

“STEPS TO SPIRITUAL SUCCESS”

Big Idea . . . Part 5: Adopt the Master’s PLAN (#3)

John 15:1-8, 11, 16

INTRO: We are unpacking the “Steps to Spiritual Success” found in John 15:1-8, 11, 16. Jesus explains the path to abundant living.

Step 1: Accept the Master’s MISSION to declare the glory of God, resulting in continuous joy for us now and forever (Jn. 15:8, 11)

Step 2: Adopt the Master’s PLAN which has five keys: #1 *The Key to glorifying God is BEARING FRUIT (Jn. 15:8)*. Fruit is common theme in Scripture. Every branch is mandated to bear fruit, which comes in at least three varieties . . . There are varying *degrees* of fruitfulness (NF, SF, MF, MF). Jesus explains three *secrets* to greater fruitfulness . . .

NF (discipline) SF (pruned) MF (abide) MF

TODAY, Key 2: The key to bearing fruit is ABIDING:

I. THE FREQUENCY OF “ABIDE”

In Jn. 15:1-8, 16 – found 11 times, 10 in vv. 1-10. Also in Jn. 8:31 “continue”. John uses 5 more times in 1 John. Paul uses twice – 18 total in NT.

II. THE MEANING OF “ABIDE”

- A. Etymology – “meno” has numerous translations: most common are abide, remain, dwell, continue, endure, to stay closely connected to. .
- B. In our context it is first union (relationship) and then communion (fellowship) – v. 4. Christ-consciousness.
- C. Abiding is Word-based (v. 7) and love-driven (vv. 9-10).

III. THE EVIDENCES OF ABIDING

Bear fruit (vv. 4, 5) – You never hear a fruit, branch, or tree struggle or groan. That’s because it’s the Vine (Trunk) that produces the fruit, through the Holy Spirit, life-giving sap to the branches (same results as in Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-20).

Charles Stanley: “The Vine is Christ, I am the branch. The Holy Spirit is the sap that runs from the vine into the branch. The branch lives, grows, and bears fruit not by struggles and effort but by simply abiding.”

His purpose is not that we do more for Him but that we choose to be more with Him.

Secret #3: If our life bears a lot of fruit, God invites us to abide more deeply.

IV. THE PRACTICES OF ABIDING

- A. Rightly respond to His discipline and pruning work – broken, repentant, receptive (Heb. 12:5-11).
- B. Get in the Word (v. 7) – Matt. 13:18-23 all about His “word” (4 Xs). It is allowing His Word to fill our minds, direct our wills, and transform our affections. It’s possible to be hearing and reading and still not abiding. Reading a book about a person is not the same thing as *knowing* the person who wrote the book (key 5 later).
- C. Connect with Prayer (v. 7b) – Commune with Him. Live Christ-consciously.
- D. Dependence and humility (vv. 4, 5c). He is our source as the Vine. Our strength and sufficiency is never in ourselves but in Him (2 Cor. 3:5; Ph. 4:13, 19).

V. THE PROBLEM IN ABIDING

“Why don’t we abide so we can bear fruit to glorify God and experience true and lasting joy?” Why so few (10%?) bear much fruit? It began in the Garden with Adam and Eve, and persists today: We don’t really believe that God likes us (He is busy, harsh, judgmental, impatient, and reluctant to spend time with us) – so we don’t trust Him and His goodness, because we don’t know Him well enough.

ILL: Bolt in pruning shears . . .

CONC: Pruning shears have a bolt that brings both blades together. Abiding in Him is the screw that holds everything together making us fruitful for Him together.

Key 1 – The key to glorifying God is BEARING FRUIT.

Key 2 – The key to bearing fruit is ABIDING.

Next, Key 3 – the key to abiding is OBEYING. We cannot abide in Him without consistently striving to obey Him. (Jn. 15:10).