

EXHORTATION: To Prosper, We Must Abide

At the turn of the year, many of us yearn for a new year full of wonderful experiences. We hope that our relationships, finances, health, and careers will blossom, and some of us even make New Year resolutions to ensure that these aspirations come true. This is great, because we are humans and as such are sensitive to the changes in times and dates. The good news is that God desires these for all His children (3 John 1:2); in fact, He designed that things should happen exactly this way. In John 15:1, 4-6, the Scripture states, **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abides in me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”** God has designed that we should be productive in all aspects of our lives. From this passage, however, a few things become clear. First, there are many vines out there, but there is ONLY one True Vine, Jesus Christ. Second, the True Vine has different types of branches, the branches that abide (i.e. remain permanently attached to the vine) and those that do not, the non-abiding branches. These are like tumble weed that roll with the changes in their environment. Further, these non-abiding branches fall prey to the false vines such as power, fame, fortune and Satan, by being deceived, and are further distracted from their destinies and thus, remain under- or unproductive. What they have forgotten is that the True Vine (Jesus Christ) is the source of eternal life, infallible wisdom, indomitable strength, and with His life provides abundantly for all who abide in Him even while they are still on this earth.

The branches that stay *connected* to the True Vine (i.e. keep their hearts stayed on Christ) have no dry days. The leaves of these branches are ever green, and do not wither during the winters of life, but yield bountifully at harvest times. One may ask, “Will there be natural disasters in 2006?” “Of course, yes.” “Will there be high gas prices, wars, terrorist threats, etc.?” “Sure, these are already ongoing.” What is important for us to bear in mind is that there is only one Supreme Being that can keep us prosperous through it all, and this is the Father and Savior of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 6:8, the scriptures state, **“that by two immutable things [a promise and an oath], in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have STRONG consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”** The Lord will uphold those that put their trust in Him by His unchangeable promises. As the waters that swallowed up the earth caused the ark of Noah to rise out of danger, so will God do for all those that hold onto Him with their whole hearts (Genesis 7:23, 8:1).

On the other hand, the non-abiding branches will become malnourished, will have poor yield, and some will even wither away when the challenges of life arise. I would rather abide than put my trust in that which is uncertain. How can we really abide in Jesus Christ? We as believers abide in several ways. First, we abide through our daily communion with God. This involves holding a reverent dialogue with a loving heavenly Father. Here, we worship through prayers, songs of worship and praise. It affords us the opportunity to pour out our hearts to Him, to repent of our sins, to be healed, and for our faith to be restored. The experience is spiritually, mentally and physically therapeutic! Second, we abide by reading and meditating on God’s word, the food of our inner man (our spirits) (Ephesians 3:16). The revealed word gives us insight into God’s plans for our lives, guidance on a daily basis, and strengthens our values that are assaulted once we wake up, and thereafter, almost every second of the day. Third, we abide when we fellowship with the rest of the body of Christ, the Church. In the local Church, we are trained to love and to receive love, to prefer one another, to deal with false and immature brethren, to discover our gifts and fulfill our ministries, and to bear the burden of the gospel. Fourth, we abide when we obey the commandments of God. This involves denying one’s selfish desires and doing what God’s word commands. This is the true test of those who abide and is the ignition point for fruitfulness. If one is not a *doer*, then one is not abiding and will not bear much fruits. Finally, we abide by shunning the seductive influences of this world. Here is a little secret, Jesus Christ loved righteousness and hated sin, so did Paul the Apostle (Psalm 45:7; Romans 12:9.) While this is part of obedience, it deserves special attention, because the reason many of us do not experience the promises of God as believers should is that we do not hate sin. Sin is an open door through which Satan enters the lives of men, takes hold of their breakthroughs and dashes them on the rocks. Jesus Christ said, **“The Prince of this world (Satan) comes, and has none in me (John 14:30).”** Christ is the only one who knows what is truly ours and is readily available to help us take hold of them. Let us not spend this year chasing the wrong objectives, rather, let us *keep our hearts on Jesus Christ*.

PRAYER TOPICS

1. We have a strong tower in our God. Let us give thanks and worship Him for He is good and faithful, and will be there for us all through the year no matter what may come against us.
2. While God’s love is constant, our disobedience takes us far away from our places of advantage. Ask the Lord to forgive us for failing to abide as we often do, and to open our hearts to perceive the great value of a close walk with Him.

3. Take authority over the seductive influences of this world and their hold on us, and break them in the name of Jesus Christ. Let us make a solemn commitment to place our communion with God at the top of our priority list for year.
4. Pray for a visitation of God's spirit on His people this year, for we are the rate-limiting step in the move of God towards the revival of our world.
5. Are there broken altars in our lives (forgotten prayer times and programs)? Its time to restore those altars and to ask for the Holy Spirit's fire to be rekindled on us.

God bless us as we call on His great Name. Amen.

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