

ABC's of Discipleship



Abide in His Word

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him,
"If you ABIDE in my word, you are truly my disciples,
and you will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free."

John 8:31,32 ESV

Abide means "to dwell, sojourn or tarry." Other meanings include: not to depart; to continue to be present; to be held, kept, continually; not to perish, to last, endure; to remain as one, not to become another or different.

What insight do these definitions give you into what Jesus meant when He used the word "abide"?

Read Psalm 1 - Contrast the righteous with the wicked. Where does the righteous person focus their life? Draw a picture of the tree that is planted by the water. How is this a picture of "abiding in the Word"?



Consider the Hand illustration. How would a believer become an abider in each of these areas?

Hearing the Word

Reading the Word

Studying the Word

Memorizing the Word

Meditating on the Word

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Bear Fruit

This is to my Father's glory,
that you BEAR much fruit,
showing yourselves to be my disciples.
John 15:8 NIV

Fruits are basically seed containers and seed disseminators. An animal or a person harvests or finds a fruit, carries it with them, consumes it and discards the remainder. This causes the seeds of the fruit to be moved to another location so that it is "disseminated" to a place where it may sprout and grow. So a fruit is basically made up of the 'meat' of the fruit, that which is good to eat and the seed through which more fruit is multiplied. To bear fruit would then be to lead a life that is attractive and through that life to scatter the seed of the gospel.

Read Galatians 5:22,23 - How is God's spiritual fruit described?

Read the surrounding verses, Galatians 5:16-26, how do we bear the fruit of the Spirit and not the works of the flesh?

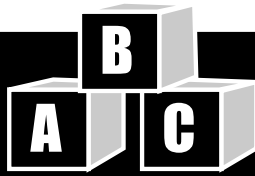
What do the following verses say about what it means to bear fruit?

- Colossians 1:6
- Colossians 1:10
- Jeremiah 17:7,8

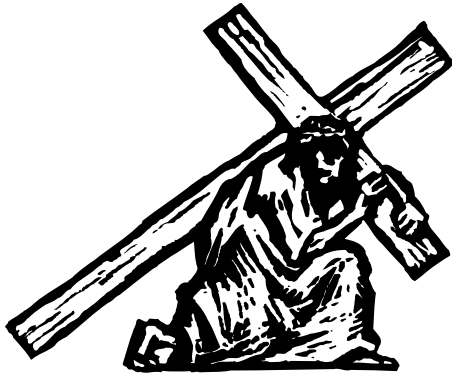
Read Romans 1:13, what was Paul's desire in his ministry to the Romans?

Read John 15:16, where are you seeking to go and bear Fruit?

How are both the testimony of your life (the meat of the fruit) and the gospel message (the seed of the fruit; 1 Pet 1:23) important in your ministry to others?



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Cross Bearing

Whoever does not bear his own CROSS
and come after me
cannot be my disciple.
Luke 14:27 ESV

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." We Christians aren't called to die once on a cruel **Cross** like Jesus did, but we are called by our Master to die by taking up our cross daily. (Luke 9:23) To die daily is to be a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1) which means that sacrificial living is part of our new identity. Paul put it this way "and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."

(2 Corinthians 5:15)

Read Romans 12:1-2. This passage begins with the words "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God" (ESV). Paul has spent the past 11 chapters explaining to us the "mercies of God" offered to us in the gospel. What is your understanding of the gospel?

In light of the gospel ("the mercies of God") why should we be motivated to be a living sacrifice?

There is incredible power in a life well lived; day after day after day. In the everyday practical realities of life, how would you faithfully follow Christ daily in body, mind and spirit?

BODY- (Rom 12:1)

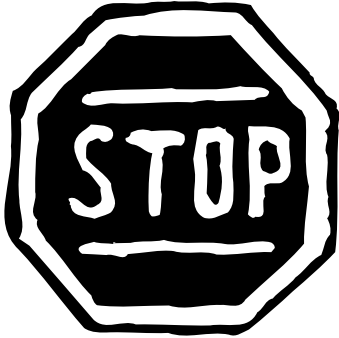
MIND- (Rom 12:2)

SPIRIT- (Rom 12:3)

Read John 12:20-26. In this passage Jesus uses the picture of a seed dying to produce much fruit. He himself died like a multiplying seed and he calls us to be where he would be as His servant (vs 26). From John 12:24, what does Jesus affirm will happen if we die (take up our cross) and what will remain dormant and undeveloped in us if we don't? Why is "falling in the earth and dying" essential if we are to realize our full potential in Christ?

In 1 Corinthians 15:31, Paul said "I die every day." Think through these areas of your life, your relationships, your resources, your responsibilities and your recreation. Pick one of those areas. Where do you have difficulty 'taking up your cross' and how does the gospel motivate you to live differently?

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Deny Yourself

If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him DENY himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and follow Me.
Matthew 16:24 AMP

In order to take up our cross and follow Christ we must deny ourselves, cross-bearing and selfish living just don't go together. The Greek term "aparneomai", translated in English as "deny" has the meaning to "disown" or "renounce." Used within the context of the imagery of taking up the cross and following Jesus, "denying oneself" conveys the sense of a person disassociating himself from his self interest to serve a higher purpose.

Self denial is not to deny one's personality, to live on bare minimums or to withdraw from the world. It is instead the turning away from the idolatry of self centeredness and every attempt to orient one's life by the dictates of self interest.

Read Ephesians 4:17-24. From verses 17-19 what was our old life like before we knew Christ? See also Ephesians 2:1-3.

How does His grace change us? (Ephesians 2:4-10)

In Ephesians 4:20,21 Paul calls this grace, the truth that is in Jesus'. From Ephesians 4:22-24, how is the pattern of change described in three steps? Why is it important that we not only 'put off' and 'put on' but that we be 'renewed in the attitude of our minds'?

Read Ephesians 4:25-32 and fill in the following chart

Verses	Put Off	Change of Mind	Put On
25			
26,26			
28			
29,30			
31,32			

Consider an area of your life where you are struggling with self. What needs to be put off? What new way of thinking must you pursue? What should you put on?

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Eminence of Christ

You cannot be my disciple, unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and children, and your brothers and sisters. You cannot come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life.

Luke 14:26 CEV

Read Mark 1:16-20. What did these men leave behind to follow Christ? How do you think Zebedee felt when he got left behind? How do you think James and John felt? Why did they make the choice they did?

“When a Jewish father adopted a child into his family (because no children had been born to him and his wife), and selected one son from a number of children, that father was said to have loved the one whom he adopted, and he hated the rest whom he did not choose for adoption. This was not an emotional response to those whom he did not adopt - no anger, malice, wrath or bitterness against those whom he did not put into his family. Love had to do with putting one into his family as his heir. This was the choice of his will. That father, I repeat was said to have loved the one chosen and hated the ones passed over. When Christ in Luke 14:26 asked His disciples to hate, He was not dealing so much with the affections as with the choice of the will; a decision as to whose authority one will accept.”

J.Dwight Pentecost • Design for Discipleship

Read Philippians 3:1-6. In this passage Paul highlights his past religious life as a Jew. Read verses 3-6. How does Paul describe his religious resume? List below all of the spiritual attainments Paul had achieved.

What would you have to lay aside for Christ to be the eminent ‘one and only’ in your life?

Read Philippians 3:7-8 in your Bible. Consider it in the New Living Translation “I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.” In light of the glory of knowing Christ, Paul did a new accounting of what was ultimately valuable in his life. Now read Philippians 3:7-11. What does Paul see as the most important reality in his life? In comparison, of what value is everything else?

Continue reading Philippians 3:12-16. What was the one thing in Paul’s life?

Look at Luke 10:38-42. What was the one thing in Mary’s life?

Are you a person of one thing or ‘many things’? Consider that the people who have the most profound impact in this world are people who are people of one thing. As Dawson Trotman said “It is not these many things I dabble at, but this one thing I do.” Is Jesus your one thing, why or why not?

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Forsake All



"Simply put, if you're not willing to take what is dearest to you, whether plans or people, and kiss it good-bye, you can't be my disciple.

Luke 14:33 MSG

"Idolatry is the most discussed problem in the Bible. Idols are not just on pagan altars, but in well-educated human hearts and minds. The apostle Paul associates the dynamics of human greed, lust, craving, and coveting with idolatry. . . . since we were made to relate to God, but do not want to face Him, we forever inflate things in this world to religious proportions to fill the vacuum left by God's exclusion.

An idol is something within creation that is inflated to function as a substitute for God. All sorts of things are potential idols, depending only on our attitudes and actions towards them. An idol can be a physical object, a property, a person, an activity, a role, an Institution, a hope, an image, an idea, a pleasure, a hero – anything that can substitute for God." **No God But God** - Breaking with the Idols of our Age, Os Guinness, Richard Keyes

Read Mark 10:17-31. Consider this person many call "the Rich Young Ruler". He had everything the people of our day could want. He possessed material wealth, youthful vigor and was a leader in his community. He runs up to Jesus and bows before him in respect and asks him a question. What does the young man call Jesus? Why does Jesus question his reason for calling Him good? What is Jesus getting at?

What is the young man's question (vs 17) and how does Jesus answer it? Is this the answer you expected? Why or why not?

After Jesus tells the young man to keep the commandments, how does the young man defend himself?

Jesus, out of love, challenges him (see vs 21). How does Jesus expose the greed or 'idolatry' in this young man's heart? (See Colossians 3:5) Why is challenging his idolatry an act of love? What does Jesus say and how does the young man respond?

What do the disciples learn from this experience? (see verses 23-31)

Martin Luther said there are three conversions—first the mind, then the heart, and finally the pocketbook. What do you think he meant?

Read Matthew 6:19-34. What do the Gentiles (or unbelievers) seek after? What are we to seek after?

Look back at Matthew 6:21. What does it say about your treasure and your heart? How are you investing this world's treasure into the eternal realities of God's kingdom? What kind of needs should you give to?

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Good Works

"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Matthew 10:42 NIV

"Jesus came as the suffering, humble servant. God understood that humility is one of the traits that gets the attention of the human race. As we give away deeds of humility we bring a similar influence into the world. As we allow Jesus to love others through us, we will find great joy in serving. Jesus' lowly estate threw a curve ball to the religious leaders of his day. They expected him to appear as victorious Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Of course, Jesus is coming the second time in manifest power and authority, but he came the first time in humility. Today, it seems little has changed. While we look high and low for effective approaches that will touch the world around us with God's love, the most obvious one is overlooked. Doing humble acts of service causes the world to notice our lives and to listen to our message."

Conspiracy of Kindness - Steve Sjogren

Read James 2:14-17 and 1 John 3:16-18. From these passages what is our responsibility to our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Look at 1 John 3:16, how does what Christ has done for us in the gospel motivate us to love others? How does it motivate you to love your brother or sister in Christ even when they are unlovely? (see what Christ did for the unlovely in Romans 5:6-10)

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16 the Message

How does being "generous with your life" as you meet the needs of others around you spread the salt and light of the gospel?

Write down below the names of 5 people that are in your personal network, where you live, study, work, worship and play. Write down for each one at least one of their needs that you could possibly meet. You can be general or specific. Pick one to do.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Name of a person where I live: | NEED: |
| 2. Name of a person where I study: | NEED: |
| 3. Name of a person where I work: | NEED: |
| 4. Name of a person where I worship: | NEED: |
| 5. Name of a person where I play: | NEED: |

Thought Question: Some Christians think the best way to reach someone is by what you do, others say it is by what you say, what do you think?

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His Love

"So now I am giving you a new commandment:
Love each other. Just as I have loved you,
you should love each other.
Your love for one another
will prove to the world that you are my disciples."
John 13:34-35 NLT

"There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to be sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. . . . The only place outside of Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell."

C.S. Lewis • The Four Loves

Read John 13:1-11. Describe the situation from Jesus' perspective (see verses 1-3).
What did He have ahead of him?

Jesus was just about to lay down his life for the world, arguably the most important act that any man has ever done, with the pressure of what awaits Him heavy upon Him, what need does Jesus see and what does He do about it? (see verses 4-11) How can He think about others at a time like this? What does he know about Judas & Peter? Does he wash their feet? Why or why not?

Read Luke 22:11-14. This is Luke's version of the disciples in the Upper Room. Read Luke 22:24-27. What were the disciples discussing amongst themselves before Jesus washed their feet? What impact do you think His humble service had on them in the midst of their discussion? Generally, we are more subtle than the disciples, but how do we as believers argue amongst ourselves as to who is the greatest?

Look back at John 13, read verses 12-17. Why does Jesus serve the disciples? (Is it just to be an object lesson for what He is teaching or is there another reason?) Was Jesus telling us that we should literally "wash each other's feet" or is there wider application than that?

Look at John 13:34,35, Jesus' summary of his life among them. What is new about His commandment to love? How should a deep understanding of the gospel affect how disciples relate to each other?

Is the quality of love in your fellowship such, that those who don't know Christ are attracted to Christ because of how much you love each other? The biggest obstacle that many nonbelievers have with trusting Christ is how Christians treat each other, how can this factor not be true of your fellowship? Why are Christians often kinder to nonbelievers than they are to each other? What can you do about this? (Read Galatians 6:9,10)