

Marks of a Disciple: A Disciple Abides in the Vine

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 August 2025

Preacher: Scott Liddell

[0 : 00] Today, we are going to begin a new sermon series. It's only three Sundays in duration.! I'm grateful for Kamesh finishing our sermon series last week in the book of Colossians.

And so today, we want to talk about what are some attributes or markers of a disciple of Christ. So we're going to take three Sundays to say, you know, there are markers of different things that we could say, oh, that's what that is.

For example, if I said there is a large flightless bird that lives in the continent of Africa that is namely black and white, we all would think, oh, ostrich.

Because those are attributes and markers and indicators of that kind of bird. And so you could describe a thing and say, oh, that's what that is. Well, there are some attributes of a disciple that we could say, oh, a disciple of Christ is these things.

Well, that's what this sermon series is about. So we're going to talk about this week, today, an attribute of a disciple of Christ is one who abides in the Lord, abides in Christ. Second, next week is selfless toward others.

[1 : 12] And then thirdly is courageous in their faith. We'll talk about that. But today, we're talking about an attribute of a disciple of Christ is one who abides with Christ. So if you have a copy of Scripture with you, if you could turn to John chapter 15, we're going to read verses 1 through 8.

John 15, verses 1 through 8. I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 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 and thrown into the fire and burned.

[2 : 30] 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.

What is difficult about a familiar passage is our familiarity can hinder us from hearing anew and a fresh, and so I pray today we would be reminded of the truths in this passage.

I will confess the bulk of my message today is going to be focused on verse 3, or verse 7, rather. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. The reason why prayer has so much potential is God.

The reason why prayer has so much potential is God, and, and this one may seem a little inflammatory, but just hear me out. The reason why prayer is surrounded by so many problems is God.

[3 : 44] Let me explain. The reason why prayer has so much potential is God, and the reason why prayer is surrounded by so many problems is God. If it were not for God, prayer would have no potential, and prayer would have no problems either.

It is God who has created both the prayer's potential and this problem, perceived problem. God is sovereign. So let me explain.

God is sovereign. His rule over nature, his rule over circumstance, his rule over human decision, he directs the human's hearts. It is certain and sure.

However, because we believe this, because God, because this is true, we pray that God would change people's hearts. We pray that God would convert lost souls.

We pray that people would be healed. We pray that God would provide this opportunity. We would pray for comfort for those who are mourning. Because God is so sovereign, he providentially works things according to his will.

[4 : 47] He creates the potential to pray. If God were inept, and we believe that God could not accomplish much, we would not ask for God in prayer.

But it is because God, who creates the potential to answer prayer, we pray. God can save someone if he chooses. God can draw people unto himself, and they are redeemed.

God can change anyone he chooses. He can heal anyone he chooses. God is the potential of prayer. Secondly, why do I say, because the prayer is surrounded by so many problems, God is the problem of prayer?

I'm saying that a little tongue-in-cheek. Let me explain. In exasperation, we may think, where is God? After the thousandth time, thousandth time, should have chosen another word, the millionth time.

I've prayed for something, and it did not get answered. We wonder quietly and privately in our hearts, and quietly, as not to seem faithless, why pray?

[6 : 10] We are faced daily with circumstances, healings that never occurred, conversions of lost souls that never seemed to occur, a change of heart that went unanswered, a trial levied against us, and we lost.

The job that never happened to us, a trial levied against us, a trial levied against us, and we lost our lives. The job that never materialized, the health condition that took a life, a tragedy that did not have to happen, the future spouse that never knelt on a knee and asked for marriage, your hand in marriage.

Since God is sovereign, since he's going to do in his providential care, what he's going to do, and nothing can thwart him, why pray? These are the two big problems.

Let's first answer the problem of prayer, one of them first, the second one first. Since God is sovereign, since he controls all things, plans all things, predestines all things, ordains all things that come to pass, he is unequalled, he is the unequalled ruler of the universe, why pray?

God is at work, upholding, directing, disposing, and governing his creation, all of it, from the asteroid flying in a far-off, undiscovered galaxy or solar system, to the death of a bird today in Croatia, that no one seemed to notice, to your very next breath, God is the one who is upholding, disposing, and governing all things.

[7 : 42] Let's read a few verses to kind of grasp how sovereign and providential he is. Look with me in Psalm 135, I think these are going to be on the screen for you.

I'm just going to skip down to verse 6. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the deeps. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does. There is no end to his sovereign control.

Proverbs 15.3 says it this way. The eyes of the Lord are every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. Nothing misses his observation and oversight.

Daniel 2.21 says it this way. He changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings. In Hebrews 1.3, speaking of the second person of the Godhead, the Son of God, he says this about him.

He is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. And are you and I not grateful he does so?

[8 : 52] So why pray? If God is in so much control, why pray? I pray that we would hear how Jesus taught his disciples to pray.

How lowed be your name. How lowed be your name. His name is to be made holy. His name is, we are to revere him as holy.

He is matchless in all his ways. Hebrews says it this way. Verse 13. Verse 21. And I'm answering the question, why pray? And I believe this verse is very helpful. It says this, Hebrews 13, verse 21. Equip you with every good that you may do his will. We get the privilege to doing God's will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

So even prayer is God working out in this world things that he wants to accomplish, using us to do his will through prayer and working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

[10 : 11] Oh, what a privilege it is to commune with the Father and speak with him in prayer and getting to participate in what he is doing in this world.

That's why we get to pray. That's why we pray in answering one of the questions. Well, what about the other problem? We pray and we pray and we pray and the millionth time we pray.

And it did not come to fruition. I want to answer biblically why the Lord may not answer prayers.

Look with me in 1 John 5, 14.

I'm going to give several principles. I'm going to name six of them and then we're going to look at the seventh one in our text. Six reasons that I could find biblically as to why the Lord may not answer prayer.

First principle is this. It may be that we may not be praying according to his will. Look with me in 1 John 5, 14 on the screen. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

[11:19] So perhaps we may be praying for something that is not according to his will. That's one reason. Second reason. It may be that we cherish sin and that we hold on to our lives.

We hold it, we cleave to it, and we won't let go of it. Psalm 66, verse 18 says it this way. Third reason why we may have unanswered prayer.

It may be that we have man-centered motives instead of God-centered motives. James 4, verse 3 says it this way. You ask and you do not receive.

Why do we not receive? Because you ask wrongly to spend it on your own passions. Fourthly, it may be that we do not believe that God will do it.

Mark 11, 24 reads this. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. Believe that you have received it and it will be yours.

[12:20] Verse 5, or number 5. Fifth reason why the Lord may not answer prayer. It may be that God is testing your faith and testing your obedience to his command. And we are to persevere in prayer.

This is why we are to pray for the millionth time. Luke 18, verse 1 says it this way. And it's the lead up to the parable of the persistent widow who is to go to the judge.

And so the verse right before the parable is spoken, Luke tells us this. He gives us a little insight as to why Jesus is going to speak this parable. He says it this way. And he told them a parable, in effect, that they ought to always pray and not lose heart.

Pray and not lose heart. George Mueller, he lived to 92 years old. But for 52 years, he prayed for individuals.

He had a list of individuals that he wanted to come to faith in Christ. And so George Mueller, he was a faithful man, a godly man. You could read about him. He's in England.

[13:19] And for 52 years, he prayed for a list of people. Two especially toward the end of his life he was burdened for. And they never came to faith in Christ in his life.

At his memorial service, the gospel was proclaimed. And at his memorial service, those two individuals placed their faith in Christ. Persist in prayer.

Sixth reason why prayer may go unanswered is it may be that God, in fact, is doing far more every time you pray than you can imagine and is daily putting in place the tapestry that will, in good time, be the complete answer to your prayer.

There's an interesting account in the book of Daniel. Daniel chapter 10, verse 2. It says, In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. And it also goes on to say that he began to pray. Well, it took three weeks for a messenger of God to visit him. And then dropping down in verse 12, same chapter, we read this.

[14:24] And he said to me, this is the messenger of the Lord. Fear not, Daniel. For the first day that you set your heart to understand and humble yourself before the Lord, your words have been heard.

And I have come because of your words. It took three weeks for that messenger to finally arrive and tell Daniel that. But God may be, in fact, doing more when we pray than we can imagine or daily put in place what God is doing in his tapestry to bring about his purposes.

And you say, Scott, I think we have diverted from John chapter 15. So what are you doing? Well, John chapter 15 gives us the seventh reason.

The seventh reason why we may have unanswered prayer. Look with me in verse 7. John 15, verse 7.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. I want us to notice the two conditions that are in this verse.

[15 : 42] Why prayers may go unanswered. Notice first the first condition in verse 7 says, If, if you abide in me.

Why is it that the attribute of a believer is one who abides with Christ? And it is now a condition of this asking whatever you wish.

It is if you abide with me. Second condition, and my words abide in you. Ask whatever you wish. But those are the two preconditions.

So let's look at the first one. Abide with Christ. If you abide in me. How is it that the believer abides? And what does it mean to abide?

It means to dwell with Christ. How is it today that we get the opportunity to commune with Christ? Through his word and through prayer largely. So I'm going to focus on those two disciplines if you want to call them that.

[16 : 43] And I will admit, this week, because of some circumstances, I normally by the end of Tuesday have about 98% of the message written for Sunday's message coming up.

This week on Tuesday I was sitting at around 80%. And for those who know me a little bit well, every hour and minute that ticks by as we get closer to Sunday, my anxiety increases.

But I actually like it that I get some time during the week to sense, okay, Lord, is everything that I have written what you want to say?

And then help me with some illustrations and application. Well, this week I had an appointment set to meet with an 86-year-old woman, a member of the church.

And this 86-year-old young individual came to visit with me. And she, if you will, gave me the application for the message.

[17 : 48] God used her to help. She said this to me, Scott, when I was young. Oh, and let me preface this. The whole reason for her appointment was this.

She says to me, Scott, before my season of life is coming to an end, and I know it, I want you to know what is most important to me.

She didn't come to ask for prayer. She didn't come to ask for a perspective. She didn't come to share with me a diagnosis. She didn't come to do any of these things that I may have perceived that she may have been coming for.

She just comes. She makes an appointment to say, I know my life is coming to an end, and I want it to be clear to you what is most important in my life.

She had my attention. And she said this. When I was in middle school, something occurred.

[18 : 54] And so I'm going to ask just a favor. If you're in 6th grade through 12th grade, would you please just stand for one moment? Would you please do that? Just real quick. 6th through 12th grade, excellent. Well done.

Good job. Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. Well done. Thank you. You can have a seat. I did that because I want you and I to have a mental picture of how old this lady was when this was shared.

She said, in my youth group, there was a man, a guest speaker, who came. And he shared the value of God's word in a person's life.

And because it's a book that is qualitatively different than any other book you will ever read. Why? Because it is the only book that is God's breathed. God breathed. It is life-giving.

It is the source of truth. It is the revelation of God. It offers the message of salvation for sin. And when applied the truth to a believer's life, it offers life.

[19 : 54] And so this guest speaker, as this lady was in middle school, she heard this and was moved.

And then the guest speaker moved on. And he said to the youth group that he was speaking to, I want you to take vows and commitments to the Lord very seriously. Don't say yes to the Lord or take a vow to the Lord unless you're going to keep it till you die.

So he warned them. And then he encouraged them, though, said this. Would you commit for the rest of your life to read one chapter of God's word a day?

And this 86-year-old woman said, and I have kept that. And the comfort the Lord has brought her, and the life the Lord has brought her, and the joy the Lord has brought her over that which is most important to her, she says, that's it.

So tomorrow, let's assume, we're to read John chapter 1. The next day, John chapter 2.

[21 : 10] There are 260 chapters in the New Testament. If you were to read from Matthew to Revelation, there's 260 chapters.

Do you know if you were to begin on September 1st, on May 19th of next year, you will have read the entire New Testament? One chapter a day.

Imagine, and this is how this lady has spent time and abided with the Lord daily.

And I want to encourage you, if you don't have a pattern of how you spend time with the Lord, try that. Commit to that. To say, I'm going to read one chapter a day.

Secondly, look at this verse again. If you abide in me, that's the first condition. Second condition. And my words abide in you. How is it that the word of God abides with you?

[22 : 20] Again, this person, 86 years old, saying, this is what's most important to me, she shares the second thing. And how fitting it is for this message.

She says, when I was in my early 20s, and so I'm going to ask this question, if you're in the decade of your 20s, would you please stand for me, please, real quick.

I know, everyone's going to end up standing here shortly. So, thank you. You can have a seat. In the decade of her 20s, in the decade of her 20s, she committed to spending five minutes a day, she literally sets a timer and sets a scripture that she wants to memorize in front of her and works on scripture memory.

And she has the same habit as I do. We have note cards. And so, I just have a note card and I think, okay, I'm going to spend time memorizing this verse. And so, this is the packet of verses that I'm working on presently.

And she has boxes now and boxes of verses that she has memorized since she was 20 years old and now she's sitting at 86.

[23 : 40] And I, if, and as she was sharing, she shared with me why, so notice the verse, if you abide in me, spend time with the Lord reading his word and the word abides in you.

You have it at your fingertips. You can, you can recall truths. And so, this is what, this is what the word of God, how it has comforted her. Listen, her own testimony. It has brought her peace in times of trouble.

It has brought her comfort in the midst of loss and sorrow. It has been a reminder of that which is true in seasons of doubt. It has provided her direction in a time of decision. It has provided clarity in a season of confusion and a life when the effects of sin and death are all around us.

Her and a kind of joy that is detached from her circumstances has all been brought because she can recall to memory the truths of God's word because she has them. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask.

Ask. Ask. So forth. Let me share this.

[24 : 56] If I had an application today, I would say this. Take that pattern. Probably most in this room could finish reading one chapter a week and five minutes of scripture memory and 20 minutes a day easily.

If you'd to help us be a people who read God's word and apply God's word.

This fall, I'm excited for all of our adults to go through this little book just to walk through 1 Peter.

It's going to be our new sermon series after three weeks sermon. This little mini series and then we're going to hop into the book of 1 Peter. This is what we're going to do all semester long and you can do it with us and it will be the, it will help us dive into God's word.

So I encourage us to do this. There's a reason why we're doing this. Love for you to participate.

Follow along with this sermon series. I want us to be like the psalmist says in Psalm 1 verses 1 and 2.

[26 : 03] Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinner nor sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.

Oh that we would have God's word in our hearts to be able to recall to our memory and meditate on it day and night. Day and night. So with those two preconditions look what John says.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you ask. Pray. Ask whatever you wish. And it will be done for you. So notice the two focuses.

I'm going to quickly do an overview because you're like Scott that was a pathetic job of going through John chapter 15. I know. Let me just say this.

You and I know that passage has two focuses. Abiding with Christ and bearing fruit. Abiding with Christ and bearing fruit. Let me quickly abiding.

[27 : 07] Verses 4, 5, 6, 7 and it's implied in verse 2. We can see that. It's clear. And that's why I say what is the point of the sermon today? That a disciple of Christ is known.

It's a marker. You can identify a Christian because they are people who just abide with Christ. You can identify them. That's what we do. Second, fruit bearing.

verses 1 and 2. Verses 4, verses 5, verses 8. We're not going to get into all that. But you can see abiding with Christ and bearing fruit. That's the whole point of this whole passage.

But I want to be specific now in what does the fruit look like? What does the fruit look like? If you're going to abide with Christ and bear much fruit and that's what he wants, that's obvious in the text, what does it look like?

Well, I want to quickly go over three things that I see. Number one, in the very next context, beginning in verse 9 through verse 13, you see that joy and the assurance of salvation is one of the fruit.

[28 : 09] What is one of the fruit of this passage that a Christian ought to bear as they abide with Christ? What's one of the fruit of abiding with Christ that you can bear? Well, you have joy and assurance of one's salvation.

Second fruit that I see in this passage is that we are going to be a transformed people. That the Lord trims and prunes those branches because he wants them to bear more fruit and that trimming and process is a transformation of a person.

And then thirdly, here's the third fruit. Why am I focusing so much on prayer today? What is the fruit of an abiding person? John 15, 7.

Answered prayer. answered prayer. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

Prayers are answered. People begin to be different than they are. Lost are converted. Missionaries are sent. Believers overcome sin.

[29 : 18] They break addictions. They overcome fleshly ways. They increase in selflessness and increase in a God orientation.

This is what just happens. We're a changed people and we have answered prayer. prayer. What is the mark of a disciple?

A disciple is one who abides with Christ. My plea and encouragement to you today, if you do not have a discipline where you spend time with the Lord, take this one.

Read one chapter a day for the rest of your life and spend five minutes a day, scripture memory, internalizing God's word. And the fruit of your life will be joy, the assurance of salvation.

You're going to be a transformed people and you're going to have answered prayer. I want that. I want to be known as that as a church. Pray with me.

[30 : 27] Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for the privilege of being able to spend time in your word.

Thank you for the opportunity to be reminded that believers in Christ, one of the attributes, just like we could describe an ostrich, but one marker of a Christian is that he's one who just abides with Christ.

Lord, thank you for being the source of our joy. Thank you for the gift of your living word. Thank you for the gift of living in a post-printing press society where you all have a copy of it or multiple copies. Jesus, I pray that we would be a people who spend time with you, internalize your word and bear the fruit and enjoy the fruit of it, of joy, the assurance of salvation, being a transformed people and having answered prayer.

Lord, thank you. You are so good to us and it's in your beautiful name, Jesus, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.