

come Christlike (Col. 3.5-11). Let's examine what it means for the believer to put off lying.

First we need to understand what lying is. To lie is to speak a false statement or piece of information deliberately presented as true. It is also anything meant to deceive or to give a false impression. The word translated "do not lie" is *pseudesthe*, a present tense imperative command meaning "stop lying" to one another. In other words, the Holy Spirit assumes that deceit is part of every unsaved man's character. But now that one is saved, he has died to his old way of living, and lying must be put off.

**Why Lying is Wrong** There are many reasons why lying is wrong. Foremost of all, lying is Satanic. Every lie has its source in the Father of Lies, the Devil (Jn 8.44). In fact, to lie to another believer is to lie to the Holy Spirit, who is God (Ac 5.3-4). Believers renounced the old life and its sinful practices at salvation (Col 3.9). Our new life is a quest for Christlikeness. This quest is a growth process through knowledge (Col 3.10). Believers will not grow Christlike unless we change our mind about deceit (1Pe 2.1-3). Jesus Christ, our example, never used deceit (1Pe 2.21-22). In addition, nothing destroys unity in the body of Christ more effectively than deceitfulness (Eph 4.25). All Christians are members of the body of Christ, and therefore to sin against a brother is a sin against yourself (Eph 4.25). Third, everyone who loves and practices lying shall never enter eternal life (Rev 22.15). God brings judgment upon sinners by turning them loose to practice this sin (Ro 1.29).

**Scriptural Examples of Lying** The Bible lists for us some areas in which God desires us to speak the Truth in the church. *First of all, we must be careful not to lie to ourselves about our true spiritual condition* (Ps 15.2). We must be careful not to lie to ourselves about our salvation. "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar" (1Jn 2.4). "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1Jn 4.20). Neither should we lie to ourselves about our sinful nature. "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1Jn 1.10).

A second form of deceit against which we must be on guard is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is

saying but not doing. Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and told the church that they had donated the entire sales price to the church. However, they had withheld some of that promised money for themselves. Peter charged them with lying to the Holy Spirit, and God struck them dead on the spot (Ac 5.1-11). Their sin was that they said they gave it all, when in fact they had only given part to the Lord (v4). Believers should recognize that our lives must match our talk, or else we too are hypocrites.

**We will not grow Christlike unless we change our minds about deceit.**

*Third, believers should be aware that false teachers will seek to infiltrate and deceive the church of Jesus Christ.* False teachers are always liars (2Pe 2.1-3). These persons come into a church to seek to destroy the liberty (Gal 2.4) and unity (Pr 6.19) that Christians enjoy.

*Finally, believers need to speak honestly.* Believers need to keep their word (Ps 15.4). We ought to meet our obligations on time and avoid making promises we cannot keep or have no intention of keeping. We should also avoid making illegitimate excuses for our failures or telling people we are busy when we are not busy. We must never ask others to lie for us. Furthermore, we need to be honest in our financial dealings. Car salesmen are notorious for concealing defects in a used car and selling it for more than its real value. But Christians ought to be full of integrity and honesty. Tell the truth even if it costs you money (Pr 19.22). Such integrity is a delight to God (Pr 12.22). Do not exaggerate the truth. Tell it like it really is. "But speaking the Truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ" (Eph 4.15).

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## Putting Theology Back in the Pew

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### Abiding: A Characteristic of All Believers

Andy Naselli

“Abide in Me, and I in you.” This English translation of the words that Jesus spoke to His disciples in John 15.4 sounds strangely mystical. When many believers read or hear these words, they yearn to advance to a deeper, more intimate experience of resting in Jesus. Those same people, however, often become disillusioned and frustrated in the elusive pursuit to achieve and maintain the experiential high of becoming an “abiding” believer. The word “abiding” (*meno*) means *reside* or *remain*. What does it mean to abide in Christ? How does one abide in Christ? Conservative evangelicals answer these questions differently.

**The “Abiding” Controversy: Some or All Believers?** There are two major views on abiding. First, some maintain that only *some* believers abide.

This view equates abiding with a mystical second tier in the Christian life. Those who do not abide are *carnal* believers, and those who abide are *spiritual* or *Spirit-filled* believers. Those who hold this view also maintain that 1 John gives evidences of whether one is an abiding, Spirit-filled believer as opposed to a non-abiding, carnal believer. Second, others maintain that *all* believers characteristically abide. Many who hold this view also maintain that 1 John gives evidences of whether one is a believer. This controversy primarily involves soteriology, namely progressive sanctification. What follows is an argument for the second view by exegeting the key passage on abiding, John 15.1-10.

There are three major views on John 15.1-10, and the key issue is the identification of the fruitless branch in 15.2 and 15.6. Some identify the fruitless branch as a genuine

believer who loses his salvation and experiences eternal damnation. Others generally identify the fruitless branch as a carnal believer whom the Father tenderly nurtures or severely chastises. A third group generally identifies the fruitless branch as a professing believer who evidences that his connection to Christ is superficial and experiences eternal damnation.

**Jesus’ Metaphor for Abiding (15.1-6)** A simile is an explicit comparison using *like* or *as*. For example, “All flesh is like grass” (1Pe 1.24). A metaphor is an implied comparison without *like* or *as*. For example, “All flesh is grass” (Isa 40.6). “A metaphor or simile has

**“Abide in Me, and I in you” means “Obey My words, and let My words remain in you.”**

three parts: the topic or item illustrated by the image, the image itself and the point of similarity or comparison (the actual meaning of the metaphor or simile in the passage)” (Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 104). In John 15, Jesus uses various metaphors to illustrate abiding. There is a single point of similarity for each item.

(1) The point of similarity between Jesus and the true vine (15.1) is that they are both *the exclusive source of fruitfulness*. A vine pours life into its branches, which is the only way its branches can be fruitful.

(2) The point of similarity between God the Father and the vinedresser (15.1) is that they both *ensure increased fruitfulness*. A vinedresser increases the fruitfulness of branches by removing certain branches and pruning others (15.2).

(3) The point of similarity between those connected to Jesus and the branches (15.5) is

**Table 1. The Components of Jesus' Metaphor in John 15.**

1. ITEM	2. IMAGE	3. POINT OF SIMILARITY
1. Jesus	The true vine	The exclusive source of fruitfulness
2. God the Father	The vinedresser	Ensures increased fruitfulness
3. Those connected to Jesus: a. Judas: phony believers b. 11 disciples: genuine believers	Branches: a. fruitless branches b. fruitful branches	Connection to the source of fruitfulness: a. non-living connection b. living connection
4. Jesus' words	Pruning Knife	Means of cleansing to increase fruitfulness
5. What believers produce	Fruit	Product of living connection
6. How believers produce it	Remaining livingly connected	Abiding

their *connection to the vine, whether non-living or living*. Every unfruitful branch connected to the vine ("in Me," 15.2) is removed, thrown away, dried up, gathered, cast into the fire, and burned (15.6). Unfruitful branches evidence a non-living connection to the vine. As Jesus spoke these words to His eleven disciples, Judas was evidencing his superficial connection to Jesus (cf. 13.1-2, 10-11, 26-30). In contrast to Judas, the eleven disciples were fruitful and clean (15.3). Judas represents false believers superficially connected to Jesus, and the eleven disciples represent genuine believers livingly connected to Jesus.

(4) The point of similarity between Jesus' words (15.3) and the vinedresser's pruning knife (15.2) is that they are both *the means or instrument of cleansing to increase fruitfulness*. Though some may think of God's pruning instrument as uncomfortable experiences such as illness, loss of job, troubled finances, or the loss of a loved one, Jesus' metaphor identifies the instrument as God's words. The Father's instrument for pruning the eleven disciples was Jesus' words. His instrument for pruning all believers in general is His words as recorded in Scripture. Every branch that bears fruit experiences the vinedresser's pruning, and every believer experiences the Father's pruning by His words.

(5) The point of similarity between fruit produced by those connected to Jesus and fruit produced from the branches connected to the vine is that they are *the product of living connection*. Jesus mentions "fruit" six times (15.2, 4-5, 8). He refers to no fruit (15.2, 4), fruit (15.2), more fruit (15.2), and much fruit (15.5, 8).

(6) The point of similarity between how those connected to Jesus produce fruit and how branches that remain livingly connected to the vine produce fruit is *abiding*. Branches

that produce fruit evidence a living connection to the vine. Professing believers who do not produce fruit (i.e., Judas) evidence a non-living connection to Jesus, and believers who produce fruit (i.e., the eleven disciples) evidence a living connection to Jesus. Abiding is necessary for fruitfulness.

**Jesus' Command to Abide (15.4a)**  
"Abiding" occurs ten times in 15.4-10 (15.4, 5-6, 7, 9, 10) and is implied twice (15.4-5). In Jesus' first use of "abiding," however, He did not define abiding. He commanded it: "Abide in Me, and I in you" (15.4a). This command has at least three implications. First, believers are already livingly connected to Jesus. Second, believers are required and responsible to maintain their living connection to Jesus; it is not optional. Third, believers are equally required and responsible for Jesus to abide in them.

**Jesus' Reasons for Abiding (15.4-6)**  
After commanding the eleven disciples, Jesus gives three reasons that they should abide in Him. First, fruitfulness is impossible apart from abiding in Jesus: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. For apart from Me you can do nothing" (15.4-5). Jesus emphatically asserts that it is impossible for believers to be fruitful without abiding in Jesus. Second, abiding results in fruitfulness: "He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit" (15.5).

Third, failing to abide results in eternal damnation: "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned" (15.6). This verse must be interpreted in light of other clear Scripture. The burned branch cannot refer to people who have never professed to follow Jesus because they were attached to Him in a

non-living way. It also cannot refer to people who are attached in a living way because all believers are fruitful and will not experience a fiery destruction. It must refer to people who superficially appear to be attached to Jesus but are not livingly attached to Him. First John 2:19 describes such people: "They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us" (cf. Ro 9.6; 11.20; Phm 3.18-19). All genuine believers are fruitful (cf. Mt 7.16-17; Ro 6; Eph 2.10; Jas 2.14-26). The fruitless branches in John 15 do not represent non-Spirit-filled believers in contrast to Spirit-filled believers. Fruitless branches represent phony, professing believers who experience eternal damnation (cf. Mt 3.10-12; 5.22; 13.40-42, 50; 25.41; Mk 9.43-49; Lk 3.17; 2Th 1.7-9; Rev 20.10-15).

**Jesus' Explanation of Abiding (15.7-10)**  
After giving reasons for abiding, Jesus explains what it means to abide. First, Jesus explains what it means for Him to abide in believers. The difference between verses 4 and 7 is significant: "Abide in Me, and I in you" (15.4) and "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you" (15.7a). The additional words "My words" explain the second part of Jesus' command in 15.4. Jesus abides in believers when His words abide in believers (cf. 6.63).

Second, Jesus explains the result of His abiding in believers: "Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (15.7b-8). When believers internalize Jesus' words, they will make Scripturally-informed requests, and God will answer them (cf. 14.13-14). The fruit in this context is the answers to those prayers (15.8). Bearing much fruit in this way glorifies God the Father and evidences that someone is Jesus' disciple (cf. 8.31; 1Jn 2.24; Col 1.23).

Third, Jesus explains what it means for believers to abide in Him. The difference between His commands in verses 4 and 9 is significant: "Abide in Me" (15.4) and "Abide in My love" (15.9). The command in verse 9 further specifies what Jesus is commanding, and verse 10 clarifies what this means: "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love." Jesus abides in believers when His words abide in believers, and believers abide in Jesus when they obey His words. Abiding in

Jesus is obeying Jesus (cf. 1Jn 3.24). In 15.10b, Jesus illustrates how believers should abide in His love: "Just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Jesus' obedience to the Father is a theme throughout John's Gospel (4.34; 5.19; 6.38; 8.39, 55; 14.31). Thus, "Abide in Me, and I in you" (15.4) means "Obey My words, and let My words remain in you." Just as every believer is filled by the Spirit to some degree, every believer abides in Jesus to some degree, resulting in different degrees of fruitfulness.

## Failing to abide results in eternal damnation.

**Conclusion** "Abide" means *reside or remain*. It is never used in a way that supports the existence of a third category of believers who do not abide. In John 15, the key passage on abiding, Jesus contrasts genuine believers (fruitful branches that remain in the vine) with phony believers (fruitless branches that do not remain in the vine). Jesus' words in John 15.4 should not be frustratingly confusing to believers. "Abide in Me, and I in you" means "Obey My words, and let My words remain in you." Abiding is a characteristic of all believers.

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## Changing the Garments of Sin: Lying

Steve Owen

The first lies ever told resulted in one third of the angels falling from heaven with the Liar (Rev 12.4). The first lie ever told to a human being resulted in the banishment of man from Paradise, an entire universe cursed with death and decay, and the subsequent death of every human being ever to be born (Ge 3.1-19; Jn 8.44).

Lying never makes anyone happy (Pr 19.5,9). Long term, it never brings success (Pr 21.6). Yet in some cultures it is a way of life (Tit 1.12). Indeed, we are all natural born liars (Ps 58.3). But when one is born again, he is to put off the garments of sin in order to be-