

John 15: Jesus' "Viability" Theology

The "Partnership" Paradigm

John 15.15

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love,
just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business.
Instead, I have called you friends,
for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you
so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.

Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

The Evolution of Abiding

“You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business.”

- ❖ As Jesus and his disciples left the room where they had observed the Passover and where he had washed their feet, Jesus began teaching them this paradigm of viability: *“I am the True Vine, my Father is the True Husbandman, you are the branches; if—and you must— abide in me, you will bear much fruit, revealing that you are my disciples.”* The branch has no viability except in proximity to the vine, and the evidence of its viability is that it bears fruit—the proof of true relationship.
- ❖ Jesus has expanded this paradigm to one of a “love-obedience” relationship. True “abiding” draws us deeper and deeper into the life of Jesus—the very same life that he shares with the Father; a life in which we are not slaves, obligated to perform with unquestioning obedience, but a relationship of compatibility and confidence.

The Transmission of Revelation

“... everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

“Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work.” (14.9-10)

❖ Earlier in the evening, Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father; Jesus’ response was not unique—which was why his reply carried the tone of rebuke. It was the entire life-purpose of Jesus to reveal the Father’s heart, speak the Father’s words, and do the Father’s work. Apart from this mission, there was no viability for Jesus, no reason for him to have come: *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work.” (4.34)*

❖ Without this mission, there was no revelation of the Father, or of grace and truth —

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (P17-18)

❖ Nor was it a revelation of compulsion as was the law, but one of love—

For the Father loves the Son and shows him all He does. Yes, and He will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. (5.20)

❖ Jesus has invited his disciples—and us—into this deep relationship; this relationship of so deeply abiding in him that what is seen, known, and revealed of us, isn't us at all, but him living in us doing his work; a relationship of privileged access, vibrant fellowship, surrendered delight, trusted friendship; one where we share his heart and ambitions just as he did with the Father.

Servants or Partners

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

- ❖ We should receive his revelation with the same delight and single-mindedness that characterized him as the Father’s *Sent One*—for we are *his* “sent ones”—

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit . . .”

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (20.21)

- ❖ Later, Jesus will call the disciples “brothers” (John 20.17)—the fullness of relationship made possible only through the Spirit of Sonship (Galatians 4.5-6), whose very purpose is to change our status as slaves.
- ❖ Tragically, many Christians are content with the slave relationship; Jesus invites us into the same place of love, confidence, and trust as he shares with the Father—one where his heart is fulfilled by us and he is revealed through us.