



The Christian life is an invitation to transformation and hope. Experiencing this does not come merely by mental ascent to Christian beliefs, but rather allowing God to work within us, then embracing a lifestyle of transformation. Key to this are two paramount values: the first is establishing a lifestyle of devotion to God where we cultivate depth and knowledge of the heart of God and the values He holds. God has made Himself “knowable” and cultivating this relationship is central to biblical Christianity. Second is what we call allegiance, or obedience. Simply put, allegiance is allowing God to actually be “God” in our lives and joyfully surrendering our will in order to His in order to experience the fullness of transformation offered to us.

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DISCUSSION #1: LIVIN’ ON THE VINE

The Christian life is an invitation to transformation and hope. Experiencing this does not come merely by mental ascent to Christian beliefs, but rather allowing God to work within us, then embracing a lifestyle of transformation. Key to this are two paramount values: the first is establishing a lifestyle of devotion to God where we cultivate depth and knowledge of the heart of God and the values He holds. God has made Himself “knowable” and cultivating this relationship is central to biblical Christianity. Second is what we call allegiance, or obedience. Simply put, allegiance is allowing God to actually be “God” in our lives and joyfully surrendering our will in order to His in order to experience the fullness of transformation offered to us.

In this discussion we will explore how the Christian lifestyle is one of living connected to God.

MY STORY | Starting Place

What is the worst disaster you have been in where services (water, electricity) were not available? How did the “disconnection” affect you and those around you?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.
(John 15:5-10)

What comes to mind when you read of Jesus’ command to abide in him?

Is the idea of abiding in Christ something you have heard communicated in church or Christian circles? How could it be communicated more clearly or helpfully?

Share a time when you felt profoundly connected to Jesus. How did you cultivate that experience?

In verse 5 Jesus says that “apart from (him) we can do nothing.” Clearly people can do things apart from him, so what do you think he means by this?

In verse 6 Jesus shares that if we don’t abide we will be gathered like sticks and burned. What do you think Jesus means here? And why would an illustration like this be important?

Is abiding in Jesus as simple as a branch sticking to a tree, or is there discipline involved? What are the most meaningful spiritual disciplines for you to stay connected to Jesus?

How do you know when you’re connected and abiding? What does it feel like to be disconnected from Jesus?

To go deeper, read Ephesians 3:17-19.

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

Have you ever had a friend who helped, or encouraged you, to abide in Jesus? Share about how that worked.

How can friends or a married couple encourage one another to abide in Christ?

How can your group cultivate greater vulnerability to be honest about our levels of connection with Jesus week by week?

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

God working in the lives of humans is a powerful reality. Think of someone in your circle with whom you might be able to share about this amazing reality, and give them a taste of the hope, joy, and purpose we gain by living in connection with Jesus.

DISCUSSION #2: ANCHORED IN GOD’S WISDOM

The Christian life is an invitation to transformation and hope. Experiencing this does not come merely by mental ascent to Christian beliefs, but rather allowing God to work within us, then embracing a lifestyle of transformation. Key to this are two paramount values: the first is establishing a lifestyle of devotion to God where we cultivate depth and knowledge of the heart of God and the values He holds. God has made Himself “knowable” and cultivating this relationship is central to biblical Christianity. Second is what we call allegiance, or obedience. Simply put, allegiance is allowing God to actually be “God” in our lives and joyfully surrendering our will in order to His in order to experience the fullness of transformation offered to us.

In this discussion we will explore how the person who identifies with Christ is eager to live in allegiance to God’s truth and to see them embodied in their life.

MY STORY | Starting Place

By nature, do you follow rules, see them as suggestions, or view them as restrictive? Has your perspective served you well or hindered you in your life? Explain.

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

*Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!
Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,
who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!
You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.
Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!
Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.
I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.
I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me! (Psalm 119:1-8)*

Painfully, the nature of fallen humanity is one of rebellion to God. Read and discuss Romans 1:28-32. How does Romans 1:28-32 define rebellion? Do you fully agree or struggle with this dark assessment of humanity? Explain.

What does it take for a human to move toward desiring to honor God and follow his commands? Where are you at in this process?

Is obedience to God a “one-and-done” decision or a recurring reality for the Christian? What does that look like in your daily life? When is obeying God most difficult for you?

Explore the following verses to dive deeper into this topic. Psalm 1:1-2; Joshua 1:8; Romans 12:1-2.

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

A primary purpose of Christian community is to wage war together against the sinful nature each one possesses. How can your group support each other in this? Are there “rules and protocols” you could identify to mutually agree to if/when someone needs others to hold them accountable?

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

Is there a friend in your circle of influence who needs some pastoral support? Not actually a pastor, but for YOU to draw close and enter into their difficulty? It takes courage, but you've got this!

DISCUSSION #3: DYING TO LIVE

The Christian life is an invitation to transformation and hope. Experiencing this does not come merely by mental ascent to Christian beliefs, but rather allowing God to work within us, then embracing a lifestyle of transformation. Key to this are two paramount values: the first is establishing a lifestyle of devotion to God where we cultivate depth and knowledge of the heart of God and the values He holds. God has made Himself “knowable” and cultivating this relationship is central to biblical Christianity. Second is what we call allegiance, or obedience. Simply put, allegiance is allowing God to actually be “God” in our lives and joyfully surrendering our will in order to His in order to experience the fullness of transformation offered to us.

In this discussion we will explore how the person who identifies with Christ lives in obedience to God, often “dying” to fleshly desires in order to truly “live” the abundant life promised by God.

MY STORY | Starting Place

Which personal disciplines are easy for you? Which ones are more difficult?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Matthew 16:24)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Contrast these verses with John 3:16 and other promises we receive as followers of Jesus.

In your experience with God, when did you begin to discover all that following Jesus would cost you? Was it an expected experience or did it feel somewhat like a bait & switch?

Does it feel like it gets easier or harder to give things to God the longer you walk with him? Explain.

Additional verses: Matthew 16:24; James 1:12; John 14:23

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

In a way, every day is an opportunity to die to something and live more freely for God. How can spiritual friendships best support you in this ongoing process of transformation?

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

Ponder the various ways God has transformed you over the years. Look for an opportunity to weave some of these experiences into a conversation this week.

DISCUSSION #4: JOINING GOD IN WHAT HE'S DOING

The Christian life is an invitation to transformation and hope. Experiencing this does not come merely by mental ascent to Christian beliefs, but rather allowing God to work within us, then embracing a lifestyle of transformation. Key to this are two paramount values: the first is establishing a lifestyle of devotion to God where we cultivate depth and knowledge of the heart of God and the values He holds. God has made Himself “knowable” and cultivating this relationship is central to biblical Christianity. Second is what we call allegiance, or obedience. Simply put, allegiance is allowing God to actually be “God” in our lives and joyfully surrendering our will in order to His in order to experience the fullness of transformation offered to us.

In this discussion we will discover how the follower of Christ seeks to be aware of what God is doing in his/her life and joining Him in that work.

MY STORY | Starting Place

Describe an experience growing up where you got to work alongside a parent, sibling or a close older friend. Explain.

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. (John 5:19-20)

It sounds like Jesus doesn't even make his own plans, but rather submits to and joins the Father in his plans. Is control and knowing the big picture important to you? How does this verse challenge or excite you?

Discuss this dynamic of Jesus only doing what he sees the Father doing. What needs to shift in our heart to live more fully in this example of Christ?

This idea was beautifully fleshed out in Henry Blackaby's epic work, *Experiencing God*. Read the below quotes from that book and discuss them.

Watch to see where God is working and join Him in His work.

You cannot stay where you are and go with God. You cannot continue doing things your way and accomplish God's purpose in His ways. Your thinking cannot come close to God's thoughts. For you to do the will of God, you must adjust your life to Him, His purposes, and His ways

Will God ever ask you to do something you are not able to do? The answer is yes—all the time! It must be that way, for God's glory and kingdom. If we function according to our ability alone, we get the glory; if we function according to the power of the Spirit within us, God gets the glory. He wants to reveal Himself to a watching world.

We don't choose what we will do for God; He invites us to join Him where He wants to involve us.

If you feel weak, limited, ordinary, you are the best material through which God can work.

Prayer is designed to adjust you to God's will, not to adjust God to your will.



Because God wants to take you in ever-increasing measures to know Him. And the only way you can know Him is by experiencing Him. So He's going to ask you to go with Him in dimensions that require more faith and more activity than you have ever used before. Otherwise you will never grow in your faith in Him. The only way you can grow in your faith in Him is to accept the next assignment which is always greater than the previous one. Don't ever feel that you will get to the place where you'll never be scared half to death.

The reality is that the Lord never calls the qualified; He qualifies the called.

When we hear His call and respond accordingly, there will be no limit to what God can and will do through His people. But if we do not even recognize when He is speaking, we are in trouble at the very heart of our relationship to Him.

God's commands are designed to guide you to life's very best. You will not obey Him, if you do not believe Him and trust Him. You cannot believe Him if you do not love Him. You cannot love Him unless you know Him.

You cannot go with God and stay where you are.

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

Discerning “where God is working” and “what God is saying” can be difficult. How can spiritual friendships help you both discern these opportunities and step out in faith once you've heard?

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

Ponder the various “God stories” in your life. Look for a way to record or capture these. Celebrating them is an act of worship.