



**Leader Note:** Each week, the message will utilize a visual illustration to help describe what it means to abide in Jesus. You can use pictures projected on a screen and/or bring in physical props to help with these illustrations.

### **Spiritual Batteries**

Have you ever had a dead battery on your phone? Has it happened at a really bad time?

**Leader Note:** Show a battery or an image of a battery to your students.

Let me tell you about a time in my life when I had a dead phone battery at an inopportune time.

**Leader Note:** Share your dead battery story. Here's the story I used in my message as an example of what to share.

*This past week, I attended a youth pastor training school. We stayed in the dorm rooms on campus in Atlanta for ten days. I had a problem, though, because I forgot my phone charger at home. I had the USB cord for my car charger, but I did not have the brick to plug into the wall. What I decided to do instead was to use the cord and attach it to my computer in order to charge it. This mixed up arrangement threw off my weekly routine in a way that I cannot explain. I could not get my phone to 100% the entire week because I was constantly using my computer to take notes. In fact, my phone died while I was on a video call with my mom and wife attempting to see my kids.*

Who here has a difficult time keeping his or her phone battery charged?

Are one of those people who always has a phone charger with you, a charger in your bag, a charger in the car, a charger at school, a charger at church and more? Have you ever been faced with the awful experience of needing to use your phone only to find out you have a dead phone battery? Most can relate to this dying battery situation. Well, a lot of people treat their relationship with God like a dying phone battery.

I want to ask you all a question: do you approach God this same way?

A lot of people treat their spiritual lives like a battery. The concern I have is that most of us journey around with our spiritual batteries almost zapped of their charge. The thing that I know for sure is that we need our relationships with God. We need a tether that keeps us connected to a loving God. Here's a couple of quick thoughts about seeing your connection with God like charging a battery:

- Instead of getting our spiritual batteries fully charged, some seek a quick, juiced connection.
- We come to church each week (or as often as we can "find" the time), and we get just enough Jesus to last us to the next week.
- Some of us want to leave ourselves plugged up to God overnight, which will ultimately leave us with a dysfunctional battery.

As I think about what it means to have a relationship with God and what this connection with God is supposed to look like, there is something very important I need to communicate with you. We have messed this entire spiritual journey up. Let me give this powerful thought to you right now: we don't have spiritual batteries. Quit trying to charge yourself up just enough to face the challenges that are before you. Our relationships with God don't work that way.

Think about a battery. A battery exists apart from the source. Once a battery is charged, it can exist on its own. We were not created to exist on our own!

The Bible has a much different way of describing our spiritual relationship with Jesus, and I want you to listen for the image that Jesus Himself uses to describe our connection with Him.

### **Turn to the Scripture**

Let's look at what the Bible has to say about this connection.

John 15:1,4-5 (ESV) - 1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

4 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. 5 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.

Instead of a battery, Jesus describes our relationship with Him to be like what? A vine.

A vine is not like a battery. We often treat our discipleship with God like charging a battery for our souls. Jesus did not say, "Recharge yourself in me." What did Jesus say? "Abide in me, and I in you."

Because of this bad picture of the way our connection with God works [spiritual batteries], we try to do it ourselves apart from Jesus all the time. Instead of thinking that you have to get plugged into Jesus momentarily in order to get your spiritual battery recharged, realize that you cannot do it by yourself. Your battery is not sufficient, and God did not intend it that way. God made us to be in relationship with Him not in an occasional or momentary sort of way. God designed us to be in constant relationship with him at all times.

Jesus describes this two-way connection and our dependency in one word: abide. We are to abide in Jesus, and Jesus will abide in us.

John's Gospel uses this idea of abiding several times. Jesus says these things about abiding...

- Father abides in Jesus. John 14:10
- Jesus abides in the Father.
- The Spirit abides in us. John 14:16
- We abide in the Spirit.
- Jesus abides in us. John 15:4
- We abide in Jesus.

Abiding is so much different than recharging, and this is good news for us today.

Let's talk about a couple more helpful images to clarify what it means for us to abide in Jesus.

## **Holding and Being Held**

Let me give you a picture of what it looks like to abide.

Turn to someone beside you right now and shake his or her hand.

**Leader Note:** Show an image of a handshake.

You are holding each other, right? At the same time, I want you to put your hand on the outside of the other person's hand. While this might seem awkward, I want you to think about how you are simultaneously holding the other person AND being held at the same time.

This example helps us understand how our relationship with Jesus works. At the exact moment that we are holding on to Jesus, He is holding on to us.

Abiding in Jesus is a constant process in which we are at all times connected to Jesus. We are holding on to Jesus, and Jesus is holding on to us. It is us keeping ourselves connected to Jesus, and it is Jesus holding us tight in connection to Him.

Most of us, as we get connected to Jesus, see our spiritual lives as something we do. We see church as something we do. We see Bible study and prayer as things we do. Our spiritual lives are not things we do. Yes, these spiritual disciplines can help us, but these things are not our connection to Jesus. These things we do are not Jesus. They are a means to Jesus, yes, but they are not Jesus. Stop worshipping the spiritual act and choose to worship Jesus. Styles of worship are a great example of how we can get the cart before the horse in this regard. The mature disciple chooses to see Jesus in all genres, regardless of preference.

Here is another example of what it means to hold and be held, which helps us understand what it means to abide in Jesus. Think about a parent holding a baby.

**Leader Note:** Show a picture of a parent holding a baby.

Abiding is holding and being held constantly. As a child being held and holding on to God, we embrace and are being embraced by God. There is something so freeing in seeing our embrace of God in this way. We are

free to lean on God and lay on God in our most joyful moments and in our deepest pains. This image is much closer to what it means to abide in Jesus.

This image of a baby holding onto a parent and being held by a parent is helpful, but it is not complete.

### **Connecting to the Vine**

If comparing our spiritual lives to a battery that needs to be charged is not sufficient, and hand-holding is even a helpful but temporary and incomplete image, what is a more helpful way of describing our intertwined dependency on Jesus?

**Leader Note:** This question is slightly rhetorical, but those students who are tracking along should be able to answer immediately.

What image does Jesus use? A vine.

**Leader Note:** Show a grape vine or a picture of a vine.

Let's review what Jesus says in the verses we read earlier. Who are the people involved in His descriptions?

**Leader Note:** Either pose this as a rhetorical question or allow students to answer aloud.

Jesus is the True Vine. God is the Vinedresser. We are the branches.

There is something very important to realize here: we are not immediately a part of Jesus' Vine. When we surrender to God and accept God's love and mercy through Jesus, we become grafted into the Vine. As we respond to God's reaching out for us, we become embraced by God and grafted into the Vine.

As we continually trust Jesus, we are choosing to abide with Jesus. This abiding is surrender and choosing. Jesus does the work in us, which is surrender. We do the thoughtful choosing of surrender, though. Jesus does not force us to abide, but we have to choose to do our part to abide in Jesus.

Remember: abiding is much deeper than being charged or holding on to Jesus. Since this connection is an abiding connection, we are born again and grafted into Jesus. As any branch that is grafted into a vine, the nourishment for our spiritual lives comes from the source; life comes from the Vine. You are not good enough to do it without Jesus. It is impossible apart from Him. While many of us know that, we attempt to live lives that do not represent Jesus. I know that might sound a little hard to hear, but Jesus Himself gives us a guarantee that serves as the source for the proof that someone is abiding in Jesus.

What is that proof? Those who abide in Jesus are able to bear fruit. Apart from Jesus, we can bear no spiritual fruit. It is Jesus working in you that produces fruit, and this fruit production is not of your own doing.

### **Closing Challenge**

Getting connected to and abiding in this connection to the Vine are the first steps to producing fruit and becoming more like Jesus. If you are wondering if you are abiding in Jesus, I would invite you right now to examine your life to see your spiritual fruit. If God were to do an accounting or an audit of your spiritual fruit, would it give evidence that you are abiding in Jesus?

Remember, don't see your life with Jesus as a battery or a striving to be better, see your relationship with Jesus as a conscious surrender and willing abiding in Jesus. Abiding is holding and being held by Jesus. As you abide in Jesus, Jesus abides in you and produces spiritual fruit in you. This abiding starts with surrender and trust. Get grafted and intertwined in Jesus. Allow Jesus to reign over all that you are. Instead of seeing spirituality as something you do, choose to see it as who you are.

Apart from Jesus, you can do nothing.

By abiding in Jesus, you can bear fruit.

Nothing is impossible when we abide in Jesus.

Let's pray.

**Leader Note:** This message ends really well with an altar call or call to Christian discipleship. Feel free to tailor this ending in such a way that you can invite students to get connected to the Vine this week.