

## **2007 How to Stay Focused in Christ**

### **JOHN 15:1-15**

I just finished reading a book called Double Bind.  
It deals with the contradictory demands on men today.  
The conflict between being a tough provider, yet a tender lover.

It talks about how we men get distracted from doing what is best  
By doing what is good.  
Jesus faced this as well.  
In the Lenten series just three weeks ago Peter had been distracting Jesus.  
From going up to Jerusalem to die.  
Peter said: **No way Lord. Surely you will not die.**  
Same words Satan used in Genesis with EVE. Surely you will not die.  
Jesus said: **“Get behind me, Satan, you are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” Matthew 16:23**

Jesus also said:  
**A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10**

Satan’s job is to rob, steal our joy, kill our peace, and  
Destroy our wellbeing, AND  
to distract us from our true purpose for being here on earth.  
And what is our purpose for being here?  
**To glorify God and enjoy him forever.**  
**(Westminster Catechism.)**

Many people don’t have that joy,  
We’re like Adam and Eve.  
When they sinned that space God had created for himself  
in Adam and Eve, was now empty.  
Satan came and stole purpose and peace from them.  
And they began to hide in the darkness.  
Fear took over and they hid their faces from God.  
Suddenly there was an emptiness inside.  
A great crack in their moral mechanism.  
The front end of our world is out of line.  
We don’t know how to fix it ourselves.

**A lady was upset about the chuck holes that appeared in her street**  
When the spring thaw came. The potholes got bigger and bigger.  
She called the city told them about her street.  
The next day she was so pleased, as she left for work,  
to see that the street crew had arrived.  
And when she came home she saw what they had done.  
The had put up a sign that said: “Rough road.”

God isn't interested in putting up warning signs  
About this great hole in our hearts.  
He interested in filling them.

Too many of us believe the phrase that Burt Reynolds coined  
"Life is hard—and then you die."  
But we don't have to live that way.

**Jesus said: I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**

Or

**have it more abundantly. John 10:10**

The word **abundant** in this context means living life to the fullest.

Abundant life is fulfilled when we discover the true purpose for what we have been  
designed and stay focused on it.

Today I want us to look at

Jesus' four part formula in John 15:1-15

On how to stay focused and free.

**First of all TO STAY FOCUSED WE MUST:**

**I. ABIDE:**

**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. John 15:4-5**

In 5 verses Jesus used the word abide 8 times.

**Abide** means: "To live in—as in a house, to dwell in- as in a residence. A place of  
sustenance and refuge."

I remember walking home from school in Olivet across our neighbor's pasture.

Down and up the hills and finally arriving at home.

I loved to do that on Monday.

Because when we came into the house.

Mom had been baking bread.

And we could smell the loaves of bread.

And we knew we were home

Where we could have some of that sustenance..

Abide--means a place of sustenance and refuge. Home

You can't stay focused apart from Abiding in Jesus.

The branch cannot bear fruit apart from the vine.

It has to stay focus or attached.

**Shortly after joining the Navy, the new recruit asked his officer  
for a pass so he could attend a wedding.**

The officer gave him the pass, but informed the young man  
he would have to be back by 7 p.m. Sunday.

"You don't understand, sir," said the recruit. "I'm in the wedding."

"No, the officer said: "you don't understand, you're in the Navy!"

What we have to realize is that we are in the family of God. Jump to vs 19

**Though we are in the world we are not of the world. John 15:19**

WE MUST STAY FOCUSED AND ABIDE.

**Yogi Berra, the catcher for the New York Yankees, loved to keep up a ceaseless** chatter that intended to pep his teammates and distract the other teams batters. In the World Series they were playing the Milwaukee Braves and Hank Aaron was their chief power hitter. As Hank Aaron came to the plate, Yogi tried to distract him by saying, "Henry, you're holding the bat wrong. You're supposed to hold it so you can read the trademark." Aaron didn't say anything, but hit the next pitch out into the left-field bleachers. After rounding the bases and tagging up at home plate, Aaron looked at Yogi Berra and said, "I didn't come up here to read."

Jesus came to give us a new focus in life.  
Even when the world seeks to pull you off base,  
Even when a rocky marriage seeks to upset and unsettle you,  
Even when your job or your kids seem out of sync.  
Even when temptation seems especially strong.

We can stay on course

**If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. This is to my Father glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:7-8**

Because Jesus gives us the power we need.

Because when all you have left is God... we discover that God is enough.

## **TO STAY FOCUSED WE MUST**

### **I. ABIDE:**

You say: "How do you keep abiding?"

WELL TO ABIDE WE MUST

### **II. OBEY.**

**John 15:10 RSV 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.**

The key for abiding is obeying.

**OBEDIENCE** – is keeping God's commandments (we reviewed all ten of them last fall.)

**OBEDIENCE--** is the act of obeying orders from another.

This differs from compliance..

**COMPLIANCE**—is action or behavior influenced by peers.

That differs from conformity.

**COMFORMITY**—is action or behavior intended to match the majority.

**Romans 12:2 Do no be confrom to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**

**Obedience is submission to authority.**

**Comedian Patsy Clairmont got on an airplane and found herself seated next to a young man** She said: “hi” He said: “Ma’am”, Then she thought. ‘Either he thinks I’m ancient, or he’s from the South where they still teach manners, or he’s in the service.’ So I ask, “are you in the service?” “Yes, Ma’am, I am.” “What branch?” “Marines.” “Where are you coming from?” “Operation Desert Storm, Ma’am.” “No kidding? Desert Storm! How long were you there?”, He said: “A year and a half. I’m on my way home. My family will be at the airport.” Patsy said: I imagine while you were in the Middle East, you thought a lot about returning to your family and home. He said: “Oh, no, Ma’am, we were taught never to think of what might never be, but to be fully available right where we were.” Focus on the Family, July, 1993, p. 5

The key to abiding is obeying right where you are today.

**Jesus said: His mission was to do the will of his heavenly Father. Luke 2:49**

Obeying the father brought Jesus joy.

This is a rare sight today.

A woman came up to our speaker at the Community Prayer Breakfast and said: I live by saying: “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it”. But our speaker said that not true.

**God said it. That settles it. Whether you believe it or not.**

**Chuck Swindoll in his book Season of Life said:**

There is a strange species of Christian running loose today....

Who rewrite the Bible to accommodate their lifestyle, (and I might add their giving.)

We’ve all met them. From the skin out they have all the appearance of your basic believer, but down inside, operation rationalization transpires daily.

They are experts at rephrasing or explaining away the painful truth of the text.

For them two things occur.

1. All desire (no matter how wrong) are fulfilled.
2. All guilt (no matter how justified) is erased.

That way everybody can do his own thing and nobody has any reason to question anybody’s action.

I hear all the excuses for disobedience.

1. “God wants me to be happy. I can’t stay married to her. She’s just not supportive. God wants me to have someone who will support me in my Christian life.”
2. “Were living together because we can’t afford to get married on our income.”
3. “I would have paid my pledge, but things came up!”
4. “I admit I should have been more honest on my tax return, but hey, if I can save a little money, that is more for God, right?”

Wrong.

Convenient obedience is not really obedience at all.

To stay focused we must

**I. ABIDE,**

**To abide we must**

**II. OBEY,**

**To Obey we must**

### III. LOVE

**John 15:12-13 This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**

This is agape love.  
That which is unconditional, accepting, and available.  
Not the love the world gives.

#### **Psychologist Rodney Cooper said:**

When people ask me “How can I start being a loving person?  
I give them the same answer I give those who start jogging.  
Start slow---and then get slower.  
The first week the goal of a jogger is to just keep running.  
Too man men and women.  
Buy new shoes  
A fancy running suit,  
And then sprint out the door,  
Chugging as hard as they can for about three blocks.  
And then their stomach begins to ache,  
Their legs cramp up,  
And their lungs burn,  
They wind up hitchhiking home, exhausted and gasping.  
“I ll never do that again.”  
That is because their body used more oxygen then it took in ,  
That is called anaerobia (without oxygen).

Too many of us love that way too.  
We love with great fervor and self-sacrifice,  
Giving 100 percent,  
But without the resources to make it last a lifetime.  
We find ourselves in pain, gasping and cramped saying.  
I'll never do that again.

Love is like running.  
Our love output must be matched by our intake.  
Running requires oxygen.  
Loves requires God’s word, his consolation, his presence.  
To stay focused we must love and to love we must stay in relationship with God..

I know that some of you are facing some hard decision.  
But stay in God and he will keep you in love.

**To abide we must obey,  
To obey we must love,  
To Love we must**

### IV. KNOW JESUS.

**John 15:14-15**

**You are my friend if you do what I command you. No longer I call you servants, for the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.**

Jesus calls us his friends.  
 To be friends we have to know somebody.  
 Somebody we can count on.  
 Share our deepest thought.  
 Be accepted.  
 To like me, in spite of myself.

To know is to spend time with someone.  
 To know is to talk with someone.  
 To know is to be transparent with someone.  
 Do we have a heart that wants to know God?

**It was Palm Sunday morning but 5-year-old Johnny had to stay home because of his sore throat.** When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm branches. Johnny asked them what they were for. "People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by," his father told him. Johnny said: "Well, wouldn't you know it, the one Sunday I don't go and He shows up."

Are you spending time with God?  
 Talking with him daily about your personal life?  
 Are you open and transparent about your temptations and trials?  
 Or are we just too busy to spend time with God.  
 The world is, and we live with a biblically illiterate society.

**Jay Leno, proved it in his "man-on-the-street" interview in which he asked two college age women about the Bible.** He asked the first "Can you name one of the Ten Commandments?" she replied, "Freedom of speech?" Mr. Leno said to the other, "Complete this sentence: Let him who is without sin..." Her response was, "have a good time?" Then Jay Leno then turned to a young man and asked, "Who, according to the Bible, was eaten by a whale?" The confident answer was, "Pinocchio."

Is it any wonder why Christianity is in trouble in our world.

**Chuck Swindoll listed the following six reasons**

why it is important to pursue knowledge of the Scriptures:

1. Knowledge gives substance to faith.
2. Knowledge stabilizes us during times of testing.
3. Knowledge enables us to handle the Word of God accurately.
4. Knowledge equips us to detect and confront error.
5. Knowledge makes us confident and consistent in our walk with God.
6. Knowledge filters out our fears and superstitions.

Kindred Spirit, Vol. 22, No. 1, Spring, 1998, p. 8

God can handle whatever you throw at him.  
 He will not reject you because you are his son and daughters.

When we are open to God we can be open to one another.

**A. W. Tozer says that people who are crucified with Christ have three distinct marks:**

1. They are facing only one direction.
2. They can never turn back.
3. They no longer have plans of their own.

*Holy Sweat*, Tim Hansel, 1987, Word Books Publisher, p. 187

When we know Christ and his love for us.

We have nothing to prove,

Nothing to lose,

Nothing to hide.

And God will give us the power to handle all the world throws at us.

**I want to ask you right now, to make a decision to turn your life over to Christ.**

**To renew your commitment to totally surrender to him!**

**Only then will we be able to ABIDE, OBEY, LOVE, AND KNOW CHRIST.**

**Lord, forgive us when we were distracted by the world. Lift us up when we were overwhelmed by our own insignificance. Strengthen us when temptation is heavy upon us and allow us always to stay rooted in your love as we obey your word and seek to know Christ more each day. I pray in Jesus name. Amen.**