

BE: Being Precedes Doing
John 15:1-11

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Text Introduction: In our ONE Day service (on August 31) and beyond, I will issue the challenge to “Do Something” for God that you have never done. At the same time that we ask this question, we will ask God as a church collectively to unify us around one thing that we can do together that we have never done before in the history of our church.

I sense that this could be a very exciting time for us as a church. I believe that this is the kind of challenge that will help us to grow as Jesus’ disciples and help us to grow in our relationships with one another. However, I want to make something clear. We cannot do something just to do something. We could be so busy doing things that we forget that Jesus calls us to a relationship of being. So, I want to spend some time over the next weeks thinking about who we are to be. I want to say today that “Being Precedes Doing!”

Text: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. ²Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.

⁵“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. ⁶If 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. ⁷If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples.

⁹“As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. ¹⁰If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love.

¹¹“I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

Introduction: Not everything you read is true, but I researched this story to make sure of its actual facts. According to a number of sources, this story is actually true.

Larry Walters, 33 at the time, was bored. He wanted to do something. So, on a summer day in 1982, Larry filled 45 weather balloons with helium and tethered them in four tiers to an aluminum lawn chair he purchased at Sears for \$110, loading his makeshift aircraft (dubbed the "Inspiration I") with a large bottle of soda, milk jugs full of water to give stability, a pellet gun to shoot the balloons when he was ready to come down, a portable CB radio, an altimeter, and a camera (because if you are going to do something so crazy, you want to take pictures to document).

Donning a parachute, Larry climbed into his chair from the roof of his girlfriend's home in San Pedro while two friends stood at the ready to untether the craft. He took off a little earlier than expected, however, when his mooring line was cut by the roof's sharp edges. As friends, neighbors, reporters and

cameramen looked on, Larry Walters rocketed into the sky above San Pedro. A few minutes later Larry radioed the ground that he was sailing across Los Angeles Harbor towards Long Beach.

The account of the story goes on to say that he had to shoot the balloons with the pellet gun in order to descend. He finally crashed into a power line, but did survive.

"It was something I had to do. I had this dream for twenty years, and if I hadn't done it, I think I would have ended up in the funny farm. I didn't think that by fulfilling my goal — my dream — that I would create such a stir and make people laugh." (From UrbanLegends.com)

Here's what I want you to hear from this story: Doing something for the sake of doing something can get you into a lot of trouble. Doing something for the sake of doing something can be downright foolish.

So, I want to take some time before we challenge ourselves to do something for God that we have never done before, to focus on being. We are going to talk about being in Christ this morning. In the next Sundays, we are going to talk about being holy, being Jesus' disciple, being content, and being thankful. In our relationship with Christ, "being" is more important than "doing." In fact, what I want you to hear this morning is "Being precedes doing."

Two things emerge from this text that are important for us to understand.

Being in Christ precedes doing works for Christ.

The Pattern of the Relationship

Jesus explained the pattern of the relationship with the word "abide," which means to remain. What does it mean to remain in Jesus? The things that He tells us to abide in help us to understand what it means to abide in Him.

1. Remain in His Word. (v.7)
2. Remain in Prayer. (v. 7)
3. Remain in His Love. (v.9)

The Penalty for Avoiding the Relationship

This text is clear about the penalty of not abiding in Jesus. As His disciple we will ...

1. Be able to do nothing. (v. 5) We might think we are doing something, but without Christ, what we are doing has no depth of purpose or meaning.
2. Be separated from Christ. (v. 6)

This is the most challenging verse in this entire section. What does Jesus mean? Is this a picture of the judgment? It could be. Let's be real simple about this statement. If you refuse to be part of a relationship with Christ, you are cut off from a relationship with Christ. That's simple logic, isn't it?

The Profit of the Relationship

1. We will experience answered prayer. (v. 7)
2. We will bring glory to God. (v. 8)
3. We will prove to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. (v. 8)
4. We will keep His commandments. (v. 10)
5. We will experience joy. (v. 11)

I heard about a particular remote tribe of people in another country who share one copy of the Scriptures. The pastor gives the people one page of the Bible at a time. They are so excited to have that one page of the Bible. These people bring home that one page and memorize the entire page. Then, they bring the page back and get another one.

Maybe our excess is our problem. We have multiple Bibles and go weeks without opening them for ourselves. May God forgive us for not abiding in Him, for that is what He has called us to do.

Being in Christ produces fruit.

So much of our “doing something” produces no fruit. But, when we abide in Christ, our being in Christ always produces fruit.

Don’t miss the most important truth of this text. We are not commanded to bear fruit; we are commanded to abide in Jesus. If we fail to abide in Jesus, we will fail to bear fruit. If we succeed in abiding in Jesus, we will bear fruit.

That seems to be our trouble. We are forever trying to bear fruit. We focus on bearing fruit. We strive to bear fruit. Instead of the oftentimes “fruitless” effort, we should instead focus on abiding.

We must have a willingness to abide.

Where do you start? You start with His Word. I don’t know any other way. Ravi Zacharias says if you fail here, you will fail everywhere. I agree. In addition to abiding with Him in His Word, we establish a time with Him when we pray. What decision do you need to make today? What do you need to change in order to say that you are abiding in Jesus?

We must welcome pruning.

The word here sounds like our English word cauterize. It is surgery that God wants to do in us.

Most writers will tell you that the most difficult part of writing is the editing process. However, the editing process, like the pruning process, makes for a better finished product. Though painful, we can only bear fruit by letting Jesus prune areas of our life. The result will be glorious—we will bear more fruit.

So, all of us need to be willing to abide in Jesus and welcome pruning. For without these, we will not bear fruit.

In closing, listen to the words of C.S. Lewis: “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next ... It is since Christians

have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth "thrown in." Aim at earth and you will get neither."