

Jesus Placed This Above Mission

Written by Bill Perkins

Confused and afraid, the disciples left the upper room and stepped onto the narrow Jerusalem street. The frigid air—like their growing fear—surrounded them, nipping at their faces and cutting through their robes. Holding their fluttering torches high, they followed Jesus out of the city. In less than 24 hours he would be dead.

A Spiritual Mystery

Suddenly he stopped. A key moment had arrived. He would tell them a spiritual mystery so profound that nothing would be the same.

In essence he said, “From now on, I want you to stop fighting to please God by trying to improve yourself and defeat your evil urges. Instead, rely on the fact that as long as we’re connected (and we will always be connected), I’ll work in you and through you to accomplish my purposes. So instead of fighting to become someone you’ll never be and striving to accomplish what you can’t achieve, give it up. Relax and rely on me.”

Of course, if Jesus had said it like that, the disciples might have missed the point. And so he took a grapevine in his hand and said, “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” (John 15:5, nasb).

On numerous occasions Jesus told them something, which they understood with the clarity of a blind man viewing a sunset. But the analogy of the vine and branch contains such profound and life-changing spiritual power that Jesus took no chance with the disciples. Just to make sure they didn’t miss his meaning or underestimate its importance Jesus used the word *abide* ten times in six verses (John 15:4-7, 9-10, nasb).

A Single Word

Think about it. Jesus could have said, “If you want to be fruitful, clean up your act, perform a religious ritual, tithe, abstain from alcohol, go to church, think positive thoughts, carry a big Bible, and stop having fun.” Instead he repeated a single word ten times:

Abide

Abide

Abide

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Abide

It occurred to me that unlike the Ten Commandments that Moses received on the mountain, Jesus repeated one word ten times. The Israelites were given a rock-hard set of rules. Jesus offered a flesh-and-blood friendship. He knew what the disciples would soon discover and what we must learn. Namely, a friendship with himself, not iron-willed determination to live up to the standards of God or man, produces a life that pleases God and changes the world.

Christ had a mission for his disciples and he has one for you and me. Yet at the vineyard he stressed friendship, not mission. Why? Because in the spiritual world who you know and how well you know him determines what you'll accomplish. All of your skills stand or fall on the foundation of your friendship with the King.
