

Plugging Into God

October 06, 2020

Scripture: John 15:1-8

1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.
2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.
4. 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.
5. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.
7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Summary: God desires a relationship with us, so first we have to make space for God.

The second step is to connect to God.

But the problem is we aren't connected to God or even other people. And if we are, it's infrequent and usually casual or shallow.

That leads to a feeling of being disconnected from God. We feel disconnected because we fill our lives with so much that we just do not have time for God.

Plugging Into God

In this lesson series, we're asking you to look at yourself through a new lens, as that of an apprentice of Jesus.

An apprentice is someone who is bound to another for a certain amount of time to learn an art or trade in which the master is an expert.

To be a disciple of Jesus means to be an apprentice.

If you are going to be Jesus' apprentice only one essential condition must be met: you must spend time with him, in other words, plugging into Him.

You can't do discipleship at arm's length or through distance learning.

Most Christians don't think in terms of this lifestyle of apprenticeship.....

The sad testimony of modern Christianity is that one can be a Christian without being (an apprentice.) Pro football coaches can tell you immediately who they have apprenticed under.

But a disciple is a person willing to be apprenticed by Jesus who learns who He is and what He does....It is learning from Jesus how to live our lives, our whole lives, our real lives as Dallas Willard says, "as he would live it, if He were I." (4) 4.

We have lives which are overburdened and overcommitted and our only solution seems to be to speed up. We think if we do then we can get everything done! Technology hasn't helped.

While technology has made our world smaller, it has also made it more complex and sped up it up.

You live a much faster lifestyle than your parents or grandparents did. And the way the world is going, your children will live an even faster lifestyle than you. And so we just keep trying to do more and more moving faster and faster, never really learning to prioritize or say no.

The Bible tells us that all this hurrying has dramatic negative effects on us. First, you feel more stress.

When you're always in a hurry, your personal reserves get depleted and your stress goes way up. Second, you lose your joy.

The faster you go in life, the less time you have to enjoy it. If you are continually fast paced, you're not really enjoying anything.

Third, when you're going at a fast pace, you're less productive.

Going fast all the time causes you to lose ability to think and act creatively.

Fourth, I'm going too fast, I can't connect to other people or even God.

Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God." You get to know God when you slow down, be quiet and become still.

The only answer is to make space for God.

God desires a relationship with us, so first we have to make space for God.

If we don't that leads to a feeling of being disconnected from God.

We feel disconnected because we fill our lives with so much that we just do not have time for God.

We feel disconnected because we don't want God to be God.

We feel disconnected because we are unwilling to give up control of our lives.

We feel disconnected because we have an enemy who is hell bent on keeping us from building this relationship with God.

We feel disconnected because we isolate ourselves.

It is easier to feel alone than it is to feel the pain of our mistakes and shortcomings.

We feel disconnected from God because there is a sin in our life that keeps us from God.

And the result is when we feel disconnected from God, we are more likely to live as we see fit rather than as God would have us live. Yet God wants us to be connected to Him.

Jesus knew how important it was for us to stay plugged in when he said, "I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. John 15:5, NKJV

God wants us to pursue Him and plug into him as the Psalmist does in Psalm 63:” O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.” So how do you plug into God?

First is through Bible study. We’ve talked a lot of about Bible Study and how central it is to your spiritual growth.

Bible studies provide a place to develop new friendships with other apprentices of Jesus. They provide a safe place to find answers to your spiritual questions.

Bible studies provide a place for you to be used by God to help meet others’ needs, to have your needs met by people who care and to be involved in the great commission through group multiplication.

Bible study is on your own. We need to read God’s word each day, if not several times a week.

There are several things we can do when plugging into God by reading God’s Word for ourselves.

First read an entire book of the Bible. It’s not often that we read an entire book of the Bible. We usually read a few verses or even a passage. But by reading the whole book, we encounter the complete story, beginning, middle and end. Since we are trying to connect with the real Jesus, try reading one of the Gospels and split the reading up into four or five days.

Ask, “What does God want specifically to say to me through this?”

Then listen to God and enter into prayer over what he brings to your mind or heart.

Finally, end reflecting on the question, “What does God want me to do as a result of the word I have been given?” Write it down and then give thanks to God for this gift.

Third is praying the Scriptures. This is the practice of using God's Word as the foundation for shaping and directing our prayers.

When we pray the Scriptures, we letting God's Word guide us and are coming into agreement with God, and His power as we pray His words.

This is particularly true when you pray a Scripture which deals with an issue or situation you're facing in life. You actually learn what God says about certain situations, and by praying His Word you will know God's will for that situation, begin praying for it and see His results. By praying the Scriptures, you honor God.

In addition, you strengthen your own life by overwriting negative narratives that have driven your life for years.

By praying the Scriptures, you come to a place of synergy: agreement with God and we begin to sense the power of Heaven released in our lives.

The second way of plugging into God is through meaningful worship. Worship is about God and not me.

It is not as much about meeting my needs as it is shaping my soul. But here's the problem: it's more than just showing up for worship.

For many of us, going to church is fraught with stress, frustration and distraction.

We have to get the kids up, fed and dressed and then get everyone to church and we're running late or someone is sitting in my seat or "I can believe she wore that to church!"

The problem is that most of us are just showing up for worship and usually at the last minute.

How many of you would run a race without training? No one. So why do we come to worship without any preparation. I would suggest that many times the worship service, or the music, or the message is not meaningful to you, it's that you have not come prepared for worship.

To make worship truly meaningful, you have to prepare for worship and bring the right attitude and expectations.

So the first thing we need to do is create margin on Sunday mornings.

Go to bed earlier on Saturday night and wake up earlier on Sunday morning which will give you more time to get ready and prepare for worship before you get to church.

Second, have a prayer and devotional time with God before you get to church. Pray for yourself, your family, the service, the pastors, the band, the worship leader and the people attending, especially our guests.

Third, As you're driving to church, put in a worship CD in the car and begin worshipping even before you drive into the parking lot.

Fourth, arrive early. That means coming before the service begins to be fully present.

Enjoy a cup of coffee and a great conversation with someone or come into the sanctuary and enter the presence of God.

Fifth, come with a sense of "holy expectancy." This is the house of God. When you enter, you are entering the presence of God. Expect God to be here.

Expect God to touch you and expect God to do great things in our midst.

Sixth, remove any barriers you bring to worship.

Many of us come to church with things in our lives that hinder true worship.

These obstacles need to be dealt with before we come to God as a body of believers.

Am I setting aside all of my concerns, to do lists, worries and frustrations to come before the King of the Universe and worship Him?

Am I being sincere in my worship or just going through the motions?

Is my heart fixed on Him and undivided? Am I coming humbly, realizing I can draw near only because of what Christ has done for me? Is there any sin in my life I haven't dealt with?

Count Your Blessings! Make a list of all the things God has blessed you with and all of the things which make your life wonderful.

Pay attention to the little things and the hidden things.

Start small: your loved ones, material possessions or opportunities you have been given.

It can also include things in God's creation: the sun, the moon, the stars, etc. but make sure it's things that directly bless your life and are meaningful to you.

Include things you love or like, the Saints or ice cream!

Finally, include the things God has done for you.

Keep adding to your list each day. Start with ten.

Then make a goal of fifty. And then see if you can come up with a list of 100 and what you will end up with a vast treasure and the ability to plug into God's wonderful blessings in your life.

Lastly, gain an awareness of God's creation.

People throughout the centuries have looked to God's creation as proof of His existence, His goodness and His blessings. Yet too often our pace of life prevents us from taking the time to "smell the roses" and to see God in the world around us.

Another way of plugging into God is to becoming deeply involved in God's world as a way of connecting to God's goodness and love.

Take a walk outside and pay attention to the sights, sounds, smells and colors of nature.

Sit out on your patio, go to a park or take a nature walk on a trail, a place which is relatively untouched by humans.

Take a tablet and write down everything you see which grabs your attention. Notice the color of the birds, the symmetry of the leaves and the sounds of the wind.

Explore them closer and gain a sense of wonder of God's creation.

Then give thanks to God for these blessings.

And when we plug into God, His Word, His nature, His character and His actions can be communicated and shared through us to the World.