

***“Growing Beyond Knowing”***  
**Stewarding the Presence Series, Part 14**

As we have been navigating through the book of John the last few months we have been learning about the power of abiding in the presence of God. Abiding means to remain to stay. It means you will not be swayed out of a loving relationship with the Father. Today we are going to be in chapter 14 where Jesus speaks about how He is soon going to go be with the Father and leave us not as orphans but send the Holy Spirit to take residence in our hearts.

I learned a lesson about 7 years ago that forever changed my relationship with God. I had just planted a church in California and was hopping around trying to find a day job. After a couple horrific places to work I found a position as a maintenance man and janitor. I didn't need a high paying job, just something that wouldn't stress me out and could provide benefits. At the time I was not making a lot of money and spending \$726.27 a month on health insurance. I remember praying and trying to figure out how we were going to make it as I was not yet receiving a salary from the church plant. In most places when you begin work you have a 30-90 probation period before you are eligible to receive benefits. But God is good. The day I started just happened to be open enrollment for their new health care system, so all the employees including me had to pick a new plan. The HR lady said, "This doesn't normally happen, but you are getting benefits on day one. You might want to call Cobra and see if you can get any kind of refund." I took her advice and was blessed to get a couple refunds back. That money went a long way.

The work environment was very nice. I was told it was my job to fix little things and keep the whole place clean. I could do it however I wanted, whenever I wanted. I remember laughing to myself that this was the first job I ever had where there was no pressure or stress. That was of course until the first Wednesday I worked there. The boss gathered all 120 workers and began reminding everyone about the rules of the workplace. The warehouse built medical devices from the ground up...many of which were top secret. All employees had to wear antistatic smocks, metal clips to ground them on their shoes, and they even had a strap to go around their wrists that was grounded to the metal workbenches. One little spark could ruin an entire circuit board. Worse, the circuit board could be comprised and risk the life of a patient. The boss then went on to tell us that because there were so many top-secret parts, we were now no longer allowed to have our cell phones. We had to keep them in our cars. Guys, I worked nine hours a day. Can you imagine nine hours a day with no music, no podcasts, no text messages, no phone calls. I was left with nothing but my thoughts and silence. Thundering silence. The first few days were pretty difficult trying to adjust. I wasn't just battling boredom; I was battling fear. I could text Nikki all day and this was in the days she was severely depressed. I couldn't take phone calls from church members. I used to love to have my ear buds in and chat with folks from the church while I was mopping or taking out the trash. I felt like so much of my precious time had been taken. But I will tell you this, I learned a new way to pray. I learned how to abide. I learned how to stay focused on the presence of God. I felt the Lord wanted to teach me a lesson that I could have only learned in that situation. And it wasn't long before I found out I could buy a small device that had no camera that I could download music, sermons, podcasts and more.

Every decade has its own set of challenges and difficulty. But I would argue that we are not living in the worst of times. Not only do we have salvation, healing, freedom, and the promises

of God, but we have more access to worship and the Word of God than every before in history. Thank to modern technology people all around the world have access to any information they want. The problem is not that we are not studying the Word of God or prayer. The problem is not that we are left without hope. The problem is that although we have everything in Christ Jesus are not clinging to Him but clinging onto the world. We are getting stuck in the world because we are not staying stuck to God. You and I are like magnets. We are going to stuck to one thing or another. Like so many in the Bible we are called not to cling to God and not live in reaction to the things of this world. Daniel was stuck in a lion's den but not stuck in fear. Paul was stuck in a prison but not stuck in depression. Jesus was stuck to a cross but not stuck to death...He conquered it.

If you have your Bibles go with me to the Gospel of John chapter 14 and we are going to begin in verse 1.

***“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. 7 If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” 8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. 11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.***

Jesus said, “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” I can see how many cults or false doctrines can use this verse that is in the Christian Bible to disprove Jesus was and is God. It sounds like Jesus is saying there is a God and separately He is in existence too. I don't see it that way. I believe most of the people in that culture believed in God and not realizing Jesus was God didn't believe His words. They had an idea about God and believed in the Father but couldn't wrap their minds around Jesus in the flesh being God with them.

Notice Jesus said He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Shortly after Jesus said these words, He would go the way of the cross, be convicted by liars and lie lifeless in a tomb. Jesus spoke the words and at first it looked like the opposite had just happened. It is so easy to come to a conclusion in our impatience and flawed perspectives.

Jesus said He is the only way to the Father. We can view this in light of salvation because there is no other way to be saved. But we can also look at this in light of intimacy. How can we draw closer to the Father through Jesus? Well, Jesus is the physical representation of the Father. Jesus said, “If you have seen Me you have seen the Father.” Because Jesus was One with the Father,

everything Jesus did was perfect theology and what the Father would be doing. When we look to the life of Jesus, we can learn more about the Father through the life of Jesus.

***12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. 15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” – John 14:1-21 NASB1995***

### **POINT #1 – Delight in God.**

I remember reading a book on apologetics years ago and one statement really stuck with me. It said, “Disciples did not die for a lie.” One of the reasons you can put your faith in Jesus and trust that He is truly God is how the disciples died. They died proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. No one dies for a lie. You and I are called to die to ourselves and live for God. In order to do this, we need to genuinely love what we are doing and genuinely know and love the God we serve.

When I planted a church, we named it “Tribe Church.” I had a dream of one day opening up a food truck ministry. We were going to call it “Tribal Tacos” and it was going to be a Hawaiian/Mexican Fusion. Not only would it serve to make the church money, but also to be a vessel to the homeless or natural disasters and offer free food. I remember one of those days where I was working as the maintenance man with no cell phone. I woke up from a daze because I realized I had just spent an hour thinking about a new burrito recipe. Notice I wasn’t thinking about a salad recipe. Thinking for an hour of the food I like was no problem because I *delight* in that type of food. You will give passion, energy, and effort towards the things that you delight in. Think of all the Scripture that speaks about delighting in something. Psalm 1:2 (which sets the tone for all 150 Psalms) says, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” Or what about Psalm 37:4 which says, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” In Hebrew the word for “delight” means to be delicate and dainty where the word for desires means petitions. So, God grants our petitions when we live in sensitivity to Him. You do that by enjoying God.

If you want to truly know God not just know about Him you must get serious about delighting in the Lord. If your delight is more for things of the world right now than it is for God then you made need a little bit of a disruption. In the same way that not having my cell phone when I was working a secular job caused me to step into a new level of prayer, you may need to shake things up in your daily routine. Maybe a conference getaway maybe right for you. Maybe you need to

go on a social media fast for a period of time. Do all that you need to do to keep you delight in Him.

**POINT #2 – Determine your value.**

During my time as a church planter, I hopped around a few different day jobs. Each time I started a new job I was excited to be a witness. I was a church planter, so I was also excited to talk to unbelievers and invite them to church. But some of the jobs I had I lost my witness. I was overworked, overtired, and got angry and quit. I also made the mistake of telling people I was a pastor right at the start. When you tell people “I’m a pastor” they hear, “Hi I’m a cannibal would you like to have lunch?” They clean up their language around me and many don’t even talk to me anymore. So, at the last day job I had, I was determined to keep my witness. I remember getting so happy when a co-worker said, “Man I like you, you are always walking around here smiling.” Then to the side I would say, “Yes! Being a good witness.” Or one time I was helping the new HR lady hang up some things in her office and she would spend a half hour saying things like “Um maybe an inch to the left...no, a half an inch...uh no I think I liked it better over here.” At the end she apologized for being so picky and annoying. I told her she shouldn’t apologize for having a spirit of excellence. She thought about it for a second and said, “you are right, thanks so much.” Then I walked out of her office saying, “Yes! Being a good witness, I encouraged someone today.” It wasn’t long before I was having deep Theological conversations with several co-workers. But I had to make up my mind at the beginning. I WAS going to be a good witness. You and I need to make up our mind before hand, “I will cling to the Lord not to this world. I love the charge Joshua gives the Israelites for the Promised land found in Joshua 23:

***5 The Lord your God, He will thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you will possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you. 6 Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, 7 so that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them. 8 But you are to cling to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day. – Joshua 23:5-8 NASB1995***

Some of us struggle letting go of the things of this world. Maybe for you it is not sin or something evil, but it could be something string like fear, anxiety, stress. Those are all things that we can cling to instead of God and when we cling to them, we end up hurting our relationship with God. There is a lesson on how to let go in the Bible. It is mainly the word “consider.” An example would be in 1 Samuel 12:24 which says, “Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for *consider* what great things He has done for you.” I remember years ago battle with not being able to let go of something and after some time in prayer heard the Lord say to my heart, “Have you considered what you will receive from what you hold on to?” In other words, consider the outcome. We obviously want the outcome that helps us grow in our knowledge and intimacy with the Father and that’s why we need to pre-decide and determine the value of only doing the things that please the Lord.

### **POINT #3 – Declutter your heart.**

The Lord has really been working in my life in the area of being able to slow down. You all know I walk fast, talk fast, eat fast, think fast. There have been several moments where I was forced to have to sit still and not do anything for a long period of time and the result was that I wanted to slam my head into the wall for relief. As a kid growing up in Southern California, the schools were on year-round schedule. I would go to school for two months then have a month off all throughout the year instead of a traditional summer break. Both my parents worked full time, so my sister and I were left at home alone to fend for ourselves. Isn't it amazing that back then an 8-year-old could walk home from school, make their own food at home, and entertain themselves? All I had as a kid was a few channels of daytime TV, and outside. Somehow, we had the time of our lives without the internet, streaming apps, or social media. We had cinder blocks and plywood, and we would break out bones jumping them with our bikes. Today I would die if I was forced to stay at home or be outside with none of the technology we have today. There are only three things that can make me slow down or sit down. Those three things are football, the riding mower, and road trips. Especially the riding mower. For three to four hours doing the landscaping here at the church I don't have access to my phone, a TV, or a computer. It is one of the most refreshing things I do. So, I asked the Lord, "why can I mow the lawn or drive for hours without the radio on and be perfectly fine?" The Lord said to me, "Because you are focused on one thing only."

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:13 this *one* thing I do, forgetting what lies behind. Joshua 1:8 says you shall meditate on the Word of God day and night." The secret to decluttering your mind is having a single focus. James tells us a double-minded man is unstable in all they do. You need to put a hypothetical bouncer (AKA Holy Spirit) at the entrance of your mind to allow your mind to stay focused on the one thing.

Let me close with this little funny. When my father-in-law moved in with us a little over a year ago, one thing he had to get used to was how often Nikki and I would say the same thing at the same time in the same way. After being married for 19 years it just comes naturally. Well, a couple weeks ago my father-in-law and I were in the kitchen and said the same thing at the same time. He looked at me and said, "Uh oh are we married now?" Isn't amazing how synced you can get with someone just by living under the same roof. You know it encourages me that the longer I focus on the one thing, the more naturally I will grow in the knowledge of my Lord. It's my encouragement to you...don't just read the Word of God but invite His presence in that time. Don't just sing songs but worship Him.