee as a sinner with cares and sorrows,  
to leave every concern entirely to thee,  
every sin calling for Christ's precious blood;  
Revive deep spirituality in my heart;  
Let me live near to the great Shepherd,  
hear his voice, know its tones, follow its calls.  
Keep me from deception by causing me to abide  
in the truth,  
from harm by helping me to walk in the power  
of the Spi**

<https://hbr.org/2012/05/the-unimportance-of-practical>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yc57X0j\\_UwM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yc57X0j_UwM)

<https://www.shawnmaust.com/2016/02/the-unimportance-of-practically-everything/>

[https://www.backtothebible.org/files/web/docs/cbe/Scientific Evidence for the Power of 4.pdf](https://www.backtothebible.org/files/web/docs/cbe/Scientific_Evidence_for_the_Power_of_4.pdf)

--	--