

Life With God

Unarguably one of the most descriptive and defining passages on living as a Christ follower is John 15.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

I am intrigued and challenged by Jesus' admonition to remain (See v. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10). He no doubt understood that "remaining in him" would be difficult for many of his followers, but continuing in him is the essence of being a true follower. Scripture contains much such instruction to abide or continue in the faith that we initially confess. James letter to Christ followers gives a wonderful promise to those who persevere in their walk with him. **(James 1:2-4, 12)** We are to guard against starting a journey with him, but becoming sidetracked along the way.

Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62

Questions begging to be asked are "What does Jesus mean by "looking back?" and "How can we be confident that we (and our students) are indeed continuing in Him?" These questions can be answered in multiple ways, but the evidence of an *abiding* life is revealed by the vitality of the relationship with him. Often this relationship is compromised by opting for cognitive, belief largely ignoring practice. Practicing his presence means living life with him in such a way that He vitally matters in our thoughts, words, and actions. Living with him and doing things occasionally for him is not the same lifestyle. Now the question is, "How can we live life with God? The

answer is to orient our thinking (**Phil. 2:5**) that we become more and more attentive to his presence and that takes spending time with him. Scripture assures us that He is always present with us, but are we present with him? Not remaining in him occurs because we choose not to be. Living life with him is the result of disciplining ourselves to intentionally spend time with him. Thomas Kelly, an insightful Quaker theologian described this as living life from the Divine Center. At first it is an activity that is scheduled for the purpose of spiritual maturity. Eventually it becomes as much a part of our life as any other action we undertake to preserve our physical well-being.

Contendings:

What is the difference in living with God and doing things for God?

What are the distractions that we face that hinder our living with God?

Related Scriptures:

Colossians 3:1-17; Acts 17: 24-28; Jude 20-21

Resources:

Book: *Life With God* by Richard Foster

Book: *A Testament of Devotion* by Thomas R. Kelly