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Title: “The Command” (Part 1 of the GROW series)

Text: John 15:1-17

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John 15:1-17

INTRO: In this first message in our series on spiritual growth, we take John 15:1-17 as a our launching point. In this well-known passage, Jesus tells us plainly that we cannot do anything apart from him and that we are to abide in Him. But what does it look like to “abide?” The goal of this series is to unpack what it means to abide and grow in Christ.

Question: What do we mean by spiritual growth and bearing fruit?

We’re not talking necessarily about some tangible achievement or work, although those certainly flow from this. Ultimately, the answer to this question is our degree of Christ-likeness (which is obviously involves a discussion as well). Romans 8:29 tell us that we are predestined as Christians to be conformed into the image of Christ. So that’s what we’re headed towards when we consider this idea of spiritual growth.

1. GOD TAKES GROWTH VERY SERIOUSLY. (John 15:2)

The world is made up of two kinds of branches—those that bear fruit, and those that don’t. The ones that don’t bear fruit (non-Christians) are taken away. The ones that do bear fruit (Christians) are inevitably going to be pressed on and cut and trimmed and pruned by God. So much for easy believism. The truth contained in this one verse alone smashes the notion of consumeristic-self-centered-cultural-nominal Christianity. God is breathtakingly serious about our growth.

There simply is no category in the Bible for a non-fruiting bearing Christian. To be a true Christian means that you will inevitably to some degree bear fruit. This should not cause us to be overly analytical or judgmental towards one another, but should cause us to evaluate our own lives first.

2. THE ONLY WAY WE CAN GROW IS TO ABIDE IN JESUS. (John 15:4)

Definition of abide: remain, continue, dwell, tarry, endure in, live in, to sojourn.

Question: What does it mean to “abide” in Jesus?

There are three essential components:

1. Word
2. Spirit
3. Community

3. BECAUSE APART FROM JESUS WE CAN DO NOTHING. (John 15:5)

This is one of those things Christians just kind of say that it is in danger of sounding trite. In order to feel the real weight and gravity of this statement we have to do some work. We cannot grow until we feel the utter futility of life disconnected from Christ.

This does not mean that we cannot do things apart from God, rather that we cannot do anything of eternal significance apart from God. Now, we can take this one of two ways.

- Psalm 127:1

4. AND ALL OF THIS IS SO THAT WE CAN REFLECT GOD'S GLORY. (John 15:8)

This is hard for us to see, because we live in an utterly self-absorbed culture. The quicker we realize that the universe and everything in it (whether good or bad) was created to glorify God and that when God receives glory we are actually most satisfied...the more joyful we will be.

5. WHICH IS THE MOST SATISFYING AND JOYFUL THING WE CAN DO. (John 15:11)

God's way and glory is not counter to our joy. We've been sold a bad version of Christianity if we think that living life according to God's ways is somehow less than joyful and requires us to trade in pleasure. Yes, we need to say no to pleasures to follow God, but these are always lesser and ultimately broken pleasures that fall vastly short of the greater pleasure God has for His people.

THE COMMAND:

The command of Jesus in this passage is that we would abide in him, and that we would love one another. As a launching point for our series on growth, this is where we need to begin our wrestling match.

Questions for personal reflection:

1-What does "abide" look like in my life?

2-What is my biggest obstacle to abiding in Christ in my life right now? (schedule, habit, relationship, etc.)