

Family TableTalk

Conversation 96

Abide

read

John 15:1-15

think

When my seven-year-old grandson was diagnosed with Type I Diabetes, it was quite a shock. Since I knew very little about Diabetes, I did what most people do these days to research something: I Googled it. I quickly learned that this very strong, active, and normal little guy had a pancreas that was shutting down. I learned that the pancreas makes the enzymes we need to break down fats, sugars, and starches as part of a normal digestive process. I also

learned that to live without a pancreas, one has to have their blood sugar monitored (finger pricks) and receive insulin shots. . . which for both is several times a day. Thanks to a great medical team and parents who keep an eye on him, Nolan will be able to thrive in life as long as he keeps his blood sugar balanced and he regularly receives his insulin. For the rest of his life, Nolan's continued health, development, and well-being depends on his being "hitched" to his insulin.

In John 15, Jesus uses a gardening allegory to tell his followers about healthy and vibrant spiritual growth and development. Jesus explains that when we enter into a relationship with Him there is a life-giving connection along with a sustaining maintenance procedure that we must willingly and actively pursue if we are to bloom, grow, and bear fruit as He intends us to. In effect, he describes how we are to be "hitched" or connected to Him as a branch is to a vine. Read John 15:5 out loud again. He wants us to bear the fruit of being like Him in our character. Our fruit-bearing and growth is increased by the sometimes painful process of pruning, which removes dead or overgrown parts so that we might become more productive.

What is the secret to this kind of growth? Jesus says the secret is this: "Abide in me." The word *abide* is used ten times in this passage. It describes a kind of "hitching" to our life-source, Jesus Christ. Rather than describing a temporary on and off relationship between us (the branches) and Jesus (the true vine), to *abide* means to remain, to stay in place, to continue, to stay attached, and to continue to stand firm. As we abide *in* Jesus, His life begins to permeate and transform us, keeping us spiritually vibrant, healthy, and fruitful. But apart from Him, we will wither and be able to "do nothing" (v. 5).

Thanks to God's grace and the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, you and I are able to thrive in life as long as we *abide* in the vine. For the rest of our lives, God's provision allows us to flourish as we draw life from Him and in turn, live to His glory. God wills that our continued spiritual growth and development depends on this constant attachment.

apply

- In today's world, what are the diversions, distractions, and activities that you have found to be roadblocks to abiding in Christ? What strategies and habits have you found to be most helpful for keeping yourself attached to the life-giving nourishment that comes through the vine?
- Think about someone you know who is over the age of 75 and who you know to be serious about abiding in the true vine, Jesus Christ. Arrange a time for your family to gather around the phone and give that person a call. Ask them to answer the prior questions.
- Take a walk through your neighborhood or in a local park. Pay special attention to the trees, bushes, shrubs, flowers, and other growth. Consider the words of Jesus in John 15 by looking for examples of everything He describes. How do those things help you to better understand the message of the vine and the branches?

pray

Almighty God, even though our sin has cut us off from you, you have made a way through your Son, Jesus Christ, for us to be grafted back into a life-giving relationship with you. Fill us with a never-ending passion for abiding in Christ and Christ alone. Amen.

by **Walt Mueller**

Walt Mueller is the President of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding. To access Walt's blogs, podcasts, and other resources, visit cpyu.org.

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