

# Abiding in His Word

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, Watermark. It's good to see you all here this morning. Last week, we started looking at what it means to abide in God, and this week we continue in the same passage.

So I hope that you've been enjoying the Bible reading plan and have been abiding in God's Word. Today's reading comes from John chapter 15, starting in verse 1. We read, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

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.

[ 1 : 05 ] 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

This is the word of God. Great, thank you. So let's pray together as we come and consider this passage. Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, precious Holy Spirit, we come before you this morning.

We come to your word because we need you. We need your word to speak to us. God, we want to encounter you, the living God, in your living word.

[ 2 : 19 ] And so, Father, this morning we don't come just to hear ideas. We don't hear just for a prep talk, just to get us going for another week. We come to, in our weakness, in our shame, in our joys, in our trials, we come to you, the fountain of life, the fountain of living water.

We come because our souls are dry apart from you, and you alone can satisfy us. So, God, I pray, won't you open the eyes of our hearts to behold wonders in your word.

God, won't you help us to see what you want us to see. Won't you both challenge and encourage us. And most importantly, Jesus, come and speak to us this morning. We pray this in your wonderful and your gracious name.

Amen. Thank you, Celeste, for reading. Well, as Celeste said, we are spending a couple of weeks in John 15, this very wonderful, very famous passage of Scripture, where Jesus essentially tells us that the source of life, the source of the abundant life, is found in Him.

He says that we are not the center of our lives. Jesus is not an accessory to our lives. He is the source and the root of the abundant, the flourishing life.

[ 3 : 38 ] And that life, we only flourish as we come to Him and embed our lives in Him, as we are united in Him. The word He uses is abide in Him.

And so, verse 4 and 5 is kind of the main idea of this passage. Jesus says, Abide in me as I abide in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit 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, or she it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.

And Jesus says He's not just like a branch, one of the many branches in our lives. We've got a financial branch and a religious branch and a family branch. He's not just an accessory to our lives. He is the source of life, and we find life as we embed ourselves in Him.

And in many ways, we've said that as a church, we feel like the Scripture is so important for us this year. This year, what are we going to do this year? What are we going to give ourselves to?

[ 4 : 43 ] There's so much of this year which is beyond our control. We're not able to predict. Who knows what the next 12 or 18 or 24 months looks like. But the one thing we can do, if you're a follower of Jesus, the one thing we must do is be abiding in Christ, rooted in Christ, finding our life in Christ.

And so today and next Sunday, we're going to kind of drop that down a little and get a little bit more granular and say, okay, well, what does that actually mean? What does that look like?

And it's not going to be extremely practical, but it's hopefully going to be one level down, a little bit more granular. And in John 15, there's two things that Jesus tells us.

We're going to look at one of them this week, one of them next week, okay? So, but before we dive in, let me ask you a question. Whose voice has most shaped your life and your worldview?

What word that somebody has spoken to you or spoken over you has most shaped your life and the person that you are today? It could be for positive or for negative, a word of encouragement, a word of criticism, a word of a parent, a teacher, a friend.

[ 5 : 59 ] Whose word, whose voice has most shaped your life? And in what way in particular has that word made you the person that you are today? As you think about that, John 15, Jesus says, abide in me as I in you.

A branch cannot bear fruit in this that abides in me, and neither can you. But then look at what Jesus says in verse seven. Jesus tells us what that actually means and what that looks like.

He says in verse seven, let me just get it in my Bible here. Sorry. Jesus says, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

So how do we abide in Christ this year? Or to use the imagery from last week, how do we not just plug our lives into Jesus now and then for a quick 20 minute recharge, but rather embed the circuit board of our lives into Christ so that he is the one that's sustaining us and carrying us?

How do we do that? Jesus says, one of the ways we abide in Christ is by abiding in his word. You see that? Abide in me, and if my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

[ 7 : 13 ] Now, today we're going to look at this verse and there's three things that are surprising about this verse. The first one is the second half. Look at what he says. Jesus says, if you do this, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

That sounds like a unusual blank check, right? Jesus says, whatever you wish, ask, your wish is my command. Okay? Second thing that's unusual is, look at how the first half of the verse is almost identical to verse four, except there's one change.

Look at verse four. Jesus says, abide in me and I in you. Now verse seven, Jesus says, if you abide in me and my words abide in you.

So what's Jesus saying here? It almost seems like what Jesus is saying is that his words are synonymous with Christ himself, which is an unusual thing to say and almost blasphemous in some ways.

You think of the eternal, uncreated, sovereign God, the one who spoke creation and the universe into being, Jesus Christ, and now Christ elevates something else almost to the same level as him.

[ 8 : 27 ] If I abide in you, abide in me and I abide in you, now he says, abide in me and let my words abide in you. It seems unusual. And yet, actually throughout scripture, this is something we see again and again, that God says, what his word does is what he does.

God again and again throughout scripture almost raises his word to the status of God himself. Very, we often quote Psalm 29.

You might have heard it before. It says, the word of the Lord breaks the cedars. In other words, strongholds. The next line says, God himself breaks the cedars. What God's word does is what God does.

A few weeks ago, Neil preached on Psalm 107. Psalm 107 talks about these various scenarios when people are in a difficult situation and they cry out to God and God delivers them.

Look at verse 19. They cried out to the Lord in their trouble. He delivered them from their distress. He sent out his word and he healed them. He delivered them from their destruction.

[ 9 : 33 ] Now the psalmist is not saying that God sent them a Bible, but he's saying that he sent them his word, his word of hope, his word of redemption. God revealed who he was and that delivered them.

It saved them. It's amazing that scripture plays such high emphasis on God's word, his instructions, his promises, his teaching, what he reveals about himself.

And yet if you think about that, that actually makes sense because that's true of most of our relationships. If I say to my kids, please will you pick up your towel after you shower and hang it up so that it dries and my kids look at me and say, nah.

Okay. Why do I take such offense at that? They're not just rejecting my words, they're actually rejecting me. If you say to somebody at work, listen, please don't do this and then they go and do that exact thing, they're not just rejecting your words, they're showing disdain for you, right?

In the same way, Jesus here says that his words are so important because it's one of the ways that we encounter Christ himself. Think of Hebrews chapter four, it says God's word is living and active.

[ 10 : 45 ] Part of what that means is the way that God works is through his word but also it's the way that God presences himself, the way he reveals himself to us is through his word which is why when we come to God's word what we hope to do is actually to encounter the living God himself not just read words on a page.

And so Jesus says the same thing, he says, how do you relate to me? To my words, what it says is actually how do you relate to me? And Charles Spurgeon in typical fashion says this, if Christ's words will not abide in you both as belief and practice, you are not in Christ.

Christ and his gospel and his commands are one. If you will not have Christ and his words, neither will he have you nor your words. And so Jesus says, abide in me and let my words abide in you.

To be frivolous or dismissive about what Jesus says is to be frivolous or dismissive about Jesus himself. But thirdly, notice the third thing that's interesting about this verse.

And this is what I want us to spend a bit of time thinking about. A few months ago when we planned this kind of preaching series, we thought, okay, we'll do John chapter 15 verse one. Week two, we'll do something on the Bible and how to have devotions and long words and long devotions because Jesus says, abide in me and abide in my words, right?

[ 12 : 08 ] But this week as I started to think about and study it, I actually saw that's not what Jesus says. Jesus doesn't say, abide in me and abide in my words.

What does he say? Abide in me and let my words abide in you. You see the difference between those two? They're very similar, but there's a difference.

What is Jesus saying? Jesus is not just telling us to do more stuff, to be more disciplined, to be more devoted, to if you normally spend five minutes in devotions and not to spend ten minutes in devotions.

Jesus is not just telling us what to do. He says, let his words, which means his teachings, his instructions, his promises, but most importantly, his revelation of who he is, let that so reside in us, so abide within our hearts, as the psalmist says, to hide it deep within our hearts that it shapes our worldview, our life, our motivations, our responses to situations.

It shapes our hearts. Jesus doesn't just say, spend more time reading my Bible. He says, let my words, in other words, let who I am, abide in your heart in such a way that it shapes you and the person that you become.

[ 13 : 34 ] So Jesus is not just calling us to be better disciplined. He's calling to let Christ himself to reside in us so that he shapes our life, our worldview.

His voice becomes the most powerful and shaping voice in our lives. So to come back to the question we said earlier, whose voice, whose word has most shaped you in your life? whose word, whose voice has shaped your worldview, how you see the world and how you see yourself? Maybe for some of us, it was a parent or a grandparent, a teacher, maybe a caregiver, maybe a sibling or a boss or a friend.

Friends, whose words have you taken so deeply into your heart that they've lodged in your heart and shaped the way that you see the world and see yourself? for positive or negative. Maybe some of us had a parent who, when we were younger, said to us, you'll never amount to anything.

Or maybe you had a teacher who called you lazy or stupid and you took that deep in your heart and it shaped the way that you saw yourself. Friends, maybe it wasn't anything specific that somebody said.

[14:51] Maybe it was just a set of circumstances. Maybe you went to boarding school at this young age and you always had to fend for yourself. And so the word that shaped your heart is nobody will ever be there to protect you.

You're going to have to fend for yourself in this world. Maybe it's just the worldview of Hong Kong's performance and comparative culture that deeply resides in our hearts. In order to be considered not a failure, a success in life, you have to do something that proves that you're better than those around you.

And so this word drives you. It drives your work performance. It drives the way you relate to others. It drives you. This word that drives you. Friends, you see, most of us here are followers of Jesus and yet what Jesus says here, you can wake up every morning, have a devotion, tick that off on your list and go off to work and yet have some other word that's driving you because something else is the word that's abiding in your heart.

There's something else that drives your motivation. It's what really shapes your sense of self-worth, your behavior, your relationships, your idea of what a successful life looks like.

It's not who Christ is and what Christ says in his word. It's what your boss says. It's what your colleagues say. It's what your parents say or your teacher or sibling or a friend. And you know that it's possible to live driven by a word even in reaction to a word.

[16:18] And so maybe you're here this morning and you said I will never be like my parents. Do you see that that word is still controlling you? It's the word that's driving you. And whatever I do I won't be like my brother.

I won't be like my sister. Jesus here says that the way to abide in Christ is to have his word abiding in our heart to be the word that shapes our lives and permeates our worldview and who we are. When I was growing up my dad used to say to me and my brothers fairly regularly used to say I want you to know there's nothing that you can do in the entire world that will stop me loving you. I may be angry I may be disappointed but there's nothing that you can do that will stop my love for you. Well for about 10 or 15 years I never really put that to the test.

And one day when I was 18 years old I was in boarding school I was in my final year of school and I did something really stupid at school and we were caught and I was grounded in the boarding house for a month I was a prefect at school and that was taken away for the rest of term and all the privileges were taken away and I knew I had to go and tell my dad about what I had done.

[17:38] And I was a little nervous I knew there'd be consequences I knew he'd be pretty cross but the one thing I knew was that for 15 years he'd been telling me there's nothing that you can do that will ever make me question my love for you.

And so while I had to I can still remember walking to my dad's study one night and telling him what had happened and one thing I knew I never for a second guessed his love or his commitment or his affirmation for me.

It's a word that shaped my life. Well you can imagine what I try and tell my kids once a week I try and tell my kids Sierra, Shiloh I want you to know there's nothing that you can do that will stop our love for you.

I want my kids to be rooted and grounded in this word. But actually more than just my love for them I want my kids to be rooted and grounded in who Christ says about them and Christ's word for them.

And so one of the ways that we do this is I take my kids to school every morning in Light Ucock and so we catch the MTR at 7 o'clock from Admiralty Station and go up to Light Ucock and we've got 20 minutes on the train.

[18:48] And we don't do this every day but a couple of times a month we run through this little routine and I ask my kids a bunch of questions. I say Sierra, Shiloh what is the gospel? They say the gospel is Jesus died and rose again that I can be forgiven and included in his family.

Sierra and Shiloh who loves you most? God loves me most. Who loves you second most? Mom and Dad loves me second most. Sierra and Shiloh who does God the Holy Spirit say you are? One who is washed and cleaned. Who does God the Son say you are? One who is righteous and forgiven. Who does God the Father say you are? One who is loved and adopted.

Sierra and Shiloh who are you? I'm a sinner saved by grace. And Sierra and Shiloh what is grace? God's undeserved mercy. And what can you do through his grace and power?

Hard things. And so a couple of times a week a couple of times a month we run through this question. And the reason is this. Because I know at school they're going to have difficult days. A kid's going to be unkind to them.

[ 19 : 49 ] They're going to bomb out on an assignment. Some teacher's going to give them a bad grade. Something's going to go wrong. They're going to do something stupid and face the consequences. And in that moment I want my kids to be so rooted and grounded.

I want a word that's abiding in their hearts. It says there is a God who loves me and there's a mom and dad who loves me. And who am I? Yes I'm a sinner but I'm loved by grace.

And I can do hard things by his grace and power. Friends but is that not true of us as well? Friends things are going to happen to us. You're going to get overlooked for a promotion three years in a row.

Right? You're going to apply for that job and you're going to get turned down for the tenth time. You're going to fail an exam at university. Your boss is going to shout at you. Things are going to happen.

Life happens. What word is residing and abiding in your heart as you go through the stuff of life? Jesus says there is a word that you need that's going to abide in your heart.

[ 20 : 50 ] If you're going to abide in Christ this year you need more than just a five minute devotion. You need his word abiding in your life and in your heart shaping you to who you become.

And maybe something really good happens. Right? It's not only bad things. Maybe you get a double promotion. Maybe you get a huge bonus and you got more money than you know what to do with.

Maybe you inherit millions of dollars from some family member you didn't even know existed.

And now suddenly you are the king of the town. How is that not going to change you? How are you not going to become pride and self-reliant? You need a word that's residing in your heart.

You need to abide in Christ. You need Christ's word to abide in you. Jesus says this. Jesus says we'll never abide in Christ deeply. He'll never become the source of our life and the real stuff of life the real matters of life until his words become the predominant shaping voice in our life.

The most active ingredient that shapes who we are and how we see the world and see ourselves.

Jesus said that if the son sets you free you are free indeed.

[ 21 : 57 ] But you know how the son sets us free? He gives us a word that cuts against all the lies and the untruths of the world. And so the world tells you if you're ready to be successful you've got to get that promotion you've got to get that job you've got to hit the status of society and you become a slave to that word.

Jesus says I've come to set you free. How? By giving you another word that says your life is found in me. Friends, sometimes the world tells you you'll never amount to anything or your teacher says something or your colleague says something and you're a slave to that word.

Jesus says he's come to set you free. How? By giving you another word. The word says that your life is found in him. If you are to abide in Christ and to bear fruit you must let his word abide in you. Now one of the best places to see this in scripture is to go to Psalm chapter 1. If you've got your bulletin in front of you you'll see on the other side of the scripture reading is Psalm 1 and turn with me there quickly.

I want us to look at it. Psalm 1 is amazing. It's the first of the Psalms but it's not the first of the Psalms by chance. It's the entry point into all of the Psalms and the way that we read and understand if we listen to the message of Psalm 1 we really can listen to all of the Psalms but Psalm 1 compares the life that is shaped by two different voices and so look at what he says verse 1 he says blessed is the man or the woman or the student who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.

[ 23 : 45 ] Here we have this Psalm 1 really is a sustained contrast between two lives that are shaped by two voices two words the voice of those that know God or the voice of God's word and the voice of those that don't know God and it's not just knowing God's word it's having God's word deeply penetrating our life and shaping our life.

Here Psalm 1 the word law doesn't just mean religious rules and regulations it means in Hebrew the word Torah means God's instruction to us his revelation of who he is who we are in him how he's

called us to live our lives and the psalmist here says blessed or flourishing or happy fruitful abundant is the person who takes on God's word and delights in it who allows God who meditates on God's word who allows God's word into their heart to shape them who ponders it and consumes it and thinks about it Psalm 19 says Psalm 119 says the one who hides God's word deep in his heart or as Jesus says the one who allows God's word to abide in him and look at verse 3 he compares these two he says the one who's hidden God's word in his heart that his life is shaped by it this person is like a tree similar to John 15 right and he says it's a tree that's planted by streams of living water who yields its fruit in the season whose leaf does not wither in all that he does prospers what happens to a tree that's planted by streams of living water well two things it's steady and sturdy it's not blown over in the wind and the trials and the storms because its root system is robust but the other thing is it's always alive because it's plugged into the source of life

Jeremiah 17 has a similar picture it says it does not fear when the drought comes when just imagine with me hypothetically imagine there's this worldwide pandemic right and for three years life is interrupted and school is online and church is online and community group is online and you can't be community are you embedded close to the source of life do you know how to get God's word into you so that even when the drought and anxiety and the fear and the heat comes you're still able to bear much fruit Jeremiah says he does not fear when the heat comes he is not anxious in the year of drought his leaves are always green always bearing fruit but the point here in Psalm 1 is that it's rock solid sturdy when there's trials and the storms come when hardship and difficulty comes it's not blown over now in verse 3 where he says he always prospers does that mean that the follower of Jesus is just life is always rosy no trials no difficulty not at all it's saying that despite the difficulties despite the hardships when the hardship comes they won't overwhelm you because your roots are deeply embedded in the source of life and so look at verse 4 he contrasts the wicked he says the one whose life is devoid of God's word are not so they are like chaff that the wind drives away do you know what chaff is when a farmer sifts the wheat the chaff is the kind of dry outer casing that just gets blown away and so you can keep the kernel it's like think of dry leaves that just get blown in the wind and so the psalmist says here you have a tree that's deeply embedded its root system has gone wide and here you have dry leaves that get blown away in the storm and the point is that when the heat comes when difficulty comes where is your root system what is abiding you what word is shaping you

Jesus says that to bear much fruit we must abide in him and the way that we abide in him is by having his word abiding in us here is a man a woman a mother father a son or daughter who are so rooted themselves in God's word that God's word has rooted them even in the storms and so come what may drought or harvest good times or bad feast or famine promotion or job loss here is a person who has let God's word shape them and anchor them and root them it's the predominant voice in their life it's their security their identity their worldview now coming back to the first thing that we saw that are strange in this passage do you see why Jesus says if you abide in me and you let my words abide in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you do you see why Jesus can say that Jesus is not just saying that he is a genie and he's giving you endless lamps to run right

Jesus is not just saying he has a blank check ask whatever you want you want to go to Japan this week just ask him right Jesus is saying that if you abide in Christ and you let his words so shape your worldview and who you are your identity your security your hopes your fears your anxieties you'll become the kind of person that your prayers are so aligned to him that it will be safe for him to give you whatever you ask your prayers will become the kind of prayers that are the things that you'd pray if you were in heaven ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you because your life will see the world the way that Christ sees it your life will be shaped by his word if you abide in me and if you let my words abide in you you can be sure that your prayers will be the kind of prayers I love to answer so practically how should we do this what should we do well last week we gave you four things can you remember what they were anybody daily decisively honestly surrenderedly okay [ 30 : 07 ] I was rebuked this week for not having the word finished with an ly last week so here's five more words how can we abide in Christ's word and let Christ's word abide in us this week daily openly communally memory family five words to remember daily we spoke about this last week the way to have Christ's word deeply abiding in us is to make sure that we are abiding in Christ's word we said it earlier Jesus is not simply asking us just to tick off a daily to-do list but he is asking us to daily start off our day by having Jesus Christ and who he is shape us and our worldview and friends it's impossible to have Christ's word saturate our hearts unless we're allowing it to saturate us and

so here's the challenge each day preferably each morning before your day starts get up a little earlier get into God's word and let who Jesus is shape you by his word let him tell you what is true and real let him tell you who he is as you go into your day and let him tell you who you are in him as you go into your day and so that as you walk into the office the word that's residing in your heart is not you better not stuff up today the word is my life is in Christ my life is hidden with Christ and my hope is in him and so every day start off the day letting God's word abide in you okay now if you don't know how to do that ask somebody ask one of the elders ask Celeste ask a mature follower of Jesus Henry and Florence will love to help you I'm sure Colin and Kristen would be great ask somebody that's a mature follower of Jesus how do I have a daily devotion Frank and Teresa have helped hundreds of people over the years get into God's word join us on the watermark bible reading plan okay if you haven't started 350 days to go still you can join us it's not too late get into God's word each day but you've got to do more than that okay you've got to not just abide in God's word you've got to let God's word abide in you so the second thing is not just daily openly what do I mean by that what I mean by that is you've got to not just read God's word you've got to let God's word read you okay what I mean by that is this in other words you have to allow God's word to challenge you to examine you to question you to scrutinize your life you've got to read God's word and let

God's word read you so let me give you an example this morning from our Bible reading plan this morning if you're with us you would have read Psalm 9 right Psalm 9 starts off like this I give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart well just stop there am I the kind of person that knows how to give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart when life is good when life is bad when trials and storms come when everything's going well when everything's going bad do I know how to give thanks to God with my whole life well here's one from this week I think on Thursday if you're with us we read Luke chapter 6 at the end of Luke 6 it says this love your enemies do good and lend expecting nothing from those that you lend to you'll be like your sons of the most high who is kind to the ungrateful and to the evil when I read that that just arrested me God is kind to the ungrateful and to the wicked and then he says you be likewise well friends to read

God's word openly means God am I kind to those that are ungrateful let me just tell you I'm not okay I don't have a lot of patience for people that are ungrateful but here God is saying Kevin are you going to let my word abide in you are you going to let it scrutinize you why am I impatient with people well it's because I'm selfish and I'm self-righteous and I'm opinionated and I think I'm better than others and that means I need to get on my knees and I need to confess and I need to let Jesus say Christ I'm so sorry come and have your way in my life Jesus I want to be more like you okay so read God's word daily read it openly thirdly read it communally you know up until 500 years ago nobody had their own individual Bibles we only got our own individual Bibles when the printing press was invented and when the Bible was translated from Latin into everyday language and so up until 500 years ago for most of church history the way that people knew God's word and got the Bible into them was communally they'd have others read it to them others explain it to them they would discuss it they would debate it they would allow one another to question them and so read the

Bible communally in other words who in your life is showing you God's word opening it up to you but also questioning you you know in the 18th century during the great awakening revival in England John Wesley in his church he organized everyone in his church in what he called bands groups of four to eight people and they would meet sometimes once a week and they would ask each other bunch of questions one of the questions they'd ask is is God being alive and real to you how are you seeing are you loving people more this week than you were last week what area of your life are you're confessing but one of the questions that they'd always ask each other is is scripture alive and real to you is scripture speaking to you what promises of scripture are reassuring you and what challenges of scripture are challenging you and so they'd ask each other these questions in other words they were allowing the community of brothers and sisters to speak God's word to them and you know in my life most of the scriptures that are most precious to me are scriptures that other people have shared with me at times of great need or just out of encouragement and with someone a brother shares the scripture and it comes alive it has like it roots itself in my heart and so read the scripture daily openly community fourth thing memory okay

[ 36 : 28 ] I know it doesn't make sense to say read scripture memory but you're with me it's got to end in a why right memory I want to challenge you here to memorize scripture to memorize

scripture one of the best ways to get scripture inside of you is to not just read it but to try and memorize it to say it over and over and over again so that it drops from your head to your heart I've done this over the years when I was a student I tried to memorize the Sermon on the Mount and the book of Ephesians and the book of Colossians and these have been some of the richest times as I've just spent hours going over God's word and so I want to encourage you I want to challenge you when you're on the bus when you're on the MTR delete that social media app you don't really need it get into God's word reading it thinking about it memorizing it and so here's a challenge for you if you're a student any students here okay one two okay Tess the only student here if you're a student here's a challenge okay

I want to challenge you this year to memorize a hundred verses of scripture okay a hundred is not that long it's like the book of Colossians or the book of Philippians it's only four chapters the book of James is a hundred verses later this year we're going to preach through James if you can memorize the book of James or a hundred verses by the end of this year Oscar will take you out for dinner okay no no no no I will take you out for dinner okay here's a challenge this is recorded if you can memorize a hundred verses this year I will take you out for dinner at the end of 2023 okay because students can't afford dinner that's why no no no anybody that memorizes the book of James I will take you out for dinner okay by the end of the year it's a challenge but seriously I really want to encourage you memorize scripture get it into you Dawson Trotman who started the navigators used to memorize one verse a day every single day before he started navigators he was a truck driver and so you just drive his truck memorizing scripture and after 10 years that's three and a half thousand verses of the bible it's like half the new testament you can do it memorize scripture okay here's the last one family family friends for those of us that are parents can ask us what words are shaping our kids lives what words are we speaking to them what words are we sending our kids into school or university or the workplace with when we put them to sleep at night when we are around the table at dinner time when we wake up in the morning is it the wonder of

Jesus is it the magnificence of God's word is what Henry shared this morning that God is utterly glorious more glorious than all creation and yet he knows our name we are not specks of dust and what word to go friends are we speaking that word over our kids is it the wonder of Jesus and his faithfulness is it his amazing grace and his everlasting love or are we just reminding our kids like an echo of the culture do well at school don't be a failure be better than others don't bring shame on our family friends are reminding our kids that God is a faithful rock he's the sovereign God upon which they can build their lives Deuteronomy six says this we'll close with this love the Lord your God with all your heart all your soul and all your strength and these words that I command you today shall be on your heart not just your mind but in your heart it says teach them to your children talk of them when you sit around the house when you walk on the path when you drive in the car when you lie down and when you rise write them on the door posts of your houses and of your gates that they will be in your heart friends if you're a parent today what words are you sending your children to the world with let them abide in

Christ by having Christ's word abide in them Jesus says abide in me as I abide in you I am the you are the branch apart from me you can do nothing abide in me and let my words abide in you and if you do that ask anything in my name and this will be done for you let's pray together Lord Jesus this morning we've really just looked at one verse half a verse really and yet God it is challenging Father if we are honest many of us our lives are shaped by so many other words many other voices the voices of our parents the voices of some of the caregiver a teacher a friend a spouse but actually God for many of us it's the voice of our culture it's the voice of the office place it's the voice that says do more be more try harder earn your lot in life

Jesus we need to hear your word you speak a better word God a better word than the word of grace God you speak to our hearts you tell us that we are yours Father God I pray for every one of my brothers and sisters here this morning that we will be individuals and we will be a church that has your word abiding in us God God come and let your word flood our hearts help us God to do Lord I pray as we go into work this week as we go into the city of Hong Kong and God next week as we have family reunion dinners and Chinese New Year time God that can sometimes be stressful and sometimes can be difficult God I pray God God God God Christ God God we are we are and we will encounter you in your word and the word of our parents and the word of our heart the word of [ 42 : 35 ] Christ will be our word Jesus we pray come and have your way we pray this in your wonderful and your gracious name Amen I say Thank you.