

ARE YOU A DIPPER OR AN ABIDER?

Listen to this provocative quote from Francis Chan:

"Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter."

What is it that matters to you?

Bearing fruit for Christ matters. And there's only one way to do that:

[John 15:4-6, 8]

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing ...

⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

FLOURISHING SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS DEMANDS A CONSTANT CONNECTION TO CHRIST.

That's what I call the principle of priority (v.4a, 5a)

"Abide in Me and I in you ... I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit," Jesus used that word "abide" 10 times in 6 verses. What does it mean to abide? Greek lexicons say that it carries the ideas of remaining, to stay, continue in, dwell, sojourn, rest in, last, endure, to continue unchanged, to be in close, intimate communion with. It means all of those things. No one word really fits it completely. The point is clear - Christ not only wants to be *in us*, He wants *us* to be *in Him!* Steeped in Him! *Steeped* is the best word I could find to describe what Jesus is really getting at. It means to be saturated with or to be

subject **thoroughly** to a strong, pervading influence. Christ is saying, “*Be steeped in Me!*”

Are you *steeped* in Christ? If you are a tea drinker, you will understand this metaphor really well. Years ago my wife and I and a few others from our church had the privilege of worshiping with Dr. Tony Evans at a large conference in Boston. In one of his talks he shared an analogy that fits this text perfectly.

Dr. Evans described a person’s relationship to Christ in *tea drinkers terminology*. If you are a hot tea drinker you know there are 2 ways to prepare your tea. And most tea drinkers fall into one of two categories.

Some people are **dippers**.

They take their tea bag and go up & down and up & down and up & down. If you’re a dipper you gotta do a lot of work. 1st, of all you gotta go up & down, then you gotta pick up a spoon, put the bag in the spoon, wrap the string around the bag, pull it tight, then take your middle finger and push it down so that you get all the stuff out. If you’re a dipper.

Dr. Evans then explained that he’s not a dipper. He’s an **abider**. He said, “*I simply drop my tea bag in the water and let it ... [long pause] remain. And the water flows through the bag, the bag flows through the water, and they kind of flow through each other and right before my eyes I watch a transformation occur.*”

You are either a *dipper* or an *abider*. Let me ask you a question about your relationship with Christ: *Are you a dipper or an abider?* As it relates to bearing fruit for God, dippers have to *make* it happen. Abiders simply *watch* it happen.

Dr. Evans related that he was drinking tea with a man one day.

In his words, “He was dipping and I was abiding. He looked at me and he said, ‘I can’t do that.’

And I said, ‘Why not?’

And he said, ‘Because my tea will get too strong.’

That’s what happens when you abide. It just gets stronger and stronger and stronger.” **And you become fruitful, and more fruitful and much more fruitful. And that’s exactly the pattern Jesus unveils for those intimately connected to Christ through abiding. ...those who ABIDE;**

- (v.2) He bears fruit
- (again in v.2) He bears *more* fruit
- (vv.5,8) He bears *much* fruit; and ultimately
- (v.16) He bears fruit *that remains*

So, don’t just be a “dipper.” Be an “**abider.**” That’s the only way you’re going to be truly fruitful. That’s the priority. Abide in Christ and He will abide in you - there is no other way to produce flourishing spiritual fruit that remains.