

Principles of Christian Growth

Section Two: The Means of Christian Growth – How do we do it?

Lesson One: We grow by abiding in Christ.

Bible Reading: John 15, 1 John 2-4.

The apostle John uses the word *abide* in a deeply theological sense to describe spiritual relationships. For John, *to abide* is to enjoy a spiritual union with another that causes mutual indwelling. It is the kind of relationship that is enjoyed within the Trinity (Jn. 1:32-33, 14:10, 15:10). It is also true that believers abide in the Father (1 Jn. 2:24, 4:12, 15-16), in the Spirit (Jn. 14:17, 1 Jn. 2:27, 3:24, 4:13), and in the Son (Jn. 6:56, 1 Jn. 2:6, 2:24). These spiritual realities can be difficult for us to conceptualize, so the Lord Jesus used the metaphor of the vine and the branches to explain how it is that we grow by abiding in Christ (John 15).

Discussion questions:

1. Jesus's word-picture tells us about three related entities – the vine, the branches, and the husbandman or vine-dresser. Identify these and describe the relationships between them (Jn. 15:1-6).
2. The first step of abiding in Christ is the acceptance of the realities of these relationships. Where does living-for-self fit into this picture?
3. John 15:7 mentions two practical characteristics of the life that is abiding in Christ. What are they, and why would they be important to this relationship?
4. The fruitfulness sought by the husbandman is discussed in greater detail in John 15:8-17. What does this fruitfulness look like?