

## Christ Abides in our Bodies

Our relationship with Christ involves our bodies, as well as our souls. One way this happens is the mutual abiding of Christ in the believer and the believer in Christ (Jn 14:23; 15:4). After considering this theme, we'll finish with an activity.

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1. What does it mean to abide in Christ?

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” (John 15:4-7, 9-10; see also 1 Jn 2:28, 3:24)

“No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is being perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So, we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love being perfected in us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears is not being perfected in love. We love because he first loved us.” (1Jn 4:12-19)

2. The Greek word translated “abide” in these passages is *meno*, and it means to remain, live, abide, or dwell. How literally are we to take it?

We are to live in God. We are to recognize he is our dwelling place – our home – and that means we are to be present to him, we are to open up to him, we are to spend time consciously with him, attending to him, attuned to his mind and heart; to spend “face-time,” joint attentional focus. Abiding is a term of closeness, intimacy, and communion.

But the Scriptural teaching shows that this abiding is a *mutual* abiding. We abide in God while God abides in us.

This is a psychological as well as a spiritual activity. It requires us to have a self that is permeable, in which another person can come into me, into my body and dwell in me. That sounds like possession. What’s the difference between demon possession and Christ abiding in us.

What keeps us from abiding in Christ?

Sin

Too much trauma in our family of origin, that needs healing.

Spiritual abuse

3. God is everywhere
  - A. God encompasses the universe
  - B. He is, therefore, present everywhere in the universe
  - C. He is *fully* present wherever he is  
What’s the difference between B and C?
  
4. A brief history of his *special* presence
  - A. Abraham
  - B. Moses (Ex 34)
  - C. The tabernacle
  - D. The temple (Is 6)
  - E. Jesus Christ (Col 1:18)
  - F. The Spirit of Christ in new covenant believers (Jn 7:37), so they are now the temple of God (1Co 6:19)
  
5. Our body, God’s temple
  - A. God is holy  
How is it possible for the holy God to dwell in sinful human beings?  
Are Christians only sinful?
  
  - B. The different roles of the Trinity in the indwelling of new covenant believers  
Which one dwells in believers and why? What does it matter?  
Why the seeming confusion between Christ and the Holy Spirit

The Father signifies the God who is absolutely external to me, who is the sovereign majesty and righteous judge of all the earth. Yahweh. The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom.

The Son signifies the God who became a human being, joining himself to my life, dying for my sin, suffering on my behalf, who is external to me, seated in heaven.  
Ascension Day

The Holy Spirit signifies the God who has been given to me and lives inside of me

6. What does it mean that Christ abides in the bodies of believers?
  - A. He's knocking (Rev 3:20). He desires to dwell in us.  
That means we have to open up the door of our hearts (by grace).
  - B. The role of faith (Eph 3:16-19)  
A synonym of faith: active receptivity
  - C. Where does Christ abide?
  - D. What's the closest physical analogue to Christ's indwelling?  
Sexual relations  
Song of Songs  
This could be scandalous or it could be healing

But there is another human analogue to Christ's indwelling

We can dwell in one another

Parents dwell in their children and we need them to indwell us.

When our parents are mostly loving and gentle with us, they are able to enter into us, and we are able to grow with a sense of another loving inside us, and we will internalize that.

But if parents didn't get this, they couldn't give it to us. If our parents were chronically angry and critical, we will grow up without loving psychological indwelling, and we will come to internalize that angry critic.

Do you have an inner critic? That is probably because our parent's indwelling anger got internalized.

Do you often feel lonely or needy? That may be because your parents didn't dwell in you lovingly and possibly were neglectful, so no one dwelt in us in love.

How can we get healing for that, if we didn't get it in childhood.

Most human conversation is not indwelling. We are separate from each other and we stand in front of each other and we talk to each other – but we are not indwelling in each other.

Good therapists are able to be safe enough, so that the counselee allows the counselor to dwell in them, and that contributes to our healing. We need that to get relational healing.

Friends can dwell in each other. Church members can dwell in each other.

And Jesus can dwell in us in a healing way. And dwelling in Jesus and letting him dwell in us prepares us for dwelling in one another, and vice versa.

- E. Let's take a moment to recognize Christ's abiding in us.

Focus on where he is in you.

Imagine Christ is in you and he's breathing in you, and as he breathes, your lungs open up and breathe out, open up and breathe out.

Let him breathe in you.

7. The psychospiritual benefits and challenges of Christ's indwelling
  - A. Wonder and awe
  - B. This has the potential to replace our loneliness
  - C. He dwells within me: reciprocal intimacy with Jesus  
He seeks face-time with you (and me).  
He invites you to share your thoughts, feelings, and story with him  
He wants to share his thoughts, feelings, and story with you  
He wants our good: over time that means that his thoughts and our thoughts become one; his feelings and our feelings become one; and his story and our story become one.
  - D. Is Christ always there? What about "Dark nights of the soul"?
  - E. Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (Col 3:15)  
Can you do this?  
Christ dwelling in us is a way we can access his peace.
8. A *lectio divina* exercise: Mark 4:35-41  
And a breath prayer:  
"Come into me and say..., (breathing in)  
Peace, be still." (breathing out)