

FOLLOWING JESUS
A Disciple's Handbook

Lesson 12:
“Following Jesus in Resting and Abiding”

Resting and Abiding Introduction

Read Matthew 11:28-30

Throughout the Bible there are promises of rest and peace for the people of God. Jesus came to earth during a weary and restless time in Israel's history. The religious leaders had made all attempts at living for God burdensome. They put heavy laws and countless rules on the people. The scribes and Pharisees added to the Word of God and required the people to obey traditions rather than scriptural truths. In the eyes of these religious leaders, the more rules you attempted to follow, the more respected you were. It became a contest to see who could do the most rule-following in their own strength. The problem, though, was that no one was getting any closer to an intimate relationship with God, and everyone was growing tired of trying.

Then Jesus came modeling an abiding relationship with God the Father. Jesus was full of joy, full of peace, and full of strength. He and He alone offered the key to a life of rest found through an abiding relationship with the Living God. Jesus called out to the multitudes of tired, joyless, frustrated and hopeless people inviting them to come to Him and discover a reprieve for their restless souls. To those who responded to that call, He showed them how to live a life of resting while working with God. Jesus showed people how one could abound in strength, endurance, and rest while diligently doing the work of the kingdom. As time went on, His disciples learned to follow His example. The good news for them, and for followers of Jesus for all time, was that real resting could be found through authentic abiding in Him.

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Resting and Abiding Defined

Jesus called those who labored and were heavy laden to come to Him and find rest. (Read Matthew 11:28.) The word *labor* in this verse has to do with working in your own strength. The term *heavy laden* has to do with carrying burdens put on you by another. The word for *resting*

in the Scriptures means being given permission to stop. Jesus gives every disciple the permission to stop working in their own strength and carrying burdens put on them by others, and not by Him.

The word for *abiding* in the New Testament has to do with attaching and remaining—not detaching nor departing—holding onto something, continuing and enduring in something. Christ’s abiding relationship with the Father becomes the model for our abiding relationship with Him. Just as Jesus did nothing apart from the will of His Father and the work of the Holy Spirit, so we are called to do nothing apart from Him. It is this abiding relationship with Him that provides the abiding rest in Him. (☐ Read John 15:4-10.)

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Resting and Abiding in the Life of Jesus

Jesus exemplified physical rest and refreshment, and spiritual, mental, and emotional peace. We have no record in the Bible of Jesus ever being anxious. We have no record of Jesus ever being so emotionally exhausted that He was unable to fulfill the Father’s will. Jesus was full of peace and joy and told His disciples that as they abided in Him, their peace and joy would be full as well. (☐ Read John 15:11.) It was Christ’s moment-by-moment intimacy with and dependence upon the Father that kept Him serene and confident. Jesus lived in abundant joy, perpetual inner pleasure, and relentless rest because He abided in the presence of His Father through the Holy Spirit. (☐ Read Psalm 16:11.)

Right before Jesus’ crucifixion He told His disciples that He was granting them the gift of divine peace through the Holy Spirit, who He would send to be the source of His life in them. He told them they had no reason to fear, and no reason for their hearts to be troubled or overly concerned. He told them by abiding in Him as He had abided in the Father, they would experience and express the same undisturbed composure that they had seen manifested in Him. Rest and renewal would be their perpetual state as they stayed constantly connected to Him. (☐ Read John 14:25-27; 15:9-11.)

Jesus exemplified physical rest and refreshment, and spiritual, mental, and emotional peace.

Resting and Abiding in the Lives of Jesus' Followers

Jesus' disciples learned to follow His example by resting and abiding in Him. They learned that their primary need was not rest *from* work, but rather rest *in* work – the work He had called them to. As they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord Jesus worked alongside them confirming their message with mighty signs and wonders. (☐ Read Mark 16:20.) It was in their abiding in Him that they found their anointing through Him, which provided the perpetual rest that was in and of Him. The early church found this same deep refreshment and rest as they lived life in Jesus together. (☐ Read Acts 2:46.) By yoking up with Jesus, these disciples carried no unnecessary burdens. They lived in a constant state of gladness and singleness of heart and purpose.

The Apostle Paul often began his letters to the churches with a greeting of grace, peace and rest found in an abiding relationship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (☐ Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-2.) This same Paul wrote that while believers' lives in the flesh were frail and limited, they were filled with the extraordinary power and strength of God. (☐ Read 2 Corinthians 4:7.) He likened believers' lives to clay pots – fragile and easily broken. Yet, at the same time, he wrote that while the human vessel was vulnerable, it could also be made victorious and powerful through the inner work of God's grace. Paul's testimony was that throughout his life of resting and abiding in Christ Jesus, he found the strength he needed to declare the gospel and to demonstrate its love and power. (☐ Read 2 Timothy 4:17.)

Resting and Abiding in Our Lives

We are a natural people living with and linked to a supernatural Savior. And while our bodies will experience fatigue and tire, our souls can experience a state of perpetual refreshment. This was Jesus' promise to His original followers and is His promise to us as His followers as well. (☐ Read Isaiah 54:13; Matthew 11:28-30.) The key to this is always the same – remain yoked to Jesus, abiding in a relationship of rest and renewal in Him. Living apart from the life-giving will and work of our Lord will always produce frustration and failure. Living abiding in the life-giving will and work of our Lord will always produce encouragement and effectiveness.

The Lord who calls His disciples into the yoke to work is also the Good Shepherd who causes His sheep to lie down in green pastures. (☐ Read Psalm 23:1-2.) The Lord who calls us each morning to rise from our bed is the same Lord who calls us each evening to lie down and sleep peacefully. (☐ Read Psalm 4:8; Psalm 127:2.) Jesus does not make His disciples weary and heavy laden. He doesn't overload them, He doesn't overwork them, and He doesn't overwhelm them. Instead, He strengthens, sustains and refreshes all who pursue resting and abiding in Him.

Living abiding in the life-giving will and work of our Lord will always produce encouragement and effectiveness.

MEMORIZE: *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)*

Use the following lines to write out the scripture to help you commit it to memory.

KEY TRUTH: Just as Jesus did nothing apart from the will of His Father and the work of the Holy Spirit, so we are called to do nothing apart from Him. It is this abiding relationship with Him that provides the abiding rest in Him.

YOUR RESPONSE:

This is how you can respond in loving obedience to Jesus as you apply the truths from this lesson to your life.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any situations in your life where you walk in your own strength.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any attitudes, actions, and/or responsibilities that are keeping you from resting and abiding.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you specific areas where you must grow in endurance for the assignments the Lord is giving you as you rest and abide.
- Commit to Jesus that you will abide in Him and walk in His strength for His work.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Lesson Review

Review each section from the lesson on the previous pages to fill in each blank below. This review will help to reinforce the truths from this lesson in your life.

1. The word for _____ in the Scriptures means being _____
_____ to _____.

2. The word for _____ in the New Testament has to do with _____ and _____ —not detaching nor departing— _____ onto something, _____ and _____ in something.
3. Jesus lived in abundant _____, perpetual inner _____, and relentless _____ because He _____ in the _____ of His Father through the Holy Spirit.
4. Jesus' _____ learned to _____ His example by _____ and _____ in Him.
5. Living _____ in the life-giving _____ and _____ of our Lord will always produce _____ and _____.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Life Reflection

Using the journaling section on the pages at the end of this lesson, write in your own words your responses to the following questions.

1. What have you learned and what has impacted you personally from this lesson?
2. In reading the scripture references in this lesson, what are you sensing and seeing the Holy Spirit highlighting and revealing to you that will enable you to better follow Jesus?
3. As a disciple and follower of Jesus, what steps of loving obedience do you need to take to see what you have learned in this lesson become ongoing practices and patterns in your life?