



Abiding Tools

A Study in John 15:1-17
September 2004 to August 2020

Introduction

Hudson Taylor was the founder of the China Inland Mission. At his death in 1905, there were 125,000 Chinese Christians in the mission – a fruitful life! But Hudson writes about a time in the early years of his ministry when his life was marked by exhaustion and deadness in his spirit. He belonged to God, but he was not experiencing joy and rest. He said, “I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, read the Word diligently, sought more time for meditation, but all without avail. I strove for faith, but it would not come.”

Finally, he found the solution in a letter from a friend who wrote to him about his “discovery of abiding, not striving nor struggling; trusting Him for present power; resting in the love of an almighty Savior.” Hudson said, “How then to have our faith increased? Only by thinking of all that Jesus is: that He be the subject of our constant thoughts. Not striving to have faith but looking off to the Faithful One.”¹ He said, “I am no longer anxious about anything. My work has never been so difficult, but the weight and strain are all gone.” Hudson had found the secret of **abiding in Jesus instead of relying on his own strength.**

The Psalmist writes,

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (Psalm 91:1)

The Hebrew word for *dwells* is *yāshab* meaning to *linger, stay, remain, abide.*

The Hebrew word for *abide* is *lûn* or *lîn* (loon, leen) meaning to *lodge with, stay, remain.*

Ah! Lingering with God! – like lingering over coffee with a friend and taking time to listen.

Jesus said, **I am the Vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit for apart from Me, you can do nothing.** (John 15:5) Abiding in Jesus means to **lodge, linger, and live** in His life as our own. It means to **rely, rest, and receive** His life. Abiding is a **restful activity.** So, how *do* we abide? I am going to share tools I found in John 15.

The events of John 15 come just after Jesus’ intimate time with his disciples at a Passover feast. Jesus was in His last days and every word counted. In the last verse of Chapter 14, Jesus said, **Arise, let us go from here.** Jesus and His disciples walk, maybe through a vineyard (we don’t know), on their way over the Kidron Valley toward the Garden of Gethsemane at the base of the Mount of Olives just outside the gates of Jerusalem. This is where Jesus would soon be arrested in the night by the Roman cohort.²

The verses from John 15:1-17 are interlaced throughout this study in **red text.** They are Jesus’ words. These verses reveal **tools that I have designated in blue.** These **tools** teach us how to abide in Jesus; when we use them, we bear the **Fruit of Power, Productivity, Purpose, Pleasure and Praise.** Other Scripture verses are noted in **dark green text.** Before you begin this study, I suggest you start by reading and lingering over these verses in your own Bible.

¹ From *Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret* by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor.

² For more detail on Jesus’ last days on earth, please see my paper *A Timeline of Yeshua Messiah’s Life.*

Fruit 1 – Power (energy, passion, motivation)

Tool 1 – Look

Looking produces **Power**.

⁴ Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

- **Recognize** and **remember** that apart from Him, we cannot follow Him and live by His Spirit. This is good news – we cannot, but He can in us!

^{6a} If anyone does not abide in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers.

- **Pray and ask**

We feel dead inside if we do not rely on Him or if we try to work in our own strength. Pray this way: Lord, please give me passion. Motivate me by the power of Your Spirit. Fill me with Your energy for Your purposes.

⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

- Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full. (Jesus, John 16:24)
- If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. (Romans 8:11)
- But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (1 Cor. 15:10)

Fruit 2 – Productivity (results)

Tool 2 – Linger

Lingering produces **Productivity**.

Years ago, I had a peach tree. The luscious peaches did not toil; they just appeared in abundance as a result of the nourishment to the roots that rested in the soil. Bearing fruit is a restful activity.

⁵ I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, He bears much fruit for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- **Focus on the abiding, not the fruit.** Make your priority your relationship to Christ. Set aside time on your calendar for Him just like you do for people or events. Then, linger with Him throughout the day.³
- Jesus said, **when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.** (Matthew 6:3) We are not to focus on the fruit, i.e., to tally our good works; we are rather to let our good works be a subconscious outflow of abiding in Him.

Productivity in Jesus is not what we would typically think of as “productive.” The other day, I felt the Lord directed me to take a nap. I had so much to accomplish that day...I thought. After the nap, I accomplished more than I had expected with much less effort!

A little hymn by Bradford Torrey from 1875 sings this well:

Not so in haste my heart!	He never cometh late.	Until He cometh, rest,	Are soonest at the goal
Have faith in God and wait.	He knoweth what is best.	Nor grudge the hours that roll.	That is not gained with speed.
Although He linger long,	Vex not thyself in vain.	The feet that wait for God	Then hold thee still, my heart,
He never comes too late.	Until He cometh, rest.	Are soonest at the goal.	For I shall wait His lead.

³ For more ideas on how to linger, see Page 2 of my Short Devotional *Clear Vision*

Fruit 3 – Purpose (simplicity, focus)

Tool 3 – Listen, Loosen, Let go

Listening, **Lingering** and **Letting go** produce **Purpose**.

On my peach tree, I had to cut off all the little branches called “suckers” that drew life out of the main purpose of the tree, which was to bear fruit. In the same way, the caretaker of a vineyard gives daily attention to the vines to be sure they are pruned in the best way to bear the best grapes. In the spring, major pruning is needed.

In a 1987 devotional, Kay Arthur writes, “The pruning of the dead branches is laborious to the vinedresser and traumatic to the vine. Often there is a struggle in trying to cut it loose, but the branches are relieved to have the dead wood hauled away and burned. If the dead wood is not removed, the vineyard becomes infected with rot, fungus and insects bringing disease.”

² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes so that it will bear even more fruit.

³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

He prunes us. The light of His Word hauls away the clutter of our spirits. Our focus becomes clearer, and we can rid our minds and schedules of endless, undirected activity. Just as the vines receive a major pruning in the spring, we also experience greater cutting-away times that bring about the fuller purpose for which we were created. (It is important to remember that pruning is not necessarily a result of sin, but it is an avenue whereby the Lord redirects or deepens our lives.)

Let us allow Father God to prune us by:

- **Listening**. He will show us where we are putting energy in wrong places.
- **Loosening**. He will help us loosen our hold on what we think we should do as we remain willing and open to hear His voice.
- **Letting go**. As we loosen our hold on our own will, we can let go of everything that is not part of His plan. Sometimes the good is not the best. We can receive His best.

Fruit 4 – Pleasure (to God, others, and me)

Tool 4 – Love

Loving produces **Pleasure**.

There is nothing like the pleasurable taste of carefully nurtured, homegrown, pesticide-free fruit. I cannot get strawberries like mine anywhere. Their shape, color, smell, and taste delight the senses!

In the same way, as our roots have abided in and relied on the soil of His love, His nutrients have supplied us with **power** to be **productive** and fulfill our **purpose** of bearing fruit. The well-tended, Son-ripened fruit is a **pleasure** to God, to others, and to me.

A Pleasure to God (My life delights and glorifies God.)

⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit.

- The Lord your God in the midst of you is a Mighty Warrior; He will save. He will delight in you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with joyful singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

The fruit that results from abiding in Jesus makes Him look good, because it draws others into this same abiding, restful, intimate relationship with God. We do not muster it; it flows from Him.

- But thanks be to God Who always leads us in triumph in Christ and manifests through us **the sweet aroma** of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are **a fragrance of Christ** to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. (2 Corinthians 2:14-16)

The word *perfect* in the New Testament often means *complete*. Jesus makes us complete. We glorify Him in our imperfections as well as when we are at the top of our game. We glorify God by apologizing to a co-worker. We break down walls by asking for forgiveness. As we abide, He is magnified. Many years ago, I was going through a difficult time at work. I felt shame for representing the Lord so poorly with my downcast countenance. I found out later that just the fact that I was holding on was a blessing and encouragement to others. My life was a sweet aroma.

A Pleasure to others (His love overflows.)

⁹ **Just as the Father has loved Me, I have loved you; abide in My love.**

Jesus had already told His disciples at the Passover meal, **A new commandment I give to you that you love one another even as I have loved you. By this all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.** (John 13:34) He demonstrated this love by washing their feet.

The Apostle John equated God with love – **God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**” (1 John 4:6) If you are abiding in God, you are abiding in love. If you are not abiding in love for your fellow man, you are not abiding in God.

¹⁰ **If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.**

So, do I need a full knowledge of His commandments to abide in love for others? Jesus answers this question in Verse 12.

¹² **This is My commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you.**

Paul quoted from Leviticus 19:18 when he said, **The whole Law is fulfilled in one word in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** (Galatians 5:14) And Paul also said, **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.** (Romans 13:10)

So, if we go back to verse 10 and read it in the light of verse 12, we can paraphrase it this way:
If you keep my commandment of love, I promise that you will abide in My love.
What a beautiful promise!

A Pleasure to me (I experience deep joy.)

¹¹ **These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be made full.**

There are seasons in our lives in which we do not experience outward happiness due to great trial or grief. But the joy of the Lord is like a constant undercurrent, a *knowing* that He is with you.

In 2002, Mike, a friend, received sudden news that he would die in three months due to brain cancer. He began to spend 15 minutes a day singing to the Lord. His life was filled with a joy greater than he had ever experienced. He began to speak about God’s love with boldness and was called to speak at many events. As He abided in praise, he was flooded with joy. Mike is still alive!

At 21 years of age, Jackie Pullinger took God’s love into Hong Kong’s infamous Walled City, a haven of filth and crime. When she first stepped into the human excrement that covered the streets, she experienced the unexplainable joy of being in the center of His will in reaching these addicts with His love. Joy is the fruit of lives that abide. (The Walled City no longer exists!)

Fruit 5 – Praise (lifted hands and hearts)

Tool 5 – Lift

Lifting our hearts in Praise increases our joy!

After walking through these verses in John 15:1-17, gravity cannot keep our hands from lifting to the sky in praise! There is no resistance to our worship!

He has called us friends!

^{15b} I have called you friends for all things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

He has chosen us to bear eternal fruit!

¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My Name, He may give to you.

We worship and adore You, Messiah Jesus, our Savior and the Lover of our souls!

Summary

Soon after the events of John 15, Jesus will give His life to procure and secure our salvation and all His promises to us. In a world that grows darker with hate at the mention of Jesus' Name, we need to abide more than ever and listen intently to His admonitions in John 15:18 through John 16:33. We need to saturate ourselves in Jesus' prayer to the Father in John 17.

So, let's abide. Let's:

- Look to Him, and let His power flow through us into this world;
- Linger long in His presence and in His word, so we are productive for His glory;
- Listen to Him, loosen ourselves from our own agendas, and let go, fulfilling His purpose;
- Allow Him to love through us, bringing pleasure to Him, others and ourselves; and
- Lift our hearts and hands to Him, letting His praise fill us with joy!

We praise the One whose words abide in us as we abide in Him in delightful union now and forevermore! So let us sing...

Come and Drink (words and music by Nathan Partain)

Leave everything you know,
the way that it should go.
Give all your control, ease your will,
and I will lead.
Leave your anxious thoughts,
the answer you can't reach.
Leave what you will never understand,
and come to Me.

Chorus

You're so deep in My love
if you'd only believe,
After all that I've done,
all the wonders you've seen.
And I'll give so much more,
never end the increase,
So, will you just stop, will you rest awhile
And be with Me.

Leave your self-contempt,
your inability.
Don't look at yourself, lift your eyes
and look at Me.
Let your reason go,
your defenses leave.
Let your heart lay bare before Me only to receive.

Chorus... You're so deep in My love

Come down to the waters, come and drink.
Leave your work and effort, come and drink.
Overflowing favor, come and drink.
I am yours forever, come and drink.
Be with Me!
Be with Me!
Be with Me!
Be with Me!