

John 14–16, pt.10, 9.27.09

Staying “in love”

Intro.

1. Taize Service at St.Timothy’s Episcopal
2. Are you in a time of instability or spiritual dryness (that not due to physical or emotional exhaustion)
3. Quote from Sacred Romance

If I'm not abiding in Jesus, then where is it that I abide? I once asked myself. I began to notice that when I was tired or anxious, there were certain sentences I would say in my head that led me to a familiar place. The journey to this place would often start with me walking around disturbed, feeling as if there was something deep inside that I needed to put into words but couldn't quite capture. I felt the "something" as anxiety, loneliness, and a need for connection with someone. If no connection came, I would start to say things like, "Life really stinks. Why is it always so hard? It's never going to change." If no one noticed I was struggling or asked me what was wrong, I found my sentences shifting to a more cynical level: "Who cares? Life is a joke." Surprisingly, by the time I was saying those last sentences, I was feeling better. The anxiety was greatly diminished.

My comforter, my abiding place, was cynicism and rebellion. From this abiding place, I would feel free to use some soul cocaine—watching a violent video with maybe a little sexual titillation thrown in, having more alcohol with a meal than I might normally drink—things that would allow me to feel better for a little while. I had always thought of these things as just bad habits. I began to see they were much more; they were spiritual abiding places that were my comforters and friends in a very spiritual way.

The final light went on one evening when I read John 15:7 in *The Message*. Peterson translates Jesus' words on abiding this way: "If you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon." Jesus was saying in answer to my question, "I have made my home in you, Brent. But you still have other comforters you go to. You must learn to make your home in me."

Brent Curtis and John Eldredge, *The Sacred Romance* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997)

4. Where do you abide/stay when you are spiritually dry or there is instability?
5. Jesus’ answer – John 15.9–10
6. Review – God desires for you to live intimately connected to Christ so that you produce much good fruit. Your fruitfulness as a believer is determined by your abiding in Christ and your submission to the pruning of the Father.

“Remain” means to continue (to stay) in perseverance and uncompromising devotion to Christ; To be settled in Christ so that you draw upon His life and it transforms your own.

A key indicator this is happening is that the genetic code of God is manifesting in your life – Ex.33.18 – 34.7 & Gal.5.22f.

Biblical Examples of those who “stayed in love”:

- Gen.1–3: Adam & Eve. They didn’t seek to please God; they pleased God. They related perfectly to God and followed His desires. There was no shame as they stood before each other and God completely exposed. Even after their sin, Adam & Eve continued interacting with the Father (based on other interactions, such as, Cain & Abel).
- Gen.5.21–24: Enoch walked with God. He had a close relationship with God. He didn’t keep a bunch of rules, but he personally related to God. Heb.11.5 – Enoch was known as a person who pleased God. He preached righteousness (Jude 14f.). He had a deep relationship with God.
- Is.41.8; James 2.23 – Abraham was considered a friend of God. He believed God and followed His ways.
- Ex.33.11; Num.12.7f. – He was a friend of God. God spoke to him as one friend speaks to another.
- Daniel, David & Job could be added to the list. Their interaction with Him surely would indicate it. Concerning Daniel, the angel Gabriel says, “you are very precious to God.”
- John 15.14f – The disciples were friend’s of God. Consider how they interacted with Jesus during the three years of ministry – Jesus wasn’t so focused that his only desire was to “get the job done”. They hung out with Him, listened to Him, served alongside Him, ate, slept, walked, and talked with Him, etc.
- Summary: None of these had a formal, rigid, lifeless relationship with God. It was fresh and exciting.

TS – All of these understood friendship involved two faith expressions.

Staying “in love” involves:

I. Obedience – 15.10.

Your level of obedience will determine your awareness of His love for you.

- A. His love is the same for everyone. He doesn’t love Jesus more than me. But, only those who walk in obedience experience the deep love of God. Jesus experienced God’s love perfectly, in part, b/c he perfectly obeyed God.
- B. In other words, as I live in greater obedience I can expect a greater response and revelation of God in my life. The more you obey the more you see!

Obedience isn’t rigid, but relational in nature.

A. **Obedience isn’t rigid but relational in nature.**

B. It’s following the Father’s heart.

- a. John 15.10 – Jesus obeyed the Father’s command from a place of intimacy not authority. In other words, He was so close to the Father & the Father to Him that He naturally did what was pleasing. The Father didn’t have to stand above Him and so, “do this...and that.”

b. **Obedience should flow from intimacy not authority.**

- i. Illust – So close to a person you could finish their sentences. You ask if you should or shouldn’t, b/c you love and respect the person.
- C. I must follow the Lord from a place of intimacy or there is still distance between us. I continue to see Him as the King dispensing orders that I follow, instead of the friend, who gently instructs.
- D. This is how Adam, Eve, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Daniel & the disciples all obeyed God. It wasn’t a rule based relationship, but a love based one.

II. Resting in His love – 15.9

- A. In my opinion, the idea of rest best communicates how we stay “in Jesus’ love”
- B. In my opinion, the best description of how rest is entered into is demonstrated between the love of a husband & wife. The marital relationship is a snapshot of how we are to rest in the love of Jesus.

C. Stephanie's love for me.

- a. It's not perfect, but it is beautiful. I don't want to paint an unreal picture of our love. We fight and have our annoyances. I am not the little darling I seem to be. She's not perfect either, just ask her kids.
- b. I know my wife loves me...adores me. She shows me...tells me. She enjoys being with me and when she's not busy taking care of the needs of the family, I am the one she enjoys being around more than anyone else.
- c. I can be honest and completely open with her and not fear rejection. She knows my stuff and doesn't walk away. She accepts me for who I am. She doesn't manipulate or control me through withholding her affection and love. She corrects, mostly, out of love.
- d. I know that she will forgive me when I hurt her. I know that she will release me and bless me from any pain that I have caused her.
- e. She gives herself completely to me. She is entirely committed to me. I never wonder about her love.

D. It's impact on me

- a. It makes me secure and strong. It gives me hope. I feel loved and accepted. I don't wonder about what I have to do maintain it or if tomorrow she will reject me. I wake up each day knowing that I am loved completely!
- b. It makes me want to serve her and bless her, not out of obligation, but from love..
- c. I don't think about how I can take advantage of her love.

E. My response to it

- a. I rest in the knowledge that I am completely loved.
- b. If that is how my wife loves me with an imperfect love then how much greater is my Heavenly Father's perfect love...who loved me so much that He sent the very best out of love for me to restore me to a place of honor, joy, hope and love in His presence.
- c. Even if you don't have a good marriage or home life the Father wants you to know that you are loved; you are precious; He delights in you; He's

proud of you; He's fond of you; He like you; you make Him laugh in joy; He doesn't want anything to separate you from His love; He wants you to come into the knowledge of His love (Eph.3) ¹⁶ I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

- d. You want to know what to do when you're either spiritually dry or living in instability?
- e. REMAIN...STAY in His love.

The Impact of "Staying in love":

1. It cast out fear – 1 John 4
2. It brings stability to my life – John 13.3

Conclusion:

- Lord's Supper – these elements represent the reality that God has provided the way for you to radically encounter and abide in His love. Don't just be satisfied to stand at the front door; enter inside and stay in his love.