

**PRAYER THAT ABIDES**  
**Series: "Christ in the School of Prayer"**  
**John 15: 1-11 --February 28, 2016**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

Dr. Veon, my field ed supervisor 35 years ago while I was in seminary and a man who taught me a great deal about ministry, handed me a little book 35 years ago, Andrew Murray's "Abide in Christ", and wrote in the front cover –"This little book will change your life, if you let it. Love, Dr. V." I went up to rural upstate Maine to do his funeral this past October and while there I re-read "Abide in Christ", a book I have often read and re-read over the years. Dr. Veon was right –if we were to take what it means to "abide in Christ" and to have "Christ abide in us" more seriously, indeed it would change our lives.

To "abide in Christ" is daily to live in and to live into Christ Jesus. To allow Jesus to abide in us is to invite Jesus to live in us through His Holy Spirit. The more we live in Him and the more He lives in us the more we understand the deep things of life and faith. To never abide in Him or to have HIM abide in us is, say, to never understand a thing with such spiritual power as the power of PRAYER THAT ABIDES...Do you want prayer that abides in your life? Do you want to ask "*whatever you will and it will be done for you.*" As our scripture attests (John 15: 7) Then, abide in Christ. "*If you abide in me*", promises Jesus, "*THEN ask whatever you will and it will be done for you*", promises Jesus. Abide in Christ.

Pastor Rick Fisher is someone alive today who I believe has the greatest handle on prayer and prayer that abides. Did you know he will be coming to The Church of the Covenant on Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> and have individual or small group sessions with people? Did you know that he also then will be preaching on Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>? You want to deepen your prayer life? How about reading Andrew Murray's, "Abide in Christ"? How about coming to the Prayer Leadership Training right here at our church? How about coming to the next Covenant Prayer Summit on Sunday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.? Rick Fisher has a little phrase that has been very helpful to me and it is this: "Park your Heart in Front of God". I think prayer is parking our heart in front of God. Its not the words so much as the positioning of ourselves. We park our heart in close proximity to the great heart of the Almighty. We seek to know the heart of God on some matter affecting our lives. We want God to know our heart in relation to something affecting the lives of those we love. We seek to abide in HIM. We seek HIM to abide in us. As we pray, we seek to watch the hand of God at work. We seek to learn HIS ways. Invite the Lord to park His heart in our heart. We seek to listen for HIS voice. We seek to talk less and listen more. I am parking my heart in your living presence, Lord. I am spending time I don't have with YOU today, my living Father. I am seeking to connect my life with YOUR life, O Lord. Teach me. Show me. Have me learn of YOUR Will and YOUR way. Park your heart in the presence of God and Jesus promises you will have prayer that abides. IF you abide in me, if you park your heart in my presence, says Jesus, THEN...

But, of course, that's not what we do. We skip along the pathways of life periodically shooting up a few half hearted prayers. Maybe we say a few things when we walk or when we drive. If you cannot text and drive why do you think you can park your heart in prayer and drive? And then something terrible happens in our life. And NOW we want to pray. And NOW we want to ask God for help. And NOW we want God to answer our prayer the way we want God to answer our prayer. And then we are frustrated when God, like some little lapdog at our beck and call, doesn't answer our every prayer and exactly the way we want it. This "prayer stuff" doesn't work, we huff and puff at the Almighty. Or God doesn't love me or He'd do exactly what I want Him to do. Or, all this Christianity stuff is just bogus. Or, whatever... OR, maybe it is we need to work on our ongoing, daily, heartfelt, connections to God BEFORE something bad happens to us in our life. Maybe we want to take Jesus' words seriously, IF you abide in me and I in

you, THEN... Maybe we can't pray because we don't really know what it is to PARK OUR HEART in front of the heart of the Almighty. We're like someone who thinks they can play in the SUPERBOWL of life with the Pittsburgh Steelers without ever having gone to even one practice session.

Prayer that abides requires a relationship with Jesus that abides. Jesus says: *"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) *"Abide in me and I in you"*, says Jesus. If a branch is disconnected from the vine it will wither away and die. You got to park your heart, O branch, in close connection to the VINE, O Jesus. Every day, all the time. *"I am the vine and you are the branches"*, says Jesus. (John 15: 5) *"He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit."* (v. 5) Fruit is the answer to prayer. Spiritual Fruit is the result of abiding in Jesus. The fruit of answered prayer is the result of parking our hearts and being connected to the Lord Jesus. And then Jesus says words that are both scary and true. He says: *"For apart from me you can do nothing."* (John 15: 5) If you're not connected to me, says Jesus, if you're not abiding in me, if you're not parking your heart in my presence, if you're detached from me as the VINE, then there will be no fruit and there will be no answered prayer, and there can be (if you really think about it) there can be NO PRAYER THAT ABIDES IF YOU ARE NOT ABIDING IN ME, reminds Jesus.

When you see me doing something it is the tip of the iceberg of what I actually do. Because almost every morning I spend at least two hours in prayer for you, the congregation I love. I have learned over the years that nothing else happens in ministry if I do not park my heart in the presence of God each day. The more I know, the more I pray. The more I pray, the more I know. I am learning each day, more and more about God's ways, and about Christ in the School of Prayer. I learn about prayer by praying. I learn about Jesus by seeking to abide in prayer in HIM. Several years ago I had a very difficult period in ministry and as an answer to prayer was the old time hymn, "Great is Thy Faithfulness". Whenever we sing that hymn you will watch me get a little teary-eyed and when it gets to the point where the line in the hymn goes, "All I have needed thy hand has provided", you will watch as I touch the palms of my hands, reminding me of every time the Lord has provided, the Lord has delivered me or someone I am praying for, reminding me of the way God works in life. So I am praying for a dear friend of mine right now who is facing significant health issues. When I pray for you I go into the presence of God, and I sit and park my heart before HIM, and I seek first, before I do anything else, before I utter even one word in prayer, to be in His presence and to abide in HIM. And it takes time. And it takes focus. And it takes quiet. Can't happen when I'm driving or when I'm distracted. I have to abide in HIM first and then I can pray. I wait upon HIM and then I can speak out what is on my heart to say to God. And that morning is the day when I am taking this friend to a prayer service for healing that night. So I am praying about that and asking the Lord to heal my friend. The song, "Great is Thy Faithfulness" comes back to me. And I am singing the hymn while I am praying. That evening, as my friend is being prayed for, I have the distinct impression that he is being healed by the hand of God. And what is the hymn that is immediately played, immediately following when he has been prayed for? -"Great is Thy Faithfulness".

We learn God's ways by praying. We learn God's will by parking our heart in His presence. We learn of our Lord Jesus by seeking to abide in HIM and having HIM abide in us. We learn of Christ in the School of Prayer...*Great is Thy faithfulness. Great is Thy faithfulness. Morning by morning (every morning when YOU seek HIM to abide in you by prayer) Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand has provided. Great is Thy Faithfulness, Lord unto me. "If you abide in me", says Jesus, "THEN" ... Beloved, abide in Christ and THEN watch what God can do in prayer. Amen and Amen.*

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*