



THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL WEEK SEVEN

Intimacy With God: The Way to True Fulfillment



I AM THE
TRUE VINE

REST IN A RESTLESS WORLD

THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL

WEEK SEVEN

DAY ONE

MY IDENTITY AS A BRANCH IS IN THE VINE

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: John 15:5

READING: Colossians 2:6-7; John 15:5; John 15:1-17; 2 Cor 5:17

CHAPTER FIVE: - JUST A BRANCH **PART # 2**

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. John 15:5

As branches, our identity is rooted in Christ the true vine. In Colossians 2:6-7 scripture says, “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving”. In John 15:1-17, Jesus describes believers as branches on a vine and says that a branch's identity is defined by its relationship to the vine: Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches (John 15:5). We cannot bear fruit without Him. He is in control. Our identity is rooted in Him and Him alone. With proper care and attention, those roots will grow deep. Like plants, when we are rooted in Christ and live for Him, we grow stronger and flourish into who He has designed us to be.

Identity: Believers are branches in the vine, connected to the Lord and partakers of His nature. Identity in Christ means discovering who we are in God through a relationship with Jesus Christ, accurately described as union with Christ. **Relationship:** Believers should remain in Jesus, as this is the one thing from which everything else proceeds. **Citizenship:** When believers identify with Christ, their citizenship is in the Kingdom of Heaven, not earthly things. Our citizenship is not worldly, like race, ethnicity, nationality, religious denomination, Northerner or Southerner, political

affiliation, sports team, male or female, Jew or Gentile, slave or free, or any other thing on earth. For when we identify with Christ, all are ONE in Christ. **Unity:** When believers identify with Christ, they are all one in Christ. **Nourishment:** The vine exists to nourish and feed the branches. When we have our identity in Christ, or we only identify with Him, then we receive nourishment from the vine and bear much fruit. **My identity comes from Him and Him alone.** “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9). The key to our salvation is not when we do a certain number of good deeds or when we finally have it all together. He says we’ll be saved when we believe in Him! As saved people, we take on a whole new identity in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” God claims this over every one of His children. We know from the very first book of the Bible that we were created in His image (Gen. 1:27). This is no small thing. We were created with specific traits to reflect the character of God. He did not create us to live as lost, or hopeless children. He created us to live full, whole, and free lives in Jesus Christ.

As God’s image bearers, He keeps refining us, changing us from the inside out. Abide in Him as the true vine (John 15:1). Fix your eyes on Jesus and on what is yet to come. Rooting our identity in Him is a process. Don’t give up! Through it all, His love will never fail. Remember, your identity is rooted in Christ the true vine. God will continue to prune us throughout this life. He desires to make us more like Him. When we root ourselves in Him, we are guaranteed a life of knowing, loving Jesus, and living with Him in eternity. We have this hope as an anchor for our souls (Heb. 6:19).

Prayer

I surrender to You and Your perfect will for my life. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

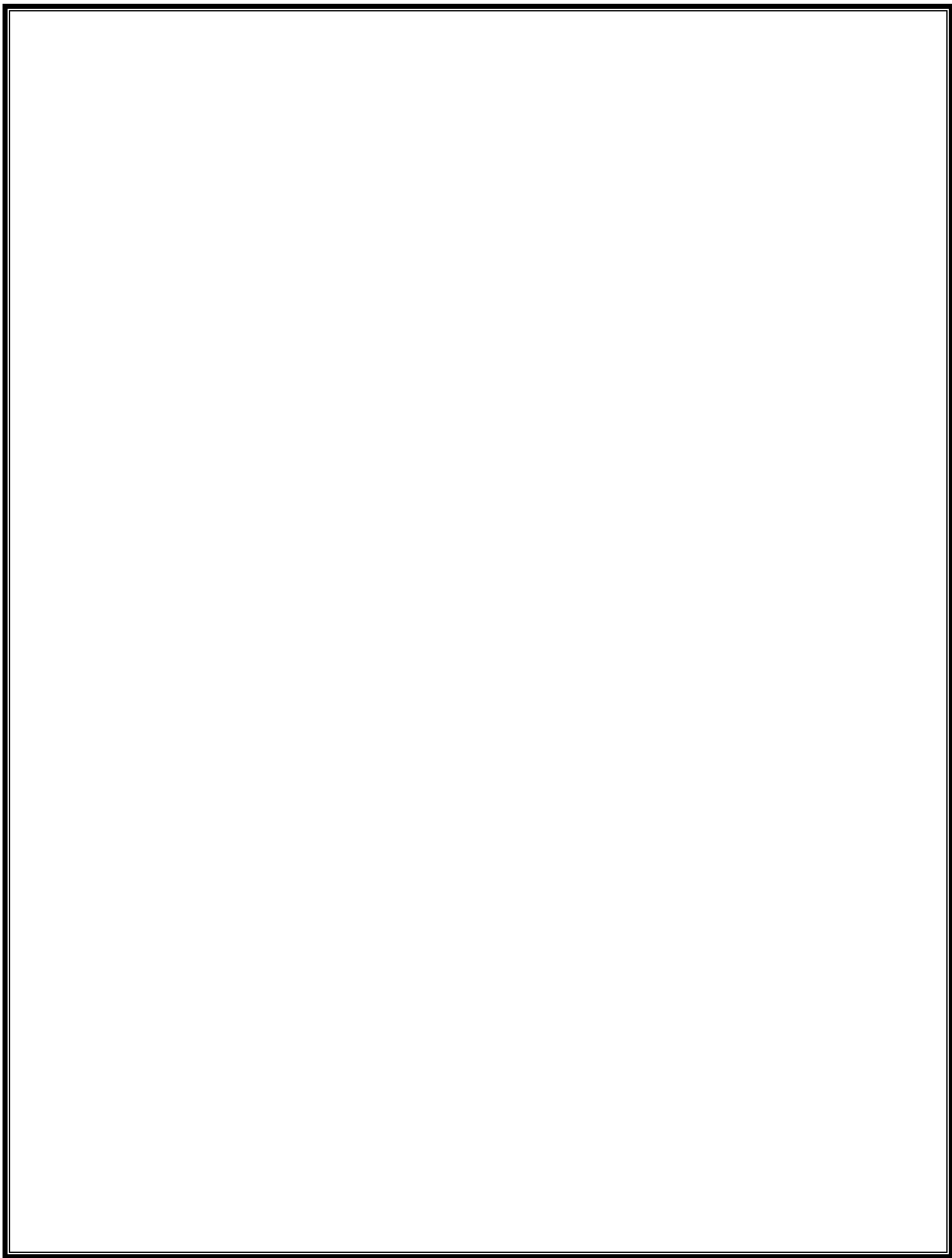
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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Colossians 2:6-7; John 15:5; John 15:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Meditate on the reading scriptures above and let the Lord speak to your heart. To meditate, you need to memorize, analyze, visualize and personalize.

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THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL
WEEK SEVEN
DAY TWO
BRANCH, THE LEAVES AND FRUIT

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: Malachi 3:3

READING: Matthew 5:16; Galatians 4:19; Philippians 2:13 [1:6]

CHAPTER FIVE: JUST A BRANCH **PART # 2**

INTRODUCTION



As branches abiding in the vine, we are supposed to bear leaves and fruit. Leaves are a constant process as we allow the life of Christ to be formed in us, but the fruit is seasonal. Both leaves and fruit are nutrients sapped from the vine. The leaves are the character of Christ. Paul said in Galatians 4:19, "Little children, for whom I labor in birth again **until Christ is formed in you**. The fruit born on a branch is evidence of an abiding life. Christ working through us because apart from Him we can do nothing. The following are some verses that discuss God working in your life:

Philippians 2:13 - "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure".

Ephesians 3:20-21 - "Now all glory to God, Who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think".

Philippians 1:6 - "God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again".

The process of producing fruit and bearing the leaves requires both pruning and refining. In the previous devotional, we dived extensively into pruning, so let's discuss the Refining Process. To refine means to purify, cleanse, process, treat and rectify. I read a story that was floating around the internet. I'm not sure whom to credit, but the story's sentiment perfectly supports what I am trying to communicate. A group of women were studying the book of Malachi. In Malachi 3, they came across this verse: **"He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver"** (v. 3). The women wondered how this showed God's character, so one of them volunteered to learn more about the process of refining silver. She promised to report her findings the following week. She called a local silversmith to make an appointment to study how he worked. She explained that she was curious about the process of refining silver. On the appointed day, she watched the silversmith hold a piece of silver over the fire to heat it. To refine silver, he said, one must place it in the middle of the fire where it is hottest and allow the heat to burn away all the impurities.

She suddenly understood this was how God holds His children in "hot" spots, exactly like the Malachi verse that talks about how God sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. She asked the silversmith if it was true he had to stay with this piece of silver, in front of the fire, the whole time it was in the flames. The silversmith answered emphatically, "Yes!" He told her there was more to his job than just sitting and waiting, though. He said he had to monitor the silver the entire time it was in the fire, never taking his eyes off of it. "If the silver is left in the flame even a second too long, it would be impaired," he said. "If it was not in the flame long enough, impurities would remain in it." She listened and then sat silently for a moment before asking, "How do you know the exact moment when the silver is completely refined?"

He smiled at her and said, "That is a good question and has an easy answer. **The silver is fully refined when I see my image in it.**" Genesis 1:26. ESV Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

The End Product: Giving away our most valued possessions can be difficult. Going through trials and facing temptations to get rid of things we may have unknowingly used as idols can feel as if we are being held in the center of the flames. But consider the words of Jesus' brother: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4, English Standard Version). I want to challenge you to rid yourself of the most distracting item in your life. And as you do, remember that God is watching closely for a glimpse of His reflection. **"He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" (v. 3). "When I see my image in You".** The story is a metaphor for God's wisdom and grace, and how He molds people to become tools in His hands. The refining process mirrors how God purifies people of their sins and replaces their despair with Himself. Matthew 5:16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

RESPONSE

Meditate By Personalizing Malachi 3:3

[The Lord] He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify (Me: _____), and purge me as gold and silver, that I may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

"Refiner's fire" is the process used to remove impurities from precious metals. Since the heat required to melt silver and gold is enough to destroy other materials, this is the method used to generate purer alloys. Here, that metaphor is being applied to us. [Royal Priesthoods] are charged with caring for the things of God and serving God. Ask the Lord to show you some impurities that He is trying to take out of your life. List them below! Repent and release to God!



THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL
WEEK SEVEN
DAY THREE
BRANCH CONFESSION & DECLARATION

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: Romans 10:17

READING: Hebrews 11:3; Proverbs 12:14; John 14:23-24; Psalm 103:1-2

CHAPTER FIVE: JUST A BRANCH **PART # 2**

INTRODUCTION

So, then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17

As a branch abiding in the Vine, our words should reveal and reflect our identity in Christ. Jesus declared Himself as the “I AM”. He was declaring His identity and purpose. A few examples: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the Gardener.” (John 15:1) “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35) “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12) “I am the door” (John 10:9) “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14) “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25) “I am the way, the truth, and the life”. Words have power. They can hurt and they can bless. But the power of words reaches much further than the impact they make on our emotions. Our words have supernatural power—power that changes circumstances and shapes destinies. It is our unique ability to choose and speak words that distinguishes man from the rest of God’s creation. Man is created in God’s image. It was not just thoughts but words that God used to create us and the universe in which we live. When He said, “Light be,” light was.

God works through words. Hebrews 11:3 describes this operating principle of creation this way: “Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen

were not made of things which do appear.” Words are spiritual; they carry power. Proverbs 12:14 tells us that we shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of our mouths. The power of confession and declaration is the idea that confessing faith in God and declaring blessings over one's life can change circumstances and create what is confessed. Some believe that confession is a vital part of spiritual growth and that it can lead to mercy, fruitfulness, faithfulness, forgiveness, and grace if you want your prayers to be effective and line up with God's will, you need to know the difference between confession, proclamation, and declaration. **Confession** is when you verbalize how God cherishes you. **Proclamation** is when you verbalize what God is doing because you know God cherishes you. It is all about trusting His nature. **Declaration** is verbalizing what you know is going to happen. Did you catch that? Confession is past, proclamation is present, and declaration is future. Confession does not deny physical facts and circumstances. It is declaring what God, Who never changes, has said about the outcome and standing in faith until all temporary conditions line up with His eternal declaration. Confession is a vital part of our spiritual growth as believers. Jesus indicated this in describing the importance of speaking His Father's words and not His own: “I do nothing of myself; but as My Father has taught me, I speak these things. ...If ye continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed” (John 8:28, 31). In answering the question of how He would manifest Himself to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus replied: “If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: Israel's King David understood this. He brought his soul—his mind, will, and emotions in line with God's Word by speaking to it: “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:1-2). To “DECLARE” is to state out loud a fact. (Truth) – What God said or is saying. A biblical declaration is the announcement of something that has already been established, decreed, or promised

by God. A level of faith is required. Instead of asking God, we are hearing what He is saying and partnering with Him to release it into the earth. – Example: **I declare** that no weapons forged against me will ever prosper. (Isaiah 54:17) - **I declare** that Jesus Christ is my Shepherd, and I shall not want for anything - (John 10:11) - **I declare** that I am strong and courageous. (Joshua 1:9) - **I declare** that because I believe and follow the Lord, my household will be saved. (Acts 16:31) Confessing the Word of God is not lying. We are not trying to get God to do anything. We are just confessing those benefits God has given us in His Word which are ours already and Satan is trying to steal them! Here are five basic confessions for you to use so you can enjoy all God has for you:

1. Jesus Is My Lord. Philippians 2:9-11

“I confess the complete lordship of Jesus Christ over my life. Jesus is Lord over all, and He has given me authority. As I confess Him, His Word, and His Name, and resist Satan in His Name, Satan must bow his knee.”

2. I Do Not Have a Care. 1 Peter 5:7; Psalm 37:23-24

“I cast all my care on Jesus because He cares for me. He upholds me as He guides my steps.”

3. I Do Not Want because the Lord is my shepherd. Ps. 23:1; Philippians 4:19 - “The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want. For my God supplies all of my need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

4. I Am Free from Sin, Sickness, Sorrow, Grief, and Fear. Isaiah 53:3-5; Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24 - “Every sin, sickness, disease, sorrow, and grief was laid on Jesus so that I could be free from them. Therefore, today I am forgiven, healed, healthy, and well. I live in divine health.”

5. Jesus Is Made unto Me Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. 1 Corinthians 1:30; Colossians 2:10 - “I confess that Jesus is my wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Only in Him am I entirely complete.”

RESPONSE

Confession & Declaration

Who I am in Christ declarations

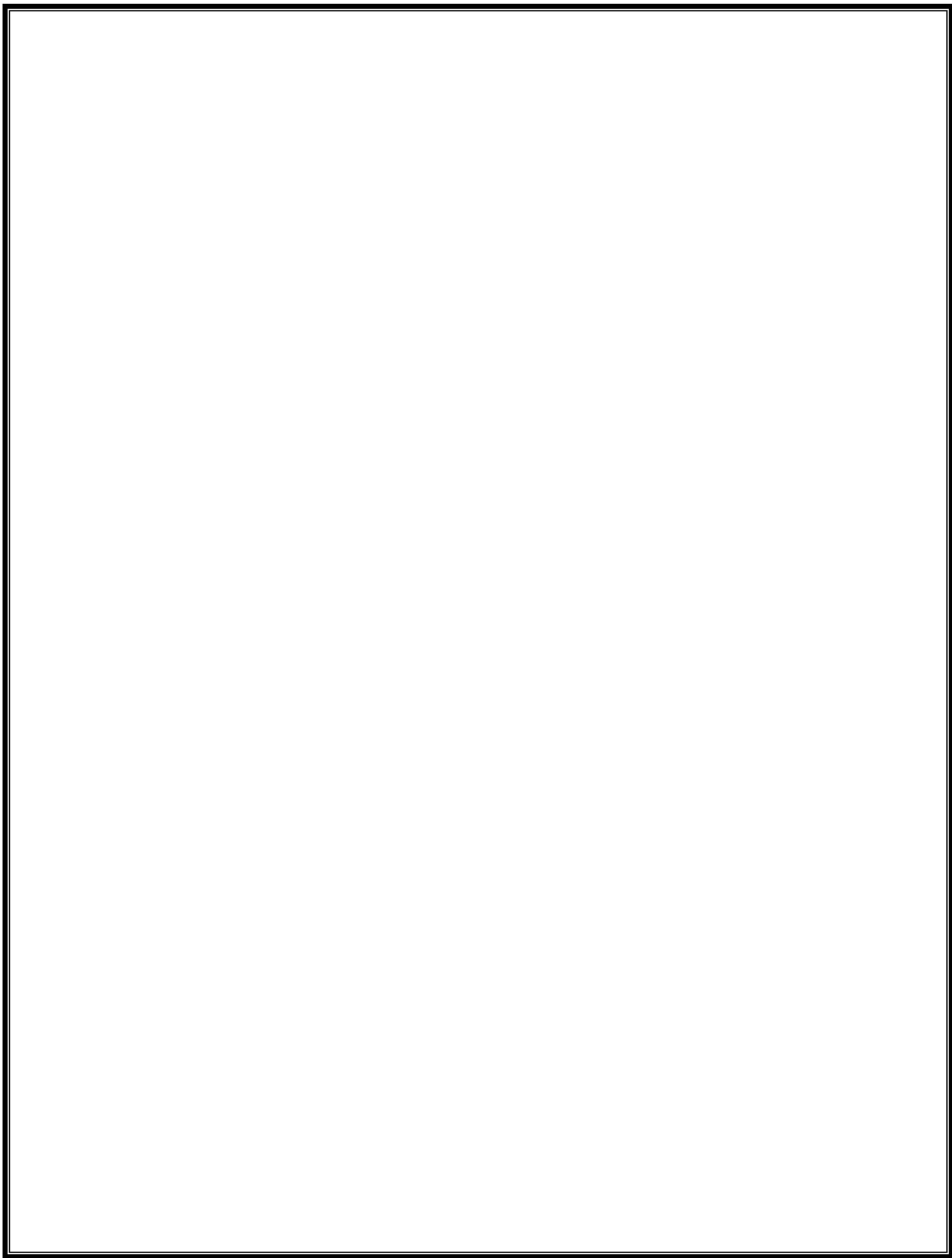
- I am a branch engrafted into a Vine which is Jesus. (John 15)
- I am a blessed and fruitful branch, and I bear much fruit (John 15)
- I bring glory, and praise to my Father, Master Gardener. (John 15)
- I am faithful (Ephesians 1:1).
- I am God's child (John 1:12).
- I have been justified (Romans 5:1).
- I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
- I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20).
- I am hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).
- I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).
- I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18).
- I am blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3).
- I am chosen before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4, 11).
- I am the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13)
- I am the light of the world (Matthew 5:14)
- I am chosen by God, holy and dearly loved (Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4)
- I am seated in the heavenly places with Jesus (Ephesians 2:6)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Hebrews 11:3; Proverbs 12:14; John 14:23-24; Ps.103:1-2

Meditate on the reading scriptures above and let the Lord speak to your heart. “To meditate, you need to memorize, analyze, visualize, and personalize.

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THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL

WEEK SIX

DAY FOUR

HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BRANCH

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: John 15:5, NLT

READING: Romans 8:9; 1Pet. 1:11; Galatians 4:6 & 5:22; John 16:7

CHAPTER ONE: JUST A BRANCH **PART # 2**

INTRODUCTION

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NLT).

I want to start with this question "Where is the Holy Spirit in all of this?" The Holy Spirit is responsible for the cohesive partner in the parable of the abiding challenge. He makes the relationship between Master Gardener, the Vine, the branch and fruit work. He is the glue that holds it all together. Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, sent by Jesus to do His work: Romans 8:9 and 1Pet. 1:11. The Holy Spirit is referred to as "the Spirit of Christ" in these Bible verses. Romans 8:9–11. Paul says that the Spirit of God lives in every Christian and those who do not have the Spirit of Christ do not belong to Him. We can never abide in Christ the true Vine without the Holy Spirit, because He connects us to the Vine. Jesus, in His human nature, relied on the Person and Power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of our redemption. The Apostle Paul, when he wrote to the Galatians, called Him, "the Spirit of His Son." And because you Gentiles have become His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father (Galatians 4:6 NLT). The Spirit of God is the Spirit of His Son.

Jesus said in John 16:7 that; “I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor, counselor, Strengtheners, and Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you]. Holy Spirit provides believers with the strength to live the Christian life and be fruitful. Let’s explore the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives as branches. Holy Spirit is God in Spirit form, an integral part of the triune nature of God. Holy Spirit brings about transformation in our lives, particularly in the process of conversion, repentance, growth and the development of saving faith. Let’s look at the unifying aspect of the Holy Spirit, as He connects us with Christ.

Understanding the union with Christ is crucial for Christians, as it addresses a common struggle, we face in comprehending how our daily relationship with Jesus works. Attending church, praying, and reading the Bible are activities we are familiar with, but grasping the significance of abiding in or with Jesus and His impact on our lives can be challenging. So, let’s shed some light on this topic. The New Testament contains passages that speak of our union with Christ. It tells us that we are united with Christ in life, death, and resurrection.

First, through the Holy Spirit, our lives are united with Christ. In John 15:5, Jesus Himself declares, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing. This unity with Jesus is not only essential but also the key to our spiritual impact. Without being connected to Him, we are ineffective and bear no fruit. **Second, the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ in His death.** In 2 Corinthians 5:14, we learn that through Christ’s death, we are also united with Him, and our sins are paid for. Though we are physically present in this world, the Holy Spirit testifies that our spiritual death has been reconciled through Jesus’ sacrifice. His death becomes the atonement for our sins, liberating us from the penalty we deserve. **Last, Colossians 3:1 reveals that we are united with Christ in His resurrection.** Just as

Jesus is the first fruit of resurrection, His victory over death assures us of our future resurrection. The Bible promises that even in physical death, we will live again. Jesus spoke these words to His friends, Mary and Martha, bringing hope and assurance of eternal life. **It's only by the Holy Spirit that we can experience the unconditional love of God apart from our performance.** God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Romans 5:5. **It's only by the Holy Spirit that we can know and understand the truth of God.** However, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. John 14:26. **It's only by the Holy Spirit that we can even come to Christ in the first place.** Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God...: John 3:5. "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. John 15:26-27; 16:7-10 ESV. **It's only by the Holy Spirit that we can experience the reality of the indwelling Christ.** And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. John 14:16-17. In conclusion, let us look at the work of Holy Spirit in your life as a believer.

- **Holy Spirit makes you more like Jesus Christ**, through pruning, teaching, transforming and empowering you for good work.

- **Holy Spirit convicts you of sin:** The Holy Spirit convinces believers of sin and leads them to repentance.
- **Holy Spirit helps renew your mind:** The Holy Spirit renews the believer's mind to be like Christ.
- **Holy Spirit bears in you the fruit of the Spirit:** The Holy Spirit produces fruit in the believer's life, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- **Holy Spirit unites you with Christ the true Vine:** The Holy Spirit unites the believer with Christ and places them in the church.
- **Holy Spirit is responsible for your eternal life:** The Holy Spirit guarantees eternal life for those who place their faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Holy Spirit guarantees your security:** The Holy Spirit seals the believer and guarantees their security until the day of redemption.
- **Holy Spirit gives you spiritual gifts:** The Holy Spirit bestows, spiritual gifts or abilities on believers for service.
- **Holy Spirit gives you Joy:** The Holy Spirit produces joy in the lives of believers. The Joy of the Lord is your strength. Nehemiah 8:10
- **Holy Spirit indwells you permanently,** and you can never lose His Presence but can grieve, quench or resist Him which is unwise.
- **Holy Spirit is the seal of God in your life** - In ancient times, a seal was a “legal signature” attesting ownership and validating what was sealed.
- **Holy Spirit helps in your weakness and intercedes** for you (Romans 8:26-27).
- **Holy Spirit Sanctifies and Enables Good Fruit in your Life**
The work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life is an ongoing process of becoming holy through sanctification. Through the conviction and

power of the Holy Spirit, believers will not indulge the sinful acts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-21) but will bear the good fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

RESPONSE

Examine The Work of Holy Spirit In Your Life

Holy Spirit makes you more like Jesus Christ.

Holy Spirit convicts you of sin: Have you experienced His conviction?

Holy Spirit helps renew your mind: Your beliefs, culture & traditions.

Holy Spirit & fruit of the Spirit: Which fruit do you see evident in your life? Galatians 5:22

Holy Spirit unites you with Christ the true Vine: Intimacy with Christ!

Holy Spirit is responsible for your eternal life: Do you have the assurance of salvation?

Holy Spirit guarantees our security: Are you fearful? Let go & receive.

Holy Spirit gives you spiritual gifts: What are your spiritual gifts?

Holy Spirit gives you Joy: Are you experiencing the Joy of the Lord?
Nehemiah 8:10

Holy Spirit indwells you permanently, so don't grieve, quench or resist Him. Repent if you have and ask Him to take His place as Lord.

Holy Spirit is the seal of God on your life – Do you believe you, are sealed by God? A seal attests of Gods ownership and validation.

Holy Spirit helps in your weakness and intercedes for you. Ask Him to help you in all your weak areas: (Romans 8:26-27).

Holy Spirit Sanctifies and Enables Good Fruit in your Life - Are you experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?

PRAYERS FOR INTIMACY

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” James 4:8

Dear God, draw me closer to You in intimacy and communion. Open my heart to Your presence and fill me with a deep sense of Your love and grace. Lord, I long to draw near to You and experience Your presence in my life. Amen.

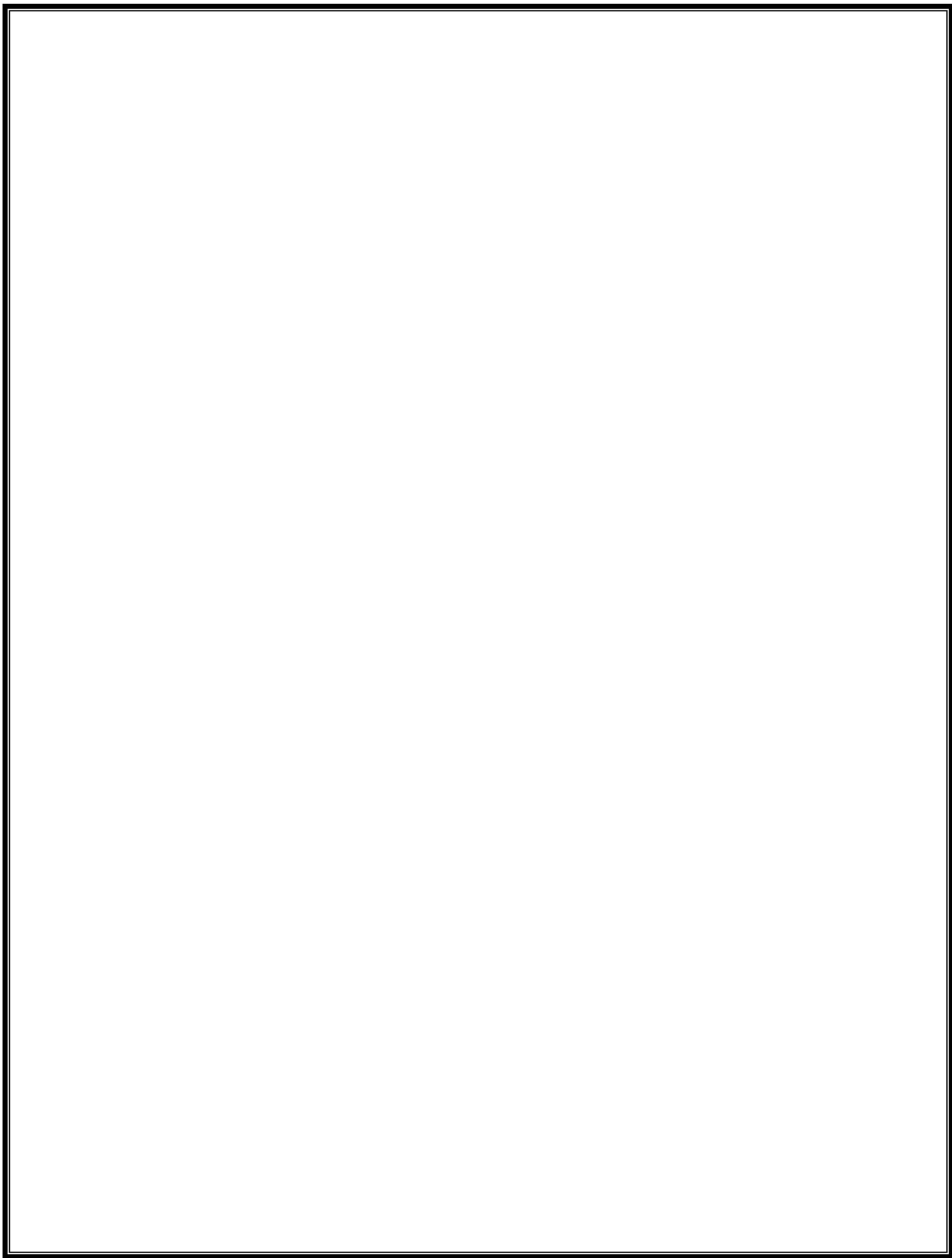
“He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” Lord, I seek Your restoration and renewal in my innermost being. Amen. Psalms 23:3

Heavenly Father, refresh my spirit with Your presence. Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon me, renewing my mind and reviving my soul.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.” Lord, teach me to dwell in Your love and to reflect it to the world around me. Amen. John 15:9

Dear Lord, help me to abide in Your love. May Your love surround me, permeate my being, and overflow to others in my life.

Abba Father, I come before You in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I reverence and worship You Lord. Thank You for the intimacy that I can have with You through Your Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Lord, forgive me for everything that I have allowed into my life that is hindering me from You. Gracious God, I surrender my will to Yours. Help me to let go of control and trust in Your perfect plan for my life. Lord, ignite a deep hunger and thirst for You within my soul. Fill me with a longing to know You more deeply and to walk in Your ways. Come Holy Spirit and break forth within me and break out upon me. I know You are doing a new thing in me. I let go of the old and embrace the new! Mighty Holy Spirit, I yield to You and to Your work in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.



THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL
WEEK SIX
DAY FIVE
SEVEN IMPORTANT THINGS ABOUT THE BRANCH

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: John 15:2

READING: John 15:9-13; Romans 5:5; John 1:12; John 15:5; 1 Peter 2:9

CHAPTER ONE: JUST A BRANCH **PART # 2**

INTRODUCITON

Jesus says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every one that bears fruit, He prunes it, so that it may bring forth more fruit" John 15:2.

The abiding challenge in John 15 uses the metaphor of the vine and the branches to explain how Christians should live and relate to Jesus. After careful study of John 15 the last few weeks, I discovered the seven main things about the branch.

1. **LOVE - A BRANCH (CHRISTIANS) LOVES** - Jesus commands us to love one another. He further explains **how** to love one another. **There is no greater way to love than to give your life for your friends.** In other words, to love is to serve one another. To love is to be selfless! To love is to be ready to sacrifice! John 15:9-13 speaks about the theme of love in the parable of the vineyard. "I have loved you as the Father has loved Me. Abide in My love". Follow My example in obeying the Father's commandments and receiving His love. If you obey My commandments, you will stay in My love. I want you to know the delight I experience, to find ultimate satisfaction, which is why I am telling you all of this. My commandment to you is this: love others as

I have loved you. You cannot love perfectly until you receive and experience God's love.

PRAYER: *“Such hope [in God’s promises] never disappoints us, because God’s love has been abundantly poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us”. Romans 5:5*

Dear Father,

I open my heart to receive Your perfect love. Forgive me for believing the enemy's lies and for the times I've willingly turned away from You. Free me from earthly hurts and wounds of my soul that keeps me from drawing close to You. O Lord, You are the only source and essence of love. You are love. Give me a tender and grateful heart towards You and for others. Lord, You have called me to love and I want to obey, and so invade me with Your love so Your love can flow freely through me to others unconditionally. In Jesus' name, Amen.

2. ABIDE - A BRANCH ABIDES - Abiding in Christ. As branches, we are called to abide in the Vine. To abide in Christ means to immerse oneself in Him and in His word. To obey His commands and live a life to reveal and reflect Him. Abide in Me, and I will abide in you. A branch cannot bear fruit if it is disconnected from the vine, and neither will you if you are not connected to Me.

PRAYER: *Dear Father,*

Who are in heaven, thank You that You are the Master Gardener of my life and You tend my life with such love and care. Cleanse me and prune me and take away anything that you discover in me that does not glorify Your holy name. Thank You, Father, that I am a heavenly branch that is united to my heavenly Vine, the lovely Lord Jesus Christ. May His life flow through mine as sap flows through the branch that is grafted into its parent stem. Fill me with His fullness so that I may live and move and grow and bear fruit as I abide more and more in Him. In Jesus' name. Amen.

3. IDENTITY – YOUR IDENTITY IS IN BEING A BRANCH - Jesus is the vine, God is the vinedresser, and Christians are the branches. Jesus says in John 15:5: I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. What I hear Jesus saying to you is that if you attach yourself to Him like a branch on a vine, then your identity will be clearly defined. Are you in identity crisis mode? If so, look to Jesus. He is all you'll ever need to feel loved, special and unique. Here are just a few verses in the Bible that tells us God sees us: John 1:12; John 15:5; 1 Peter 2:9; Galatians 3:27-28; 1 John 3:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

PRAYER: *Lord, I pray that You would unlock my heart that I might be fully alive to my identity in You. Give me clear revelation to see myself the way You see me. Help me to stand in Your truth against all enemy attacks and guard my heart with all vigilance (Proverbs 4:23). Help me to identify the lies and reveal to me any places where I am chained to the past in a negative way. I repent for any lies of the past. [Name those lies and ask God to forgive you.]*

Teach me to hear Your voice and not believe the enemy's destructive lies about who I am. I thank You for my uniqueness and that I am made in Your image (Genesis 1:27). I choose to believe the truth about how You see me. I thank You that I can hope in the future and believe in the good destiny that You have for me. You have a vision for my future. Help me to live a fruitful life now and overflow with Your love to others. I want to know You on a deeper level, and I don't want anything to hinder my relationship with You. Thank You for this new identity I have in You. Help me to live out this truth in my life every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

4. DEPENDENCY AND TRUST – BRANCHES DEPEND ON THE VINE (CHRIST) AND TRUST IN THE MASTER GARDENER

Trusting and depending on God is a Christian practice that involves believing in God's promises and living in obedience to Him, even when it's difficult. The Bible encourages people to trust and depend on God, and some say that it's something that set us free. John 15:4 - "Remain in me [Christ], as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Nor can you bear fruit unless you remain in me". But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. Jeremiah 17:8. Depending on God is basic to the Christian life. We trust in, or depend on, God for our salvation (Ephesians 2:8–9). We depend on God for wisdom (James 1:5). In fact, we depend on God for everything (Psalm 104:27) and in everything (Proverbs 3:5–6). The psalmist teaches the Lord's reliability with the three-fold description "the LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer" (Psalm 18:2).

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, I come before You today with a humble and contrite heart, seeking to be more like Jesus, Your Son. Help me to live in total dependence on You and point people to You that others might know You because of my life. I want to learn to trust You with my life each day. Lord, I give You every part of me. When I'm tempted to rely on my understanding, align my heart with Yours. All that I have is Yours and belongs to You. You are what I need, and You are the one I desire. I am under Your leadership. I am Your child. Thank You that I am under Your protection. You are my rock and refuge. I am so blessed because of You. In Jesus name, Amen.*

5. FRUIT – A BRANCH MUST BE FRUITFUL

In John 15 the branch is expected to grow and bear fruit. It talks about barrenness, productivity, and abundance. Branches that remain in the vine bear fruit, while branches that are cut off wither and die. As Christians our spiritual lives comes from Jesus, and we can only be fruitful through abiding in Him. Bearing fruit glorifies God and make us His disciples. Fruitfulness is a sign of being a Christian.

PRAYER: *Father, in Jesus' name, I thank You for filling me with the knowledge of Your will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding that I may walk worthy of You, Lord, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of You. In Jesus name. Amen!*

6. PURPOSE – BEING A BRANCH MEANS YOU LIVE PURPOSE

God's purpose for Christians is to progress from barrenness to fruitfulness, and to live lives that honor God and help others. Your Life Has a Purpose. You may wonder, why am I here? Does my life have meaning? Do the things I do really matter? What happens after I die? God, our loving Heavenly Father, wants us to find happiness and joy. His plan gives meaning and context to our life here on earth and answers the above-mentioned questions. Ephesians 2:10 - "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"

PRAYER: *Dear Lord, You give us purpose, and Your plans are for our ultimate good. Even when things seem bleak, "we know that for those who love You all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28, ESV). I pray for the strength to align my life with Your greater purpose, finding joy along the way. Guide me in my journey of Christian living, understanding that even in a world that may eventually forget our specific deeds, You will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:23, ESV). In Jesus name I pray. Amen.*

7. PRUNING – A BRACH MUST BE PRUNE TO BEAR MORE FRUIT

"Prune to bear more fruit" refers to the idea that God removes from our lives things that may prevents us from being fruitful and advancing His kingdom. It appears in John 15:2, which says, "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". In John 15:2 (AMP), Jesus says, every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that continues to bear fruit, He [repeatedly] prunes, so that it will bear more fruit [even richer and finer fruit]. Pruning is vitally important for us to grow in our walk with God. I've found it's helpful to evaluate my life periodically and ask God to show me if there are things that need to be cut off because they are hindering my relationship with Him. **Ask yourself:** Am I dragging around "dead branches" in my life?

PRAYER: *Lord, please search me and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, that hinders my fruitfulness and leads me in the way everlasting. Lord, I surrender all old wounds from your past, a negative attitude that keeps me from enjoying life to the fullest or anything I look to for a sense of security other than You. Prune me so I can bear much fruit for Your glory. In Jesus name, Amen!*