

## **Abiding in Christ: Contemplative Spirituality**

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**John 15:1-11**

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Last week I started to share about what Sabbath is and why it is an important part of our Christian faith. When it was introduced as part of the Ten Commandments it was in part to help break the slave mentality of the Israelite people as they left Egypt. For us today we need to also remember that we are not defined by our work and that our society should not be based on commodity and capitalism alone. We as humans have an inherent worth and value that is not tied to our productivity or earning capacity.

**In today's readings we hear of two other kinds of sabbath. The first is from Genesis where we hear the original form of sabbath, the Sabbath rest that God** takes after creating the world. This Sabbath is similar to last week's in that we are to take it after a period of hard work. God expends all of this creative energy and then rests. For most of us, we know this is a much needed kind of rest. When we expend a lot of energy, creative or physical energy, we need to stop and rest in order to recover. Sometimes if we don't take that kind of rest we will find our body forcing us to take it by getting sick.

**Our Second passage from John 15 may not seem like a sabbath text right away,** but it is. One of the important aspects of Sabbath is that reminds us of our dependence and interconnectedness we have with God. It is important that we not only take time to rest and be in God's presence without distraction. It is important that we also abide in Christ. This kind of sabbath is a constant connection to God. We are challenged by Jesus' words here to consider ourselves grafted in, tapped into the source of the Divine. We are encouraged to remain connected to God.

**Its kind of how some people handle their cell phones.** I typically don't plug mine in until I see it is getting low, say under 20%. My wife on the other hand has power cords in several places. So that when ever she sits down for any length of time she will plug in the phone too. She even carries a portable charger if she is somewhere, like a convention, where plugging in is more challenging. She also uses her phone a lot more than I do. She reads books on it, looks up things all the time. Has the GPS on all the time. So there is clear reasons for her to plug in often otherwise the phone would be dead within a few hours.

So the argument can be made that if we want to be effective in our Christian life we need to stay plugged in. So lets look at some ways we can remain or abide in Christ. Some would call this contemplative Christianity. **For me when I ever heard the term contemplative practice, I imagined monks in a monastery.** This image for me is not really how I imagine being in regular connection with God. When I went to Credo **I met a Rev. Scott Landis** is a contemplative minister. He was our spiritual director for the week and he does this as a profession also. I was pleasantly surprised to explore contemplative practices with him during our week together. He helped me realize that having a daily contemplative practice did not mean I would sit in silent meditation every day, but there is a wide variety of ways to have a contemplative, or mindfulness spirituality. The key here is that it is a daily practice of mindfulness of God in your life.

**I really appreciate this graphic to describe some of the many ways we can** incorporate contemplative practices into our daily life, or into our life in general.



In all of this the purpose and intent is to become more like Christ and to be fruitful for the Kingdom of God and to the Glory of God. Returning to the image of **being grafted into the Tree of Life when a wild branch is grafted in, it needs** to receive constant nourishment from the vine in order to stay alive and begin the transformation of becoming part of the tree. The wild aspects of the branch need to be trimmed away so that the new life of the vine can take over the grafted in wild branch.

To become true disciples of Christ we cannot just occasionally be exposed to the teachings and influence of God in our lives. We need to stay plugged in and nourished by God. In so doing we become more attune to the voice, power and leading of God in our lives. We are transformed. The contemplative spiritual practices lifted in this picture is a great tool to help us find ways that fit best with our personalities so that we all can experience a contemplative spirituality and grow in faith.