

With leadership changes coming up and the beginning of new families, we wanted to take a step back from all of the *doing* of life. For this study, take a breather from the hustle and bustle of *doing* ministry so we can remind ourselves *why* we do ministry in the first place.

Our BCM mission statement is "After God's heart, in community, on mission." Tonight we're going to look at John 15 and how it reflects our mission statement.

Read John 15:4-17

1. After God's Heart // John 15:4-8

- a. Living in community and being on mission is important, but even if we are completely submersed in Christian community and outreach, it is not a substitution for our personal relationship with Christ. Seeking after anything but Christ will not satisfy us. The more we seek Christ the more we become like Him and the more our hearts align to His.
- b. Read John 15:4-8
- c. We hear the word "abide" a lot in this passage. What does the word "abide" mean to you?
- d. What is the difference between abiding and existing?
- e. Would you know your friend if you never spoke to them or spent time with them?
 - i. Of course you wouldn't. So why do you think you'll know God's heart if you don't spend time with Him. [kinda cheesy example, but you get the point]
- f. Now we know what the definition of abide is. We also know what the difference is between truly being intentional with our relationships with Christ and just existing in those relationships. So *why* should we abide in Christ?
 - i. To bear fruit. We do not spread the love of Christ on our own. God uses us to spread his love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Those things cannot overflow from us if we are not inextricably connected to source of the love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness to begin with.
- g. Why do we bear fruit? – verse 8
 - i. For God to be glorified through us. We abide to bear fruit. We bear fruit to glorify God.
- h. What is the result of not abiding in Christ?
 - i. Without daily communing with Christ, we are going to wither away and become more distant from Him. He doesn't move, we move from Him.
- i. Looking at verse 7 → Disclaimer: this is not the prosperity gospel. God's timing is perfect. Sometimes God will say yes, but His yes doesn't mean it's going to happen the way you want it to. Sometimes God will say no, but that doesn't mean He says never. The *only* way to know what he's saying is to abide in him and listen to him.

2. In Community // John 15:9-15

- a. Read John 15:9-15
- b. What does it mean to you that Jesus calls you his friend (verse 15)?
 - i. By calling us friends, Jesus is drawing us into community with him.
- c. Why is this community with Jesus so meaningful?
 - i. "We can't talk about being in relationship with other people without being clear of the relationship *within* us. We can't try and figure out community between us and other people without knowing how we are wired. The perfect example of community is God

Himself - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God is the perfect image of community. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created mankind in his own image..." Right from the start, we see that we are created BY community FOR community. **The need for community around us is fed by the Community within us."**

- d. Why are we here? The BCM as a whole is a community, right? Why isn't large community fellowship with 633 enough? Why do we also do small group studies?
 - i. We find the answer to this question in verse 13
 1. For a better application for verse 13, we can look at 1 Thessalonians 2:8 which says, "so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God **but our lives as well.**"
 2. Verse 13 isn't talking about just physical death as laying down our lives. It's talking about sacrifice: sacrificing time, money, energy, etc. How have you seen this demonstrated?
3. On Mission // John 15:16-17
 - a. Read John 15:16-17
 - b. Looking at the beginning of verse 16, has there ever been a time when God called you to do something that you didn't want to do?
 - i. He may call you to do something that you don't feel you have the talents or abilities to do, and you're right. You don't have the talents or the abilities, but God will grow you and mature you and equip you to fulfill the assignment He has given to you.
 - ii. God does this on purpose so that we are more reliant on him, which comes back full circle to abiding in him.
 - c. Looking at the second half of verse 16, what do you think that means?
 - i. When we ask the Lord for something, we are showing our dependence on him. We have to be fully dependent on God as we are on mission because it's not something we can do and it's not something we were created to do on our own.
 - ii. Like we said earlier, disclaimer: God always answers our prayers, but his answers may not be what we'd hoped.
 - d. Where does verse 17 fit into all of this?
 - i. We often wonder how God wants to use us to spread his love and his message. But if Jesus were standing in this room right now, he wouldn't look at you and say "Come here so I can use you." He'd say, "Come here so I can love you." We love other people because Jesus loves us. And Jesus loves other people through us. His love for us and for other people is *why* he commands us to be on mission by loving each other.

We close with this illustration. Our lives are full of sets of parenthesis. Some look like this .) and others look like this ...). Is there a difference? YES!

.) at the end of a sentence means it's over and a new sentence is beginning. God doesn't work quite like that. He can see the whole picture of our lives as they are a part of the whole story He is creating in the world. It's more like ...). The sentence is still continuing. There may be a pause, but it picks right back up.

Our lives are similar. God is interweaving all of our experiences together to continuously draw us closer to Him. Everything we do and everything we see is ultimately an invitation for us to ABIDE deeper and deeper in His love. So as we transition into a new leadership term, graduate from collage, or switch families, ask yourself, "How is God asking me to abide deeper in HIM?"