

16. Learning to Abide in the Love of God

In our last topic, we saw that one of our goals, as Christians, should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow in love. We saw that love is the nature of God and because Christ placed the Holy Spirit in our lives at the moment of salvation, love is now a part of our new nature as Christians. We saw that we help our children to grow in the love of Christ as we model that love in our own lives. Today, we will focus on how to help our children learn to abide in the love of God.

In 1 John 4:12, we read, “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” Since Christ returned to heaven, the world cannot see Him. As a result, the only way the world sees the love of Christ is as they see the love of Christ in our lives. That is why we want to help our children develop a mature love. In Galatians 2:20, we read that Christ lives in us. In Romans 8:9, we see that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. In this verse, we see that God abides in us. As we help our children understand that the entire Trinity lives in their lives, we want to help them understand that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit develop godly love in their lives as they grow and mature.

In this verse, we see what happens as we learn to abide in the love of God. This development of godly love in the lives of Christians is the way the world sees the love of Christ. That is why Christ promised, in John 15:4, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” Notice a key fact. The branch does not produce fruit. The fruit is produced by the vine. The branch only bears fruit. To “bear fruit” means *to carry the fruit that is produced by the vine*. As we abide in the love of God, that love is carried to the world around us.

Here, we see that the evidence of the maturity of our love is the amount of love that flows through our lives both to other Christians and to the world around us. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” The liberty that Christ has given us is not for the purpose of sin. Instead, that liberty is to make it possible for us, as Christians, to serve one another in love. In the same way, as that love flows through our lives, Christ uses that love to draw others to Christ. That is why Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” We are to look for opportunities to allow the love of Christ to flow through our lives both to Christians and to non-Christians.

Since the love of Christ only flows through our lives when we are abiding in Christ, we want to help our children understand what it means to abide in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” One thing that helps us to abide in Christ is regularly remembering the love He showed to us when He died for us. We need to understand our condition at the time Christ died for us. Ephesians 2:12-13 says, “That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from

the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” We had no hope, but now have been given hope. We have been brought near the Father by the blood of Christ.

A second thing that helps us to abide in Christ is learning to take root in Christ. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” We learn to become rooted in Christ as we learn to meditate on the things Christ taught. Psalm 1:1-3 says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” As we meditate on the things Christ taught, we learn to abide in Christ and become rooted in Him.

A third thing that helps us to abide in Christ is learning to take root in the love of Christ. Ephesians 3:17-19 says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” We want to help our children really learn to take root in the love of Christ. The more our children understand and take root in the love of Christ, the more that love will be brought to maturity in their lives.

We go on to read, in 1 John 4:13-16, “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” In these verses, we see that as we learn to abide in God, we also teach proper doctrine about the entire Trinity.

Verse 13 points out the fact that part of the assurance of our salvation is the fact that the Holy Spirit abides in us. We want to help our children understand that we have been given the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of our eternal salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” The reason why it is important for our children to understand that the Holy Spirit dwells in them is that the Holy Spirit is our source of power. In Luke 24:49, before they received the Holy Spirit, Christ told the disciples, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” Now, we want to help our children understand that they were given the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.

Verse 14 points out the fact that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. We want to help our children understand why the Father sent Christ. Here, we see that He sent Christ to be

the Savior of the world. As we help our children learn to abide in God, we want to help them understand that they have been given a purpose as they live in this world. That purpose is to help the people of the world understand that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.” We want to model to both our physical and spiritual children that our purpose, as Christians, here on this earth is to be the ambassadors of Christ and share the message that the Father sent Christ to be the Savior of the world.

Verse 15 points out the fact that we know that we abide in God because we confess that Jesus is the Christ. John 20:30-31 tells us, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” We want to help our children clearly understand that Christ is the Son of God, and that as a result, people can have eternal life through Christ and only through Christ. John 14:6 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” In order to carry out the purpose God has given us for our lives, we need to be able to show our children how to explain to others, in love, that the only way they can come to the Father is through Christ.

Verse 16 points out the fact that we have known and believed the love God has for us. Here, we see that we want to show our children the difference between those who have eternal life and those who do not. John 8:31-32 says, “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’” People can believe that Christ is the Son of God and yet not place their trust in Him. However, those who place their trust in His Word and continue in His Word are true disciples who have eternal life.

Christ gave an illustration of what it means to continue in His Word when He said, in Matthew 7:24-27, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Christ said that the person who hears His Word and obeys it is building on a solid foundation that will last. This is what we want to help our children do and teach others to do. Then, they know they are abiding in God. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to abide in the love of God and equip them to help others learn how to abide in that love.