



Going Beyond the Sermon

Sunday, May 2, 2021 – Dr. John Stephens

“Grafted in the Way of Love”

John 15:1-8

Bible S.W.A.P.

S-Scripture

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³ You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

W-What Does it Say and What Can I Obey?

For this sermon series, the Going Beyond the Sermon notes will look to each Scripture passage for direction in discipleship. We will make connections with the stages of discipleship being experienced by the characters in the stories and where we are in the discipleship journey. For the “What Can I Obey?”

portion of study, we will be challenged to take a next step of faith, with the goal of using the passage and notes as a tool for processing and learning to direct ourselves to grow in closeness to Christ.

In John 15, Jesus uses the phrase “abide in me” repeatedly. Notice that the act of abiding is mutual. The branch abides in the vine and the vine produces fruit in the branch. Christ followers abide in Christ and he abides in them. Like branches cut off from the vine, believers who do not abide in Christ “can do nothing.” Those who do abide in Christ and allow his words to abide in them bear much fruit and bring glory to God.

The stage of discipleship depicted here is called “Abide in Me.” Jesus taught his disciples the analogy of the vine and branches in what is known as his final discourse. The Last Supper has been eaten and soon Jesus will be betrayed, arrested, tried, beaten, and crucified. The disciples, like Jesus, will need to be firmly connected to God (like a branch to a vine) and their power will come from God and not from their own strength. To tap into this source of peace, love, and strength they must surrender their own desires and totally trust God.

A-Apply

When we were developing the “Next Step” ministry at Chapelwood, we considered all the stages of faith and tried to assign names that the congregation would easily be able to recognize in their own lives. This stage was the hardest to name. We considered “remain in me,” “rest in me,” and “surrender to me” and finally decided to go with “abide in me” because 1)it’s how most translations of John 15 are worded and 2) it indicates staying, living, being at home. This stage is characterized by surrender to Christ. Spiritual growth in this stage is deeply motivated by your love for Christ. People at this stage are letting Christ be the driver of their lives. Their love for and trust in Christ is so deep that they obey Christ even without understanding “why” or “what’s in it for me?”

Read the descriptions below to see if this stage is your “home stage” now.

I honor God in every aspect of my life – work, play, and relationships.

I intentionally build relationships with unchurched people to share God’s love.

I am responsible for my spiritual growth and I share what I experience with others.

I am stepping out, trusting in God, to help others grow in their faith.

I love Jesus therefore I join him in mission.

I am tithing and reordering my life to free up even more for God’s use.

The next steps of surrender take a lifetime. “Things that were once productive need to be pruned sometimes. I don’t have to be the vinedresser. My role is to abide,” said Chapelwood’s former pastor, Jim Jackson, in a sermon on this passage. “Pray for the Holy Spirit to mark branches that need to go.” (April 21, 2002)

P-Pray*

Move more deeply into the inner sanctuary where you and the Father are one – one mind, one heart, one will. Listen carefully for the still, small voice of His guidance. Feel His pleasure in who you are. Relish His joy in giving Himself and the full range of His power and energy to you to be used in the service of others. Connect with the Father . . . as if you were connecting to the ultimate power source.

When you are faced with the impossible, or when you realize your own inadequacies, what do you do?

*Each passage in this sermon series invites us to imagine the scene. We will use guided imagery from “Christheart” by Jeanne Miley, as prayer prompts. This week, the prompt is from Multiplying Loaves and Fishes, Day 4, p. 133.

**To learn more about the Stages of Discipleship, go to
www.chapelwood.org/mynextstep.**

*Going Beyond the Sermon is written by Teresa Rossy, Director of Grow Ministries,
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Source material is quoted throughout. The sermons are streamed online, and worship is in person at 9:00 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary of our Greenbay campus. Go to www.chapelwood.org for details.

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