

Red Letter Challenge: Being

John 15:4-8

1.27.2019

Series Intro: The goal of a “Red-Letter Edition” of the Bible is to make the words of Jesus stand out! The goal of the “Red Letter Challenge” is to accomplish even more!

But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 1:22

But, before we get to what we should do, we need to start with who we should be.

Two Types of Religion

- What you DO leads to who you ARE (“doing” makes you good)
- Who you ARE leads to what you DO (God makes you good)

Christianity is unique because it claims the second! That goes to Jesus’s word-picture of being “born again.”

“Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3

To get into the kingdom of God requires a moment where you do nothing and God does everything. Just like you do nothing to be born, God does everything when you are born again!

So, today (and this week), we are going to talk about simply being with Christ.

<ILL: Small Groups: 230+ Groups and almost 900 people engaged> Why is this so amazing to me? Everyone has a LOT going on! It makes it hard to get together. Doing often detracts from being. But this is not what Jesus wants for us. He wants us to be with Him ... to “remain with Him.” And this takes us to our text for today...

“Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in Me.” John 15:4.

Words people and numbers people! A remainder is what remains after you’ve divided a problem out. I believe that many of us have divided our lives so much that we have no remainder – nothing is left over!

- Work
- Home (activities)
- Finances
- Health
- Sleep

We divide it out so completely that there is no room for being! Or what Jesus is calling “Remaining.” Jesus says that “remainders” start with “remaining.” This is both good news and challenging news...

- Good: It’s okay if we slow down.
- Challenging: A full life does not come from fulling every hour with “doing.

We MUST slow down enough to experience “being/remaining” in Jesus.

The RLC books are formatted into devotions/Scripture reading and challenges. Each day we focus on the words of Jesus and then are challenged to put them into practice.

However, the challenges this week all center around slowing down and being or remaining in/with Jesus! Here’s why this is so important...

“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me.” John 15:5

Jesus says, “When it comes to remaining with God, two things can happen: you can bear much fruit, or you can do nothing.” This is where I want to spend the rest of our time today.

Bear Much Fruit When you remain with Jesus, you can bear much fruit. What does this mean? There are a couple things you need to understand.

1. With Jesus, a little can be a lot!

“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and comes back to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” Luke 17:3-4

This is incredibly hard and the disciples are taken aback!

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” ⁶ “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,” the Lord said, “you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.” Luke 17:5-6

Bearing much fruit does not take much faith. What matters with faith is its object. If you remain with Jesus, great things can happen, not because your remaining is so great, but because Jesus is so great!

<ILL: Being upgraded on the way home> Why did they do that?

The reason we can do anything great in our lives and with our lives is because of who we’re with!

In fact, sometimes we get confused about our successes!

- **Money - Remember that the LORD your God gives you the power to gain wealth. Deuteronomy 8:18**
- **Family - Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, offspring, a reward. Psalm 127:3**
- **Morality - Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. Hebrews 2:11**

2. Jesus’s fruit comes in bunches.

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. Galatians 5:19-23

We can pick and choose our sin, but we can’t pick and choose our fruit! The fruit of the Spirit COMES IN BUNCHES!

Do Nothing

“The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me.” John 15:5

There is a blessing and a warning in Jesus’ words. When we go at things on our own terms in our own way, all our efforts amount to nothing. Jesus says in the very next verse...

“If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”

John 15:6

I don't think Jesus is talking about eternal punishment. He is making a different point. Notice that there are two steps: a person who is disconnected from Jesus withers and then he is burned.

1. Withering If you don't eat, you will wither physically. If you don't give and receive love, you will also wither emotionally. Neuroscience and the Bible are in sync. In the same way we wither without certain food nutrients, we also wither without certain emotional nutrients. Spiritually, the same is true. If you cut yourself off from Jesus, you wither!

2. Burning When you're withered and dried, the tragedies hit harder. You can be burned easier! Remember, LIFE GETS HOT!
If you're connected to Christ and have His living water, life may try to light you on fire, but if you are “in Jesus” you are really hard to burn!

I will be with you when you pass through the waters, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. You will not be scorched when you walk through the fire, and the flame will not burn you. Isaiah 43:2 And that's why we stick with Jesus! That's why we remain in Him.

This week, spend some extra time with Jesus! You'll never overstay your welcome. After all, Jesus wants to spend time with you so badly, He's invited you to be with Him eternity. You spare an extra few minutes this week?