

Staying Connected with Jesus

Simple Prayers for an Abiding Relationship

By Ginny Kisling

Recently I met with a pastor who shared that he had missed his customary morning prayer time with the Lord due to an unforeseen schedule conflict. He went on to tell me that this occurrence led him to question what it might be like for the people in his church when they, too, miss regular times of prayer. Would they struggle with feeling out of sync and slightly “off” for the day?

As we mulled this over, we explored what the Lord might have to say. Must we experience a “disconnect” with ourselves or a sense of things not being quite right just because we occasionally miss our usual prayer appointment with the Lord? How can we remain connected all the time?

One Formula that Works

Whether or not we miss a set appointment with the Lord on any given day does not change the fact that Jesus came to live among us and to form a unique relationship with us. John 1:14 tells us, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” God did not simply send us a manual to live by. He sent us the living text in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. By the very nature of His relationship with us, He has set the stage so that you and I can remain vitally connected to Him.

Relying on formulas can sometimes get us in trouble, but here is a promise from God’s Word that is simple, straightforward,

and works without fail: If we abide in Christ, He abides in us (John 15:4, NASB). The Greek meaning for the word “abide” is to remain, to continue, to stay. Abiding has to do with the concept of *being* rather than *doing*, which is not an easy accomplishment for overscheduled Americans or task-driven Type-A personalities.

Let’s look a little more closely at what it means to abide:

Definitions of “abide”:

- To wait for, await
- To endure without yielding, withstand
- To bear patiently, endure
- To remain in one place

Synonyms (strict and slang) for “abide”:

- To stay, dwell, remain
- To hang around, stick around
- Tarry

In Silicon Valley where I live, “hanging out,” “sticking around,” or “tarrying” without an agenda is almost unheard of. If one wants to survive and get ahead, multi-tasking is the name of the game in most sectors of the population. In fact, “tarrying without an agenda” is another name for “loitering,” and violators may be prosecuted to the full extent of the law!

A Relationship Renewed in Maui

Abiding is about being in relationship with Christ, and the relationship is more important than the things we do or don’t do. This truth was driven home to me earlier in my Christian life when the Lord took my family to live in Maui for 19 months. We had just come off an intensive time of ministry where our lives had been filled with doing many good things for the Lord, but I was on the verge of serious burnout from the intensity and non-stop ministry commitments.

When I first arrived in Maui, I immediately put into motion plans for getting involved in the work of the Lord. But something was very wrong. I began to enter a season of spiritual dryness such as I had never known before. It was as if I'd arrived in the wilderness instead of the place of peace and rest I associated with Maui. Accompanying this was a complete lack of energy that soon forced me to withdraw from everything I had signed up for.

This was a harsh adjustment for me, and only when the swirl of activity ceased did I begin to understand that this dry season had its particular purpose and that *where I was* would be vital to *where I was going*.

A shocking first revelation was that God, in removing me from ministry for a season, was removing *from* me a false sense of security—one based on ministry accomplishments. He hadn't at all minded that I drew great satisfaction from my teaching, writing, and various other gifts and abilities, but He drew the line at seeing the shift to my trusting in these things as the source of my self-worth. He wanted to be the focal point, the centerpiece of my life. Thus He began to firmly root my security in Him.

I settled into life on Maui which, by most peoples' standards, was enviable. I managed a small resort with the ocean right outside our door, and spending my days caring for the lovely grounds provided a much-needed tonic for my weary body, soul, and spirit. Long, leisurely walks on the beach and meeting people from around the world worked miracles of rejuvenation.

Without the external demands of ministry, I fell into a new rhythm with the Lord that was filled with a joyful flow of continuous communication. As long as I *abided* with Jesus and kept my eyes fixed on Him, my life on Maui was nurturing and healing. A new level of intimacy was developing with my Lord.

Even so, something happened regularly that was perplexing to

me. At some point in my daily communications with the Lord, He would ask, "Am I enough?" Without hesitation I would reply, "Yes, Lord, You are enough." This exchange became a daily ritual for us. Needless to say, I was puzzled.

One day, many months into my stay on Maui and when I was feeling stronger and more spiritually revived, I asked the Lord, "Why do You continue to ask, 'Am I enough?' Haven't I answered that question to your satisfaction?"

Surprisingly, He answered with yet another set of questions that revealed His longing for me to understand what it actually means that He is with me at every turn, in every situation in life.

"Ginny," I heard, "am I enough for you if I do not return to you any of your former gifts, talents, and abilities? Am I enough for you if I do not return you home?"

"Am I enough," He continued, "if I do not restore your friendships or your ministry—or your marriage?"

This time there was only silence on my part. I had no quick answer, but I finally understood the depth and meaning of His questions. I was to look deep within and ask myself, "Do I really believe He is sufficient for all my needs? He calls Himself the "I AM." What does that mean to me?"

I knew He hoped my answer would be, "Lord, You are whatever I need at any point in my life, and I long to know and stay connected to You at a deep heart level. I want to experience more and more of how *enough* You are." And that would eventually be how I answered Him.

Do-Able Prayers for Abiding

During my times of meditation and contemplation on Maui, I learned to offer up very simple *do-able* prayers that helped keep me in the place of *abiding*. Frequent reading of His Word

restored a “moisture” to my life, keeping me refreshed and encouraged. We are not to be peddlers of God’s Word, but people of sincerity who are commissioned by Him. And when we have found our place of *abiding* with Christ, the fragrance of Christ is spread by us, for we are to God the aroma of Christ and we carry the fragrance of life (2 Cor. 2:14–17).

Here are some do-able prayers that I offered up frequently during my stay on Maui.

- Lord, have mercy on me (Ps. 86:3).
- Lord, impart Your thoughts to me (1 Cor. 2:10, Isa. 55:8).
- Lord, help me to take every thought captive to You (2 Cor. 10:5).
- Lord, test and examine my ways (Lam. 3:40, Jer. 17:10).
- Lord, make my desires Your desires (Ps. 37:4).
- Lord, help me to be faithful in small things (Luke 16:10).
- Lord, show me which way I should turn today (Isa. 30:21).
- Lord, keep me in Your dwelling place (Ps. 84:1).
- Lord, keep me on track today (Phil. 3:12–16).
- Lord, give me Your mind (1 Cor. 2:16).
- Lord, help me to set my mind on things above (Col. 3:2).
- Lord, help my speech to be gracious (Col. 4:6).
- Lord, keep me in Your shelter and give me Your rest (Ps. 91:1).
- Lord, more of You and less of me (John 3:30).

Jesus, Our Ultimate Model

Jesus is our ultimate model for *abiding*. He was always in the place of abiding with His Father when He was on earth. At one point, when His anxious parents were looking for Him, He asked, “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business” (Luke 2:49)? Truly, one can only be about God’s business if they are in a place of *abiding*.

At a recent Pastors' Prayer Breakfast we broke into small groups to pray for one another. As I was praying for one of the pastors, the Lord brought to my mind's eye an image of the Pool of Bethesda. You may recall this pool from John 5 and how it was renowned for its curative powers. As I continued to gaze into this mental image in prayer, I could see the pool located right next to the left arm of this pastor. In fact, the pastor was as close to the pool as he could possibly be without jumping right in. As I allowed the Lord to increase my understanding of this image, I could see the Holy Spirit busily stirring the waters and welcoming the pastor in. I saw that the pastor's right side was conducting his ministry work uninterrupted while at the same time his left side, which was barely touching the water, was receiving all the refreshment and benefit needed. There was no need for him to stop what he was doing for this to happen.

We can see in this vision a great present day application for ourselves because of the intercession of Jesus. Did you know that He is interceding for us all the time? Yesterday, today and tomorrow? The prophet Isaiah referred to the Messiah's intercession in Isaiah 53:12 and He continues in intercession for each of us individually stirring up the waters of our faith. He is speaking into the Father's ear on our behalf around the clock. Yes, even now (Heb. 7:24–25, Rom. 8:34)!

Step into the Stirring Waters

Just as the Holy Spirit was engaged in rousing the curative powers in Bethesda's waters, Jesus is busy stirring up the waters of faith and life for us with His continuous intercession. And even as we go about our day-to-day responsibilities, we can enter into that miraculous place of *abiding* and receive the full benefits of the water of life He is moving for us right where we are!

Abiding in Christ is not about performance or what we can do for Him; it is about a relationship that we engage in on an

ongoing basis. We can be in relationship with Jesus at all times, even in the hectic pace of a given day. Jesus is interceding for us 24/7, stirring up the waters of life and faith for us to step into in any given moment. When we *abide* in Christ, His fragrance emanates from our life to those around us.

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