

# Abiding in Christ (Session 4)

by Joseph Carroll

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*Abiding in Christ requires surrender to God, trust in his loving heart, and a focus on relating everything to him.*

**Duration:** 34:25

**Scripture:** John 15:4

**Topics:** "Abiding", "Abiding in Christ", "Brokenness and Renewal"

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## Description

Joseph Carroll emphasizes the centrality of Christ in the believer's life, illustrating the journey from wrestling in our own strength to experiencing true rest in Him. He explains that many Christians struggle in an outer circle of effort and inconsistency, but brokenness is the key to entering into a deeper relationship with Christ. The sermon highlights that true life comes from dying to self and fully embracing Christ as our source of strength and sustenance. Carroll uses personal anecdotes and biblical illustrations to convey that it is not about what we can achieve, but about who Christ is in us. Ultimately, he calls for believers to shift their focus from seeking experiences to seeking a personal relationship with Jesus.

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## Transcript

I want you to look at this little word up here. In the center, you have Christ and the faith, rest, life. That's what we're aiming at.

Christ in the center, Christ alive, Christ all. Then faith, rest, faith in him, and the evidence of trust in him is rest. So that's what we're aiming at.

All right, now, up here in the big circle is, what do you think? Wrestling. Trying so hard to get there into the center. Jesus said, I'm wrestling, wrestling in the joy of what thou art.

Now that's where most people are. Vast majority of people are in that outer circle, wrestling, trying hard. Right now, they make a little progress, begin to realize this just isn't the way, it's very tiring, very exhausting, very discouraging, and they begin to learn to, at times, walk by faith.

But it's not consistent. So the next circle is inconstant. Perhaps not a good word, but it's inconsistent.

Inconstant, not constant. On again, off again. Ah, here's a big one, brokenness, brokenness.

That's the doorway to the center, brokenness. That's why God puts you in his university of suffering, to break you. Then and not till then are you going to consistently experience a faithless life.

I wonder where you are this morning. My dear brother Ted prayed for perhaps some who do not know the Lord here this morning. Well, you're not even in the circle, the outer one.

You're not on the screen. Dead in your trespasses and sins, what a tragedy. The vast majority wrestling, trying so hard.

If only I prayed more, fasted more, went to more conferences, heard more messages, memorized more scripture, you name it. Well, that's not the way. But it can lead you to an inconstant life, and then the Lord breaks you.

He brings you right down to nothingness. Then all you can do is cling. And wonder of wonders you experience his life.

Because there can be no life without death. The great principle in the spiritual realm is death in order to life. If there's anything that people don't want to do, they do not want to die.

What have some of the speakers been saying this week consistently? You must give up your right to yourself, if you would have Christ in all his fullness. In other words, you must accept the sentence of death upon your life in this world, if you would have his life in this world through you. And not until you come to that point are you going to abide.

There's an illustration I use quite consistently, especially with students, because it illustrates the point. In 1957, my wife and I had the privilege of visiting Dr. Hollisby, who wrote that perhaps incomparable book on prayer in Norway. He was quite ill at the time, but he did agree to see us for about 15 minutes, and we were ushered into the presence of this truly great Christian, this man who'd stood for the Lord in Europe against all the liberalism and universalism of Europe for many, many years, and suffered for it.

Very Christ-like man, tall man, grey hair. And we chatted for a few minutes, and then I said to him, Dr. Hollisby, do you have a word for me? Most of my preaching career is still before me. He said yes.

And I can still see that man. I was seated, he was standing, he stood up, and the tears began to roll down his cheeks. Now here is one of the great men of our time, one of the great spiritual giants of our time.

You've never read his book on prayer. You get it. It's very different to others.

And he said these words, God is using but very few men today we are too big to use. The apostles preached, and he's quoting scripture here, with all humility of mind. He said we're too big, God doesn't use us.

This is the basic problem of the evangelical world. The preachers are too big. Too big.

It was just a year before that, 1956, I was invited by the Southern Baptists to go to Formosa for six months to minister in their churches and in their seminaries. And there was a conference for missionaries at a place called Sun Moon Lake, a very beautiful spot. And most of the missionaries on the island went to Sun Moon Lake for that summer conference, a week of meetings.

I spoke once in the morning and once in the evening, and the second meeting in the morning was addressed by a missionary, various missionaries from different denominations. And about the third day or the fourth day, fourth morning, I was seated with my wife in the congregation for the second period. And one of the missionaries, a woman missionary, led this man onto the platform.

He went to the center of the platform, then she departed and left him standing there. I thought, well, maybe he just needed a little help. Well, he certainly did, I found out later.

Well, he was the speaker for that morning. And as he began to speak, you could hardly catch his words. His words were just running into each other, but if you concentrated, you could catch what he was saying.

It was quite difficult, but you could get it. And his message was so simple. Now here he is addressing missionaries, most of them old China hands, they'd been in China before the Communists took over and they had to evacuate.

And speaking to that congregation, you were looking actually at a sea of gray hair. Very few people in that missionaries who didn't have gray hair in that congregation. You know who he spoke on? Zacchaeus.

A little Bible story. I thought, what are you doing? And all I can remember is he kept on saying, the Lord said to Zacchaeus, come down, Zacchaeus, come down, come down, come down out of the tree. I want to dine with you today.

And if he said it once, he said it fifty times. You're too high, Zacchaeus, you're too high. I'm not going up there to dine with you in a tree.

You come down. He got his point across. One of the most powerful sermons I've ever listened to.

Come down, Zacchaeus, come down. Come down out of the tree. I want to dine with you.

I want to have fellowship with you. I want to speak to you. But you've got to get out of that tree and come down.

And then, of course, he applied it. The application's obvious. If you want to have fellowship with Jesus Christ, you must come down.

We've been speaking about love demanding a love of its kind. Heart responds to heart in love. Well, what was the heart of our Lord? The only self-descriptive words he ever used were, I am meek and lowly of heart.

If you want to have fellowship with Jesus Christ, you're going to have to trust the Spirit to give you a heart like his, which was meek and lowly. So we have the center. Faith rests life.

Jesus said, I'm trusting, trusting in the joy of what thou art, finding out the greatness of thy loving heart. That's God's way and the only way. The only way is his Son.

He doesn't have any other way. We've seen it's not a way. It's the only way.

I am the way. It doesn't matter what the situation is, the need is. Christ is the way.

Christ is the answer. Christianity is Christ. I am the way.

But he also said, I am the truth. I am the ultimate interpretation of everything. That's quite a statement.

It doesn't matter what it is, ultimately you're going to have to come to me because I am the truth. I am the ultimate interpretation of everything. I mean everything.

And he also said what? You know what he said. He said, I am the life. So he said, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.

Why? Because life in combination with the way and the truth - now let's get this - life in combination with the way and the truth is the whole sum of existence. Can you get hold of that? Life in combination with the way and the truth is the whole sum of existence. So he said, I am the way, truth, life.

And there is no other way. So once you turn from Christ, you're off base. Once you turn away from the Lord, you're off base.

I've asked Ray to shine on the screen a little map of the coast of Bougainville in the Solomon Islands. I was on Bougainville for about 14 months in the Second World War and I was asked to take a boat, a small powerboat about 22 feet, from the base in Tarikina down to this Machu Pina point. Quite about 25 miles from Tarikina to Machu Pina and a few miles further on were the Japanese lines and the boat were certain necessities that had to go down and having had some experience in boats, I was to take it down.

Now the little boat didn't have a compass and I had a friend of mine, he was a chaplain and he didn't know much about boats and didn't know much about sea. So there were numerous reefs here so I took the boat straight out of Tarikina and I headed the bow of the boat to the point of Machu Pina. And there was a big star, many stars, shining that night but there was a big star right over the point.

So I said to my friend Neville, now Neville, all you have to do is just keep your eye on that star. Don't look at the bow of the boat, don't look anywhere, just keep your eye on that star. I'm going to have a nap and you wake me up in about an hour.

So I had a nap in the rear of the boat, I was very tired and I woke up feeling a big swell. Well, Neville had picked up another star. We weren't at Machu Pina point, we were down near the opposite of the Japanese lines.

If there had been a Japanese boat out there I wouldn't be here today. All he did was pick up another star and we almost got into deep, deep trouble. Now you pick up any other star and you'll be in trouble.

You pick up any other star and you'll be in trouble. And I mean the further you go the deeper the trouble. What are some of the stars people pick up? Let's take the United States.

There's no country in the world like the United States for opportunity and freedom. No country even begins to compare with it. My own country of Australia perhaps as close as any but still way off.

It's a great country. But there are two things I think you might agree in this culture and I have studied cultures that people are apt to worship. One is sex and the other is the brain.

I feel sorry for the poor kids in this country that go to school. They're all supposed to be A plus students. They're all supposed to graduate with honors.

Poor kids. What if he's got a C brain? How's he going to get on? In no way he's going to graduate with honors. You go into some evangelical churches and poor little Johnny he's simply got to be Hudson Taylor.

All he has to be is Johnny in the will of God. I've never yet said to any of my children when they brought their reports home why didn't you do better? In fact I just had a little chat with them prayed together,

thanked God for what he was able to do through them and let's go on to the next one. I remember on one occasion President Kennedy the late President Kennedy stating you can't do better you can't beat brains.

Well I can beat brains. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ beats brains.

Do you know that? Do you believe that? Jesus Christ beats brains. I was looking out in the field this morning preparing our field of grass then I thought yes all the scientists in the world can't create one blade of grass. Can't produce it.

Certainly not so hard. You've got millions of blades out there. Who put them there? Who created them? Jesus Christ did.

Not only did he create all things but all things cohere by him. They hold together. That blade of grass out there is a blade of grass because of Jesus Christ.

Do you realize the one we're talking about this morning? That blade of grass is a blade of grass because of Jesus Christ. And he is in you and he's in me. All the doctors in the world we thank God for doctors but all the doctors in the world combine their skills and their drugs and their hospitals and you name it and they couldn't heal the scar on a corpse or a wound on a corpse.

All of them. Here's a corpse man has died there's a wound. They can't heal that wound.

Put them all together they can't heal that wound. The life has departed. All they can do is cooperate with the creator.

That's all. Jesus Christ is the way the truth the life. He's everything.

We've been thinking of some truly great men of God and how they came into the blessing of realizing that Jesus Christ was all. And one of them was A.B. Simpson. A.B. Simpson began his ministry as a Presbyterian minister.

He had I think at least six breakdowns. Became utterly broken in health. And yet when your boys were in Vietnam and they would come across a group of Christians invariably with very few exceptions those Christians had been brought to Christ brought to Christ under a Christian missionary alliance missionary and the founder of the Christian and missionary alliance was A.B. Simpson.

How did he become the great man of God he was for so many years? I'm going to read from a little booklet we have some of them up there that's entitled himself. And he has this to say it is the Christ I want you to listen carefully to what he says because you can you can be like my friend and just miss the point. And unless you really get this point you're not going to abide.

It's a very fine point it's very important. He says it is the Christ it is himself. It is the person of Christ we want.

Plenty of people get the idea and do not get anything out of it. They get it into their head and it let's remember it into their conscience and it into their will but somehow they do not get him into their life and spirit. There's a big difference there.

You're not here to get it which is abiding you're to get him. So if you go away from this conference thinking of abiding, abiding, abiding you've completely missed the mark. But if you go away conscious of him and

relating everything to him you've got it.

And if you're truly relating everything to him you're resting. Now it's a crisis and a process and the spirit of God may bring you to a crisis during this last meeting or on your way home or he may have already brought you to a crisis and you realise well I've been very foolishly doing everything except the thing that I should have done which was relate everything to him because here's my life and here's my all. And so I present myself my body to him in order that he might live his life through me and I continue to do it every day.

So it's not it's a person. You don't get it. It's a person.

Jesus Christ. Then he goes on to say they get it into their head and it into their conscience it into their will and somehow they do not get him into their life and spirit because they have only that which is the outward expression and symbol of the spiritual reality. I once saw a picture of the constitution of the United States very skillfully engraved in copper plate so that when you looked at it closely it was nothing more than a piece of writing.

But when you looked at it at a distance it was the face of George Washington. Good illustration. What are you to see through these words of scripture? The face of Jesus Christ.

The person of Jesus Christ. The face shone out in the fading in the shading of the letters at a little distance and I saw the person not the words nor the ideas and I thought that is the way to look at the scriptures and understand the thoughts of God. To see in them the face of love shining through and through not ideas nor doctrines but Jesus himself as the life and source and sustaining presence of all our life.

So it is not it is him. I prayed a long time to get sanctified or to be made holy and sometimes I thought I had it. What was the it? Well he had the sanctification.

On one occasion I felt something and I held on with a desperate grip for fear I should lose it. You ever had that experience? I've got it I'll hold on in goes. I've lost what? It.

And the Lord is still there. Who said we were not saved? And kept awake the whole night fearing it would go and of course it went with the next sensation and the next mood. Well I don't feel as if I have it.

It felt like that. I've lost the it the blessing. Isn't it tragic? Well I'll have to go I'll just have to wait until next year and go to the institute again and get it back.

Some people do going to conferences. Some people have been going for instance to Ben Lippin for 20, 25 years every year. Very often they go up just to be blessed and try to hold on for another year until they can go back.

There was a lady who arrived at Ben Lippin and a good friend of mine was one of the preachers that year and she said to him oh brother I've come to get my batteries recharged. He said ma'am I have a word for you you don't have any batteries. Yeah.

Come to be recharged hoping to get a big charge in her battery so she could coast along for a year and then come back and get them recharged. Again he said you're deceived you don't have any batteries. You have Christ.

So afraid of losing it when all the time we have him. Of course I lost it because I did not hold on to him. I'd been taking a little water from the reservoir when I might have all the time received from him fullness through the open channel.

I went to meetings and heard people speak of joy. I even thought I had what? What's he going to say? The joy. What's he bringing home to us consistently? That he's seeking for things instead of him.

He's seeking for experiences instead of him. So he thought he had the joy. But I did not keep it because I had not himself as my joy.

At last he said to me oh so tenderly my child just take me and let me be in you the constant supply of all this myself. And when at last I got my eyes off my sanctification and my experience of it and just placed them on the Christ in me I found instead of an experience the Christ larger than the moment's need. The Christ that had all that I should ever need who was given to me at once and forever.

And when I thus saw him it was just such rest. It was all right and right forever. So he enters into the experience.

Then he says there came a time when even faith seemed to come between me and Jesus. That's an important point here. Even faith seemed to come between him and the Lord.

I thought I should have to work up the faith so I labored to get the faith. At last I thought I had what? What's he going to say? It. Right? It's a trap isn't it? At last I thought I had it.

But if I put my whole weight upon it that if I put my whole weight upon it it would hold. I said when I thought I had got the faith I am trusting in myself in my own heart in my own faith. I was asking the Lord to do something for me because of something in me.

Try to get hold of that. I was asking the Lord to do something for me because of something in me. So he's terminating with who? Terminating with Simpson.

That's dangerous. You always terminate with the Lord. You begin with him and you terminate with him and you go all the way through to the termination with him.

Not because of something in him. All right? Let's get the point. He was in trouble because he was looking for something in him, his faith which made possible the blessing instead of something in Christ.

So what is he getting away from? He has stopped floating, hasn't he? He's just beginning to sink a little bit. He stopped floating. Now he's back with Simpson's faith.

He's in trouble. So the Lord allowed the devil to try my faith and the devil devoured it like a roaring lion. Ate it up.

Just ate up his faith. Wasn't that good of the Lord? He'll eat it up. He'll just sit and let the devil loose on you.

The devil thinks he's a big shot and all he is is one set is the Lord Sergeant Major on the Barrack Square of Grace. Did you work that out? The devil is the Lord Sergeant Major on the Barrack Square of Grace. I was drafted into the army in January 1940.

I took some well Dan was wrong when he said the war started in 1942. That was for these lazy Americans. The war started in September 1939 and I was drafted into the army in January 1940.

Stayed there for six years. My first day in the army was quite something. He said put all your equipment over here.

So I gave him everything but my Bible. Put that in there. I had enough of the army from my father.

I wouldn't give him my Bible. I'd never get the thing again. And I'd read a biography of Moody and Moody said if you carry a big Bible you preach a sermon ten miles long if you walk ten miles.

So I bought the biggest Bible I could find. It was a Bagster. Have you ever known what a Bagster Bible is? Almost as big as this lectern.

Not quite but it's a big Bible. So I couldn't do any preaching I didn't know what to preach but I could carry my Bible. So I carried my bags everywhere I went and I was going to carry it to the army.

So I arrived pushing this truck and we went about eighty miles north of Sydney of this dirty dusty military camp. They debussed us from the vehicles and we stood there on the parade ground and I heard a voice like I'd never heard before like a foghorn. And I looked around and here was this regimental sergeant major.

He had about a twenty inch neck and he roared. And he was determined to make soldiers out of us. We were the first draftees in the nation and they didn't know what was going to happen whether there would be a rebellion or what.

So they decided they were going to step on us from the first moment and they were not going to take their foot off us and they kept their word. Well here was this big dusty parade ground. Every morning very early.

Out here on this parade ground it was hot sometimes 108, 110 degrees. That didn't mean a thing to them. And that sergeant major out there in control of all the sergeants and everybody drill, drill, drill, drill, drill hour after hour after hour after hour.

What were they doing? They were making soldiers out of us. Making soldiers out of us day after day same thing step left, right, left, right, about turn, hour after hour. Teaching you to obey without question a command.

Well what is the devil? He is the lord sergeant major on the barrack square of grace. The lord puts you out there on the barrack square of grace, sets the devil loose on you. So don't get all upset about the devil.

He is on a leash and he is doing what he is told to do and doesn't even know it. So the devil devoured his faith. Praise God.

Now he does him anything. Well now he can begin to live. Now he can begin to live.

He doesn't have a thing. Now Jesus Christ can be everything to him. You find that this is a consistent experience of the great ones of God.

What preacher in the last century could compare with Spurgeon? And Spurgeon on one occasion was about to enter a certain hall of learning and everything went wrong and he didn't have his interview with

the president and then the spirit of God spoke to him and he said, seeketh thou great things for thyself seek them not. And so Spurgeon lived and died Mr. Spurgeon never attended any Bible school college or seminary and yet the greatest preacher of the 19th century by far probably the greatest preacher since Whitefield. C.H. Spurgeon.

But God had to keep him low in order that Christ might manifest himself through him. And this was the experience of this truly great man. The devil devoured his faith.

And I found myself so broken down that I did not think I had any faith. God allowed it to be taken away until I felt I had none. And then God seemed to speak to me so sweetly saying, never mind my child, you have nothing.

But I am perfect power, I am perfect love, I am faith, I am your life. I am the preparation for the blessing and then I am the blessing too. I am all within and all without and all for ever.

That is it. It is not your faith, you have no faith in you, any more than you have life or anything else in you. You have nothing but emptiness and vacuity and you must be just openness and readiness to take him to do all.

What a testimony. And so God took that man and used him to be the founder of the Christian and missionary alliance. But he had to bring him down before he could lift him up.

I am going to ask Ray to show, throw a project onto the screen, a hymn that he wrote. It is a very simple hymn but it is his experience. It says, Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord.

Once it was the feeling, now it is his word. Once his gifts I wanted, now the giver own. Once I sought for healing, now himself alone.

Once was painful trying, now it is perfect trust. Once a half salvation, now the uttermost. Once it was ceaseless holding, now he holds me fast.

Once it was constant drifting, now my anchors cast. Once it was busy planning, now it is trustful prayer. Once it was anxious caring, now he has the care.

Once it was what I wanted, now what Jesus says. Once it was constant asking, now it is ceaseless praise. Once it was my working, his it hence shall be.

Once I tried to use him, now he uses me. Once the owner, once the power I wanted, now the mighty one. Once for self I labored, now for him alone.

Once I hoped in Jesus, now I know he's mine. Once my lamps were dying, now they brightly shine. Once for death I waited, now his coming hail and my hopes are anchored safe within the veil.

What a testament it's all there. It's not it, it's him. Shall we pray?

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