

# How to Remain in Christ: Hear and Know the Word of God

## John 15:3,7

preached @ Hawkwood Baptist Church  
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Intro. Based upon last Sunday's message, let me remind you of a few prerequisites to "remaining" in Christ.

- Before you can remain in Christ you must first be in Christ, and to do that you must know Jesus personally. You must have a relationship with Christ that began as a response to His call.
- You must know that in Christ you have been given the Holy Spirit in His fullness. (To make this clear is the whole point of John 14)
- You are in Christ and Christ is in you. (John 14:20)
- Now you will want to remain (abide) in Christ, so that He can produce much fruit through you. But how do you remain in Christ?
- The answer: Through the Spiritual Disciplines.

I Tim. 4:7 "Train yourself to be Godly." (NIV)

I Tim. 4:7 "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." (NASB)

- Through the spiritual disciplines we do our part to remain in Christ. He will then do His part to produce fruit through our lives.
- It is my intent, as God leads me, to take some time to teach you about Spiritual Disciplines: to teach you what they are and then give you hints toward practising them. Let me say it again; it is through your involvement in Spiritual Disciplines that you will remain in Christ.
- Of course, you will eventually discover that faithfulness in spiritual discipline is God's gift to you as well.

1Th 5:23-24 May the God who gives peace make you holy in every way. May he keep your whole being — spirit, soul, and body — blameless when our Lord Jesus Christ comes. *The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.* (GW)

What, then, is the first thing you should do to get involved in Spiritual Disciplines?

1. **Continue as you began.** In other words, if your Christian life began by hearing Jesus and responding to his call, it should carry on the same way, with Jesus continually speaking to you through His Word, the Bible. He will call you to ever deeper levels of commitment and you will be transformed through obedience into an ever increasing Christlikeness.

Why would I say Scripture intake (starting with Bible reading) is the first and most important of the Spiritual Disciplines?

- a. John 15:3 "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." For Evangelical Christians this verse raises two possibilities; by "word" Jesus either means a once-for-all declaration of salvation (**justification**; see Luke 18:14, Rom. 4:5), or else he

is referring to **sanctification**, God's ongoing work of transformation of life and character. In this case we're talking about sanctification.

- i. "Spoken" translates a Greek word that emphasizes continuing speech, as in a conversation, or in this case, the teaching that Jesus had done during the three years the disciples were with Him.
  - ii. "Clean" translates the same root word that is translated "prune" in the previous verse. This verse could read, "You are already pruned because of the word I have spoken to you."
  - iii. John 15:3 does not mean perfection (That very night the disciples would prove how imperfect they were). Rather, it indicates a cleansing process by means of the teaching Jesus had given them over their three years together (sanctification).
- b. Contrast John 15:3 with 13:10-11. In chapter 15 Jesus says the disciples are clean. In chapter 13 he says that all but one are clean.

John 13:10-11 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, *though not every one of you.*" For Jesus knew who was going to betray him, and *that was why he said not every one was clean.*

- i. What made Judas different from the rest? Jesus is implying in 15:3 that Judas did not accept his words in the same way as His genuine disciples did.
  - (1) They had embraced Jesus' words.
  - (2) They accepted that Jesus came from God.
  - (3) Christ's words had been allowed to judge their thoughts.
  - (4) His words had enlightened their consciences.
  - (5) Perhaps most of all, their hopes had begun to rest in His promises.

Nothing Jesus said could stop the true disciples from following Him.

John 6

66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

- (6) "words of eternal life" Jesus' words were difficult; they were offensive to the crowds, but words of life to the disciples. Thus they clung to Jesus because they wanted to hear more and more of His words. **This is the mark of the authentic**

**disciple of Jesus Christ.**

2. No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God's Word.
  - a. Other change agents act from the outside in (other people, circumstances). Only God's Word acts from the inside out.
  - b. No other discipline is so intimately connected to the work of God's Holy Spirit in your life.
    - i. Compare these parallel passages
      - (1) Eph. 5:18 "Be filled with the Spirit"
      - (2) Col. 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly
    - c. No other discipline is so certain to produce the desired results. By that I mean no other discipline is so guaranteed to operate independently of our sinful flesh or to counteract its terrible influence upon all that we try to do for God.
      - i. Prayers can be prayed in error (Jas. 4:3)
      - ii. Worship can degenerate into a focus on aesthetics. (Music I like, sanctuaries that are architecturally pleasing me, length of sermons, pastor's tone of voice, or bow ties, etc.)
      - iii. Even such costly disciplines as service and fasting can become sources of pride rather than opportunities to glorify God.
      - iv. But when you are in the Word, God has an opportunity to speak to you in words of transforming power. He will say what needs to be said without fear or favour!

Heb. 4

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

3. The means of Scripture intake (I intend to address these next week)
  - a. Hearing God's Word
  - b. Reading God's Word
  - c. Studying God's Word
  - d. Memorizing God's Word
  - e. Meditating on God's Word
  - f. Applying God's Word
  - g. Doing God's Word

But for the rest of our time let me speak to you about overcoming

#### 4. Hindrances to Scripture intake

- a. No time to read (I'm up at 5:00 a.m. to go to work, I'm exhausted when I get home and there is still supper to prepare, children to attend to, a host of other duties clamouring for attention. Really, there is always something else to do.
- b. Difficulty with reading the Bible, and I'm not a good reader anyway (even in modern translations it is filled with unfamiliar terms, unfamiliar history, strange events, sometimes strange people, etc.)
- c. Difficulty with understanding the Bible (it's so complicated; I never know where I am in the historical parts. Then there's all that rigamarole about laws and sacrifices in the Old Testament; not to mention all the genealogies. Even the prophets are difficult. Half the time I have no idea what Isaiah is talking about.)
- d. Sense of its irrelevance: what does a 2,000 year-old book have to say to 21<sup>st</sup>-century people? Hasn't the Bible been disproved by science, by palaeontology, archaeology, astronomy, psychology, history, political science? In a word, "No!"
- e. Personal irrelevance: Doesn't address my present needs. I need a job. Or, I need to be more successful in my work. I need answers for raising my teenage kids. I need a break, not more commands to follow.

The only reply to all these objections is this: Does Jesus speak through His Word or not? Do you want to hear from Jesus or not? Is Jesus alive in you or not? Here's the amazing truth; the same objections raised by modern man against listening to Jesus were raised by his opponents when he walked upon the earth. But the disciples were different. Disciples are different. They don't come to Jesus because they have airtight arguments for the accuracy of Genesis. Disciples come to Jesus because they love Him and they come to the Bible because they find Him speaking to them throughout His word!

#### 5. **Principle:** Getting through the hindrances to Scripture intake is what separates Jesus' disciples from everyone else.

- a. They asked questions of Jesus until they understood.
  - i. Mat. 13:10-22 (the parable of the soils)
  - ii. Mat. 13:36 (the parable of the weeds)
  - iii. Mat. 15:15 (the parable that taught all foods are clean)
  - iv. Mark 9:28 (failure with the demon-possessed boy) Clearly neither the crowd nor the Jewish leadership had any interest in following up with Jesus' teachings.

- b. The disciples stuck to Jesus even when they didn't understand. They understood enough!!!! Eventually they understood more than anyone else on earth!!!!
  - i. They didn't understand his coming crucifixion or his resurrection
  - ii. They didn't understand why he was so willing to offend the Pharisees
  - iii. They didn't understand most of his parables at first
  - iv. They didn't understand why he would drive some followers away, then embrace those who were apparently least qualified.
  - v. They didn't understand how Jesus' life fulfilled Old Testament prophecy
  - vi. But they understood He loved them. They understood He had power to heal and bless. They understood He had words of eternal life!
- c. They allowed Jesus to put them to work
  - i. They dropped their work to follow Him. (Mat. 4:18ff)
  - ii. They helped feed the 5,000, without understanding at all how that could take place.
  - iii. They went on missionary journeys for the Lord and experienced great authority and joy in their work. (Mat. 10:1ff; Luke 9,10)
- d. They endured Jesus' rebuke without taking offense
  - i. Mat. 16:23 Jesus to Peter, "Get behind me Satan."
  - ii. Mk. 9:33 Jesus to the disciples, "What were you arguing about on the road?"
  - iii. Lk. 9:55 Jesus to James and John, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."
  - iv. Compare with John 6:60 "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"
  - v. They did not judge Jesus; they allowed Jesus to judge them.

**Principle:** Those who persevere in Scripture intake do so because they believe it is the very Word of God and the only sure way to hear from their Lord. They work to understand it in order to understand God. They obey it in order to obey God. They open their lives to its examination as if Christ Himself were examining them. They enter into its pages daily with the thought that nowhere this side of heaven will they be able to fellowship so closely with their Lord and Saviour.