
ONE FROM THE HEART

Abiding Union

What is the meaning of this life?

Humans have been trying to answer this question since the beginning of time, it seems to have impacted the way we live more recently.

False Meanings

- + Plato: attaining the highest form of knowledge
- + Aristotle: Happiness, a good life and successful living
- + Epicurean: Freedom from fear and freedom from pain
- + Nihilism: there is no objective meaning to life
- + Postmodernism: deconstruct all structures of power
- + The Australian Dream: home ownership and stability
- + Millennials: belonging to something that impacts the world

Gospel of John

John's Gospel stands alone and is unlike the synoptic gospels, which follow more of a chronological story of Jesus. Rather, John includes messages that match Matthew, Mark and Luke, but they are spoken of in a different light - i.e. instead of many healings, John only mentions explicitly three physical healings. Instead we have a well thought out masterpiece of a book.

Seven Signs

1. Turning Water Into Wine (John 2:1-12)
2. Healing the Nobleman's Son (John 4:46-54)
3. Healing the Man at the Pool (John 5:1-11)
4. Feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-15)
5. Walking on Water (John 6:16-21)
6. Healing a Man Born Blind (John 9:1-12)
7. Resurrecting Lazarus (John 11)

Seven "I AM" Statements

1. I am the Bread of Life (John 6:35-48)
2. I am the Light of the World (John 8:12; 9:5)
3. I am the Door (John 10:9)
4. I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-14)

5. I am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25)
6. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)
7. I am the True Vine (John 15:1-5)

Two 'Books'

1. Book of Signs (Chapters 1-12)
2. Book of Glory (13-21)

John 15

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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.

(John 15:1-10 ESV)

Vine

Vines and vineyards were a common in agricultural societies. Throughout the Old Testament, more than merely a means of yield and income, vines and vineyards are used to describe God's chosen people, Israel particularly through the prophetic literature. (Isaiah 5:7, Ezekiel 17:6, Jeremiah 2:21)

Jesus is the source of our salvation, and every good thing that comes from us.

Jesus is the True Vine, and the impression here, is that this vine is positive and unlike others, this vine will allow for flourishing and abundance.

Gardener

The Father cares because this gardener sees “every branch”. There is not a single branch that this gardener misses. The gardener's job is to prune and maintain the vine and branches.

The Greek word for “cuts off” (NIV) or “takes away” (ESV) is ‘airo’ which means to raise up, to elevate or to lift up, to bear or carry. It’s less about being cut off forever, and instead being lifted up, off the ground, and given a space to be cleaned and aired to allow for growth.

The gardener prunes the fruitful. If you haven’t yet been pruned, you are not yet bearing fruit.

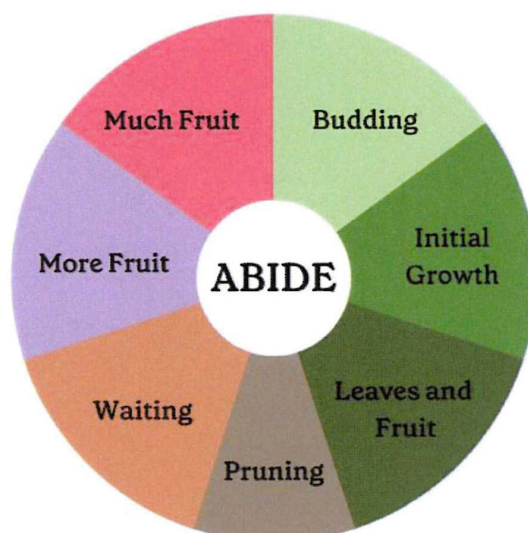
Branches

If you are a follower of Jesus, you are a branch. Branches should desire pruning and correction as a sign of Sonship and of the gardener's love.

“Because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” Hebrews 12:6

Lifecycle of Branches

**YOU ARE THE
BRANCHES**



Abiding

Often, we think that only when we bear fruit we are abiding in God. But no, every stage is abiding. Every stage is submitting our lives to the gardener, who knows best.

“What do I have to DO to abide?” is perhaps the wrong question. If you have called upon God, you are a branch! It’s not a matter of doing, but of being. So how, how do you abide? Being with God, being united to Him is abiding.

Union

John Murray, the Scottish Theologian said, “Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation”. From the very beginning when we put our trust in Jesus, until the very end when we are taking our last breath, all of us are called into a mysterious union with God through the power of His Spirit. The glory of God, through an abiding union, that’s the meaning of life.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the meaning of life? Do you see any of the ‘false meanings’ in the way you live?
2. As these are some of Jesus' last words to His disciples, why do you think this matter of fruitfulness and abiding in Christ were so important to Him?
3. Have you ever thought of God the Father as a graceful gardener?
4. What ‘stage’ of growth as a branch are you at the moment (i.e. Budding, Initial Growth, Leaves and Fruit, Pruning, Waiting, More Fruit or Much Fruit)?
5. How do we practically measure the fruitfulness of our lives?
6. John Murray, the Scottish Theologian said, “Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation”. Do you agree? Why? Why not? (Don’t be intimidated by his credentials!).
7. Pray for an abiding union to be central to all disciples of Jesus.