

STEP 11 — STAYING CLOSE TO JESUS

JOHN 15:1-11

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

THINKING IT THROUGH

In this passage, one word carries the weight of Jesus’ teaching: “remain.” Jesus uses it over and over again. How many times? Count them. The Christian life is not described as striving, performing, or trying harder. It is described as remaining.

The Greek word translated remain is μένω (menō), which means to stay, abide, dwell, continue, or make your home in. It carries the idea of ongoing, relational closeness, not occasional contact. Jesus is describing a life that stays connected to Him the way a branch stays connected to the vine.

A branch does not struggle to produce fruit. It simply stays connected to the vine, and life flows naturally through that connection. This is exactly what Step 11 is inviting us into:

STEP 11: INTIMACY — *We seek to deepen our relationship with God daily and depend on his power to do his will.*

Notice what Step 11 does not say. It does not say we try harder to fix ourselves. It says we seek God daily and depend on His power. That is the language of remaining.

Recovery and spiritual growth both begin to fail when we drift from connection with Jesus. When we try to manage life on our own strength, we wither like a branch cut off from the vine. Old habits, fears, and patterns quickly return. But when we remain in Christ, something different happens. His life flows into ours.

- ▶ His strength replaces our weakness.
- ▶ His truth reshapes our thinking.
- ▶ His love heals the places we once tried to medicate with sin or control.

Jesus also tells us that remaining involves two simple practices:

1. **His words remain in us.**
We stay close to Scripture, allowing Jesus’ voice to shape our hearts and minds.
2. **We remain in His love.**
We continually return to the truth that we are loved by Him — not because we perform well, but because we belong to Him. We are beloved children of God.

This is why Step 11 encourages daily rhythms like prayer, Scripture, reflection, and quiet listening. These practices are not spiritual chores. They are ways of staying connected to the Vine.

The result? Joy!

Hear these words, again:

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

When we remain in Jesus, we discover that real healing and lasting freedom are not produced by willpower. They grow naturally from a life deeply rooted in Him.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How would I describe my current connection to Jesus — consistent, occasional, or sporadic?

How am I currently making space for Scripture to actually remain in me — not just pass by me?

What is one small, simple practice I could add (or return to) that would help me remain in Him?

What practices (or distractions) tend to pull me away from staying close to Jesus?

Jesus promises “complete joy.” What steals my joy? What restores it?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for inviting us to remain in You. Help us stay close—rooted in Your love, guided by Your Word, and strengthened by Your Spirit. Prune what needs to go, grow what brings You glory, and fill us with Your joy. As we leave this moment, keep us abiding in You so Your life may flow through ours.
Amen.

RE:GENERATION: <https://www.regenerationrecovery.org/>

Re:generation focuses on heart transformation, seeking to remove the idols of our hearts that keep us from a deep, intimate relationship with God. We plan to launch **RE:GENERATION** at Sherwood Oaks Bloomington this fall, with an informational meeting this summer. We are looking for leaders to help us.

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12 STEPS OF RE:GENERATION

STEP 1, ADMIT — We admit we are powerless over our addictions, brokenness and sinful patterns—that in our own power our lives are unmanageable.

STEP 2, BELIEVE — We come to believe that God is the one whose power can fully restore us.

STEP 3, TRUST — We decide to trust God with our lives and wills by accepting His grace through Jesus Christ.

STEP 4, INVENTORY — We make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

STEP 5, CONFESS — We confess to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our sins.

STEP 6, REPENT — We become entirely ready to turn away from our patterns of sin and turn to God.

STEP 7, FOLLOW — We humbly ask God’s Spirit to change our hearts and minds in order to follow Christ fully.

STEP 8, FORGIVE — We forgive those who have harmed us and become willing to make amends to those we have harmed.

STEP 9, AMENDS — We make direct amends whenever possible, submitting to God, his Word and biblical counsel.

STEP 10, CONTINUE — We continue to examine our lives and when we sin promptly confess and turn to walk with Christ.

STEP 11, INTIMACY — We seek to deepen our relationship with God daily and depend on his power to do his will.

STEP 12, REGENERATE — Because of our new lives in Christ, we carry God’s message of reconciliation to others and practice these biblical principles in every aspect of our lives.