

Revolutionary Disciple Week #2: Remaining in Christ

We are talking about **the most revolutionary part** of being a disciple of Jesus. **To be revolutionary, something has to create dynamic change.** It will change **your relationship with God.** It will change your relationships within your **family.** It will **transform our church** into a life giving fellowship and something powerful in this community. Yes, this is a revolution that can **spread into our culture.**

The challenge is to lean into this uncomfortable subject. There are **three ways.** Commit to come each week, in person, if you can. Get into a bridge group, where we will discuss the topic further. And finally, if you want to do some reading, there is a book that we are encouraging people to read that has the same name. **Get your phone out right now** and contact a bridge group leader and talk to someone after the service. If you are at home, contact the church office.

Like most revolutions, it starts small and builds. It's grass roots. It's not flashy. **It is unassuming and yet completely countercultural.** Here's one of the verses that is **at the heart** of what a revolutionary disciple of Jesus is. **Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.** ² **Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.** ³ **Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.** Ephesians 4:1-3

But these words need a little explanation. **How do we do this in all the areas of our lives?** And yes, **there are boundaries to humility; humility doesn't tolerate abuse or injustice.**

Here are a couple of **definitions** we started with last week. **If you missed last week,** you can watch online.

Pride is simply being self-absorbed. I am focused on what I am thinking, feeling, and interested in. **The problem with pride is that it negatively affects all of our primary relationships** because we miss so much of what is going on with others. as well as **missing what God is up to** around us.

Pride kills discipleship. It keeps us **from following Jesus** because we know where we want to go. It stops **Jesus' ability to change us** because we decide who we are and how we will live. And it **puts the breaks on committing to Jesus' mission,** because that's something I want to decide for myself.

Humility is knowing who you are in relation to God and choosing to go lower.

Notice that there are **two parts to this definition**. The first part is knowing who you are in relationship to God. **How does God see you as opposed to how you might see yourself** when you are focused on yourself? Maybe you are **repeating what someone has told you** that you are. Then, the second part is choosing to go lower; **Jesus is our example**, he had complete confidence in how the Father saw him and the state of his relationship with God, the father. And **because of that sense of security, he chose to go lower** by serving and dying for everyone.

Today we are going to look at your true identity that can give you the confidence necessary to choose to go lower. You see we can't really practice humility and break out of our human tendency toward being self-absorbed if we don't know who we are in our relationship with God.

Here's a diagram that we will use for the rest of this series. **(Sphere's diagram)** Just look at it for a few moments and see what you notice about it. Today we start in the middle where the white flag is. That first sphere, or area of our lives, needs to wave the white flag of surrender. That is the first part of slaying the destructive demon of pride. **Start in the center and move outward.**

When we enter into a relationship with Jesus he gives us a new identity.

This passage from Ephesians describes the path of this relationship and how it can change for the better. Take note of how these words describe you and how that description changes as we read on.

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, **obeying the devil**—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³ **All of us used to live that way**, following the **passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature**. By our very nature we were **subject to God's anger**, just like everyone else. ⁴ **But God** is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, **he gave us life** when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) ⁶ **For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms** because we are united with Christ Jesus. ⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as **examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness** toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. ⁸ **God saved you by his grace when you believed**. And **you can't take credit for this**; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about

it. ¹⁰ For we are **God's masterpiece**. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:1-10

We start by being described as **dead, living in sin, following like slaves our sinful passions and desires and subject to God's anger**. Wow, that's a pretty tough description. You might be saying, "I'm not that bad." But compared to what God has for me, I am that bad. If you and I were to make a movie of all the rotten things we have done, said, and thought, we would be embarrassed to show it to anyone.

Then the verse spins on that word "but." Because of God and his grace, not our efforts, the description of who we are starts to change drastically. He now gives us life from death. He raises us up from that death and seats us where Jesus is seated. Jesus is a king, so we are raised up with a king. He points at us as **examples of what he can do**. Finally, you are his masterpiece.

If you have accepted Christ's gift of grace and forgiveness and started following him, then this is your story. If you haven't committed your life to Jesus, this could be your story.

Another turning point is the phrase; "God saved you by his grace when you believed." It's his grace, but we have to believe, or more accurately, put our trust in him.

Listen to the end of that story again. ⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. ⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:6-7

This means that anyone **who belongs to Christ** has become a **new** person. The old life is gone; a **new** life has begun! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Are you a fan, an enthusiast, or do you belong to him?

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. Ephesians 1:5 **We are adopted children**. That means he chose you. Being chosen feels good, doesn't it?

Jesus raised you up to where he is and you are united with him. Then he points to you as an **example** of his incredible grace and kindness. Then

you become a new creation. A masterpiece. You are adopted children of God. This is not just good news, this is the best news.

This is your identity if you believe or trust your life into his hands.

What is your response to this? It's more than just me believing to receive all of this. It is to repent and believe. To believe in this way is not intellectual understanding, but rather putting your trust in him. This is what it looks like to trust Jesus.

²⁸ Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." Matthew 11:28-30

Humility is the basis of how our relationship with Jesus gets started. But it's also how it continues and grows. When we enter into a relationship with Jesus, he gives us a new identity... Then we start walking behind Jesus which (also) takes humility.

And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6 Again, pride kills our ability to be Jesus' disciples, but humility or walking behind him allowing him to lead, releases more of God's grace to us.

Humbling yourself by walking behind Jesus is a transfer of allegiance. Here's a quote from the book, *The Revolutionary Disciple*. "Allegiance brings together both repentance and baptism because they both show our humble acceptance of the change in authority over our lives. Through baptism, we submit to and follow Christ. It's our entry point into abiding in Christ, where we walk with humility."

Being baptized is a powerful act of allegiance to Jesus. It is a way of saying, "I'm walking behind him from now on. I certainly will not do this perfectly, but it is my desire to walk behind Jesus."

The opposite of allegiance is rebellion. That is one way the Bible refers to sin, rebellion against Jesus' rightful position as king or ultimate authority. You may not feel like a rebel to refusing to allow Jesus to be king means making ourselves our own kings.

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behind Jesus, which takes humility...**This allows us to move from disciples of this culture to disciples of Jesus.**

A disciple is someone who follows a teacher to learn from them and copy how they live. We are a disciple of something or someone, it just isn't always Jesus. We can be a disciple of someone we see as successful in the way we define success. It can be a parent. It can be an ideology or worldview, like capitalism, socialism, the political left, or the political right.

Let's look at Ephesians 2 again. **Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. Ephesians 2:1-3**

Our culture does a great job of discipling people into certain ways of life, or ways of viewing life. Much of how we think is a part of us being disciplined by our culture or the world. When we naturally move toward a way of thinking or living that is opposed to what the Bible teaches, we are unknowingly disciplined by this world.

Signs that we might be unknowingly aligning our lives to the culture or being its disciple.

- Follow your dreams
- Success financially
- My truth, which is code for truth is within me
- Individualistic
- Do standards from the Bible and from Jesus' teachings offend you?
- I can do with my body anything I would like
- If I get all of what I want, it will have no effect on someone else getting all of what they want.

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We don't need to say too much about this. **Unless we are still relying on our own goodness, then my pride won't allow me to say that I was an enemy of God.**

Humility is to know who you are in relation to God and chose to go lower. In order to do that...Now we must remain in Christ.

I need to live in this new reality where I am alive, chosen, lifted up with Jesus, an example of what God's grace can do, a new creation, an adopted child of the king. What would it be like to live in this world as if that was your reality? Not a theory, but real.

Being a disciple of Jesus is not about arriving somewhere. It's not taking steps to get closer to him. It is to remain in him, not take your hand out of his and open yourself up to more of what he wants to show you. There's a big difference between viewing your relationship with God as something you are trying to earn or achieve to learn to live in this new reality where you are adopted and brought close by God.

The new reality is that we are adopted, chosen, examples of his grace, new creation, who are already close to him. Just stay there and allow his grace to transform you.

I'm using the word "remain," but you could just as easily use the word "abide." Listen to this beautiful image that describes what it means to abide or remain in Christ. "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. ⁵ "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. John 15:1-8
Remain is used 7 times!

Abiding or remaining does not mean we can have the "it's Just Jesus and me". After all, what is the church called in scripture, the body of Christ? How can you ignore the physical presence of Jesus in this word?

Let's say a man and a woman marry and the woman says, "I only care about your spirit or your soul, your body is not important. If you want to eat fast food every day and smoke camel unfiltered cigs and snort cocaine I don't care if you take care of it or not, don't need to touch you or have sexual relationship with you because I'm above that, I only need you in the

spirit. First of all, I don't think any man is going to go for that kind of relationship. **It's saying we are one only in a spiritual realm.**

Ok if that's too weird and uncomfortable, then the Bible also calls the church the bride of Christ. Let's say you have a friend and he really likes you but he absolutely hates your wife. He doesn't want to be around her and thinks she's below you, even worthless. **Do you think you are going to remain friends with this guy?** Not if you're smart. **How can you be my friend and hate the person who I love and am one with? You must not really love me.**

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. Proverbs 18:1 ESV This is the way I like to put it. **When we isolate ourselves from the church, we don't get wiser, we get weirder.** Yes, we do need to spend time alone with Jesus. **But that doesn't mean we isolate ourselves from others.**

Here's a very blunt way to say what we are driving at here. **Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they correct me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it. Psalm 141:5a** **Yes, you can make sure that the godly don't strike you, but that is pride.** Remember the **truth will set you free, but first it will make you angry.** Those who ignore that uncomfortable truth or just make sure they **never have any deep discussion or allow people to know them** well enough for it to happen. "Don't let me refuse it."

Pride is why we focus on individualism and consumerism in the church and refuse to let the body of Christ correct us.

Here's the way Jim Putman and Chad Harrington put it. **"The point here is that we don't abide in Christ in isolation, but with the people of God. God's beautiful design here helps us. Our individual relationship with Jesus is a good starting place for interpreting and applying Scripture to our lives, but we need help from others to check and balance our understanding of God's Word and voice. We hope by now you understand this requires great humility." Pg. 99**

I need people who are more mature to speak into my life and that demands humility. But we also need humility to allow **The Bible to speak into our lives.**

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Hebrew 4:12

Pride is the reason we don't allow the Bible into our lives. And when we do hear it, we treat it like something off of a Hallmark card. It's true, but kind of charmingly irrelevant. We don't want to allow it to expose what is wrong in our lives.

We want a nice soothing rub instead of a deep tissue massage that really gets in there and works out the kinks. I go to Miss Lisa because I want something that will hurt, but will help.

"These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word. Isaiah 66:2 We don't tremble much at God's word. It's filled with nice stories on what to believe and hints on having a happy life. No, it's the booming voice of an all-powerful creator of the universe. Ignore it at your peril.

We always need to get down to the point of learning humility from Jesus. What is God saying to me? What do I need to be obedient to what he is saying? And finally, whose help do I need to do this?

Learning humility:

Take that first step to repent and believe.

Is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about stepping over the line of faith and committing your allegiance to Jesus? Trusting him through repentance and belief.

Prayerfully consider...

Am I trying to walk in front of Jesus?

Does my allegiance to Jesus include giving His Word authority?

Let's pray together as you consider these questions. Share what you are hearing from God with someone who is a little further down the path than you are.