

## Abiding in Christ

by Dr. Barbara Green Moses

**Passage: John 15:1–10**

### My Plan

I remember receiving the telephone call from Polly Ann Brown who invited me to apply for the position of principal at Philadelphia Mennonite High School. This was going to be the first Mennonite High School located in a major metropolitan area in the United States. Initially, I said no because I was “happy” in my position at the School District of Philadelphia. I was the Director of Social Studies Education, travelling around the world, mentoring students and teachers, and hosting a weekly television program.

I had 30 years of service and was just five years away from full retirement. I never wanted to be the principal of any school. To make matters worse, at the time Polly Ann contacted me, there was no building and the salary was about half of what I was making. I was thoroughly convinced and convicted that God was not asking me to accept this assignment.

### God's Plan

For approximately one month after I said no to Polly Ann, the Holy Spirit would not let me sleep. I was miserable, crying daily, trying to figure out how I could live on half my salary, while doing something “I” never wanted to do. The one thing I did want was to be in God’s will, even though I was not sure what that would mean. I counseled with my pastor who told me to abide in Christ. He said, “Stay in God’s word, fast and pray, and God will show you His will in His word.” Through this time of studying, fasting, and praying, the Lord gave me Joshua 1:9 with direct orders, “I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (NRSV) I accepted the position with the faith that God had given me, as I abided in Him.

This year marks my tenth anniversary as principal. The Lord has answered prayers, opened doors, and provided in miraculous ways. I was “happy” working for Pharaoh, but I am experiencing true joy working for and abiding in Christ.

### Characteristics of Abiding in Christ—John 15:4–10

The key word “abide” is mentioned eleven times in verses 4–10.

It means to continue, keep, or remain in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us to produce fruit. This requires the Word of God and the confession of sin so that nothing blocks our communion with Him. It also requires obeying Him because we love Him.

When we abide in Christ, the evidence is apparent. We bear fruit, are pruned, and grow in our relationships with God and others. Remember, branches don't eat the fruit, others do. We must produce fruit by our words and works that others may be fed. We bear fruit as we grow in holiness and obedience. Christian giving is fruit from a dedicated life. The "fruit of the Spirit" in Gal. 5:22 is the kind of fruit that characterizes Christians, glorifies God, and draws others to Him.

Abiding in Christ requires our Father's pruning, which is the cutting away of those things which will not allow us to produce bigger and better fruit. No one likes the pruning process, but our Father knows just what and where to cut for our good and the good of others. He prunes us so that we can produce more and better fruit for His glory.

Our prayers are answered when we abide in Christ. By studying His word, we learn what to ask, and we learn to understand which of our expectations of Him are appropriate.

Abiding in Christ must be cultivated in the Christian life. It demands worship, meditation on God's word, prayer, sacrifice, and service. Now, that is real joy! As we cultivate this deep relationship of love and joy with Christ, we will never want to return to the shallow life of the lackadaisical Christian.

## PONDER

1. *What steps do I need to take to abide in Christ more deeply?*
2. *In what ways can I better demonstrate to others my relationship with Jesus?*
3. *"Believing" is an action word. How can I conduct my life in ways that help me share Christ more boldly with others?*
4. *Identify a time when the Father pruned you, and your life produced better fruit.*

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your presence. Empower me through your Holy Spirit to seek your will as I abide more deeply in you. 📖