WEEK 5

Abiding in Christ: The Source of Daily Faithfulness

Doctrinal Anchor: See *Becoming a Disciple*, Chapter 4 (Union with Christ)

Key Scriptures

John 15:1–11
Galatians 2:20
Colossians 2:6–7
Philippians 2:12–13

Teaching: Following Is Sustained by Connection, Not Self-Effort

By this point, the call to follow Christ, the purpose of living for His glory, the cost of surrender, and the perspective of eternity have all been established. Each of these is essential, yet they raise a necessary question: how is this life actually sustained over time? If following Christ requires ongoing obedience, reordered priorities, and a willingness to surrender, what enables a person to continue in that direction consistently? Scripture answers this not by pointing first to increased effort, but by directing attention to relationship.

Jesus makes this clear in John 15, where He says, “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” (John 15:5). The image is deliberate and unmistakable. A branch does not produce fruit through independent effort, but through its connection to the vine. Its life, its capacity, and its fruitfulness are all dependent on that relationship. The emphasis is not on what the branch does apart from the vine, but on whether it remains connected to it.

When Jesus spoke these words, those listening would have understood the dependence implied in the image. A branch that is separated from the vine does not struggle to produce fruit; it ceases to have life. The issue is not lack of effort, but lack of connection. In the same way, the life of a believer is not sustained by attempting to produce obedience apart from Christ, but by remaining in Him. The call to abide is therefore not secondary to following; it is essential to it.

That meaning remains unchanged. While the outward expression of daily life differs from the first-century context, the nature of dependence has not been altered. To abide in Christ now is to remain consciously and consistently dependent on Him through His Word, through prayer, and through a posture of ongoing responsiveness. It is not a passive state, but an active relationship in which the believer remains attentive to His voice and aligned with His direction.

This introduces an important doctrinal clarity. The Christian life is not sustained by the same means through which it is often attempted. Many begin with a clear sense of dependence on Christ, yet gradually shift toward self-directed effort as they seek to grow. Scripture does not support this shift. Paul writes, “Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6). The same dependence that marked the beginning of faith is to mark its continuation. Growth is not achieved by moving beyond dependence, but by deepening it.

This dependence on Christ is not abstract. It is made real through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit unites the believer to Christ and sustains that connection in daily life. As the believer engages with God’s Word and responds in obedience, the Spirit produces both awareness and strength. He brings conviction where there is misalignment, directs the heart toward what is true, and enables the believer to remain in Christ rather than acting independently. Abiding, therefore, is not sustained by effort alone, but by the ongoing work of the Spirit within.

This is further clarified in Galatians 2:20, where Paul writes, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” This is not merely a statement about past conversion, but about present reality. The life now lived is not self-originating, but is lived “by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” The believer’s life is sustained through ongoing reliance on Christ, not through independent strength.

At the same time, this dependence does not remove responsibility. Scripture consistently holds together the call to active obedience and the reality of God’s enabling. Paul writes, “So then, my beloved… work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), immediately followed by the reason this is possible: “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). The believer acts, but not independently. Obedience is real, but it is empowered by God’s work within.

In the first-century church, this understanding would have shaped how believers approached both growth and struggle. They did not view obedience as something achieved through determination alone, nor did they treat dependence as passive inactivity. Instead, they understood that remaining in Christ was the source of both direction and strength. Their lives were marked by engagement, but that engagement was rooted in relationship.

That same understanding is necessary today. Without it, the call to follow Christ can gradually become burdensome, and the cost of discipleship can begin to feel unsustainable. When obedience is pursued apart from abiding, it becomes either inconsistent or exhausting. Over time, this leads either to discouragement or to a form of outward compliance that lacks genuine transformation.

Abiding in Christ addresses this directly. It shifts the focus from managing behavior to maintaining connection. As Jesus says, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit from itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me” (John 15:4). The issue is not whether fruit is desired, but whether the source of that fruit is rightly understood. When the connection is maintained, fruit is the natural result.

This does not mean that effort is removed from the Christian life. It means that effort is rightly directed. Instead of striving to produce change independently, the believer gives attention to remaining in Christ—through engaging His Word, responding to conviction, and maintaining a posture of dependence. From that relationship, obedience flows. Over time, this produces not only outward change, but inward transformation that reflects the character of Christ.

The question, then, is not simply whether a person is attempting to follow Christ, but whether they are doing so in a way that reflects dependence on Him. This is revealed not only in moments of success, but in how one responds to difficulty, failure, and ongoing struggle. Where there is a pattern of returning to Christ, seeking His direction, and relying on His strength, there is evidence of abiding. Where there is a pattern of self-reliance or disengagement, there is a need to return to that relationship.

Scripture Focus (For the Week)

John 15:1–11
Galatians 2:19–21
Colossians 2:6–7
Philippians 2:12–13

Reflection Questions

1. When you think about your daily pursuit of obedience, do you tend to rely more on personal effort or on conscious dependence on Christ?
2. What does it look like, in practical terms, for you to "abide" in Christ throughout your day?
3. When Jesus first spoke about abiding, His listeners understood the necessity of remaining connected. As you consider that context, what does that same dependence require of you now?
4. Where do you recognize patterns of self-reliance in your spiritual life, and how have they affected your consistency?
5. What is one specific way you can give greater attention this week to remaining in Christ rather than acting independently of Him?

Weekly Practice

This week, shift your focus from trying to manage outcomes to intentionally maintaining connection with Christ. Set aside consistent time each day to engage His Word and respond to Him with awareness and dependence, allowing your actions to flow from that relationship.

Prayer

Lord,

You have not called me to follow You in my own strength, but to remain in You. Help me to understand what it means to abide in You in the reality of my daily life. Show me where I have been relying on myself and where I have become disconnected in practice, even if not in belief. Teach me to return to You consistently and to depend on You for both direction and strength. Let my life reflect not only effort, but true connection with You.
Amen.

Edwards' Resolutions (For This Week)

Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die. *(Resolution 17)*

Resolved, to inquire every night, as I am going to bed, wherein I have been negligent.
(Resolution 37)

Resolved, never to do anything out of revenge. *(Resolution 14)*

WEEK 5 — DAILY STUDY PAGES

Abiding in Christ: The Source of Daily Faithfulness

Monday

Scripture Reading:
John 15:1–5

What does Jesus say about the relationship between the vine and the branches?

What does this passage reveal about your dependence on Christ?

Where do you see yourself trying to produce spiritual fruit apart from abiding in Him?

One step of response today (how will you remain aware of Him?):

Prayer:

Tuesday

Scripture Reading:
John 15:6–11

What does Jesus say about abiding and obedience in this passage?

How are abiding and obedience connected according to Jesus?

Where have you been trying to obey without first remaining in Him?

One step of response today:

Prayer:

Wednesday

Scripture Reading:
Galatians 2:19–21

What does Paul say about his life now that he is in Christ?

What does it mean that "Christ lives in me"?

Where do you still tend to live as if everything depends on you?

One step of response today:

Prayer:

Thursday

Scripture Reading:
Colossians 2:6–7

What does it mean to "walk in Him" in the same way you received Him?

What does this passage teach about how spiritual growth happens?

Where have you shifted from dependence to self-effort in your growth?

One step of response today:

Prayer:

Friday

Scripture Reading:
Philippians 2:12–13

What does this passage say about your responsibility and God's work?

How do these verses correct either passivity or self-reliance?

Looking back over this week, what has God shown you about abiding in Christ?

What will you carry forward from this week?

Prayer: