

Intro –

I have been asked several times, How? How do I go to school full time, raise 3 kids, work full time, volunteer at the church, be a brother, a husband, and a functioning person in society. People get mesmerized and they think I have a secret system, magic tool, or I know something that they don't. As I smile at them and try to be kind and encourage them, the whole time though I am thinking I am actually dying inside. If they only knew how burnt out, tired, and exhausted I am.

The thing is I know productivity, I train in productivity, and I maximize productivity. I am somewhat of an expert in this category, I am able to take things apart and find ways, options, and ideas on how to improve and maximize. How to eliminate free space, off time, or downtime. I am a professional productivity consultant. I've personally been guilty of telling people they are not productive and they need to fill their time better.

However, even though this has been one of the most productive years of my life, this past year has also been one of the hardest, most exhausting, and stressful years in my life. Managing everything I had going on to say the least was overwhelming. I have become a fine tuned employee, husband, father, and volunteer, but I now live in burn out.

I'm not alone... a study from Statista shows that 1 in 5 adults is experiencing burnout or someone directly linked to them is experiencing it.

Burn out is something we all know. Exhaustion because you finish working, you get home just in time to run your kids to practice, which finishes just in time to get something to eat, which then it's time to get everyone to bed and start over and do it again. You can't remember the last time you had a meaningful conversation with your kids, significant others, friends, or family. It seems like no matter what you do there is not enough time to finish, complete, or finish anything. never being satisfied with performance. You feel like all the work we do is not enough, not good enough, or even overwhelming us. We spend a lot of our time on trying to avoid it, trying to prevent it, or even try to stop it.

The standards, the expectations we put out there, that we put on ourselves are all based on productivity. Everything from our schooling, like standardized tests, in our work, by performance reviews, productivity spot checks. Even our down time isn't down time. We get home we are rushing, we scarf down our meals during break, we lay in bed and think about the next day and what we have to do. We replace every moment of down time with our cell phones, social media, or binge watching. We think that multitasking is an art form or it actually helps us, but it only hurts us.

How many of us binge watch while interacting on social media, texting, or playing a game. What are we really watching when we are on facebook or twitter or catching up on our next post. Even when we are in our day time we never unplug.

There is this myth of productivity, that we can just go, go, and go and that there are no consequences, that it doesn't cost us anything, and that productivity is the best way to operate to get the most out of ourselves.

The truth is that it is we shouldn't just always go, go, go. We have a suspicion that spirituality is an answer - mindfulness and meditation are new buzzwords. But in our overcrowded schedules, God is the first thing to go. The first things we cut are prayer, church, c group, rest, quiet time. Or is that just me?

We live in a world of factories, so no wonder 'productivity' is a value - that's what a good factory does. But humans aren't machines. We're organic. So maybe we should worry less about being productive and ask how we can be FRUITFUL. Maybe there's something in recognizing we're not machines that can run 24/7/365 that can bring us life.

Message

In this season after Easter, we're working through the "I Am" statements Jesus made in the Gospel of John. "I Am" is a translation of Yahweh, the name of God. Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus makes it clear he's God by calling himself "I Am". But he also makes statements like "I am the Way" or "I am the resurrection" to reveal what it means that he is God.

Our series is called "Monday Messiah" because what Jesus reveals to us about his godhood. Jesus came not just for our religious experiences - our Sunday mornings. He came for our everyday lives. That's why he uses images like sheep, vines and bread - though they're strange to us, they were part of the everyday lives of Israel. So we're asking how Jesus matters in our everyday lives. What difference does Jesus make on Monday?

[Scripture Slide] This week, we'll be in John 15. If you have your bible, bible app, or phones turn with me to John 15:1-8. If you grabbed one of our free bibles from the back it is on page XXX.

This is the section in John's gospel is called the "farewell address". It is during the last supper and Jesus knows he's about to be arrested and crucified. Jesus is giving them a framework for what Christianity is and how it can be fruitful. This is Jesus' farewell instructions. This is right before he is taken by the temple guard and handed over to pilot and he is leaving his disciples physical and mental practices so they can continue to follow in his footsteps.

Here, Jesus claims, "I am the true vine." Vineyards were common in ancient Israel. The Mediterranean has the perfect climate for growing grapes. Like the other 'I Am' statements, Jesus draws on something from the disciples' everyday. Even if they didn't grow grapes, they knew vineyards. (For us it would be like someone talking about a grocery store, factory, or a high rise office building.) Jesus uses this idea of a vineyard, something organic, to explain God's providence, that creation is dependent on a creator, and the goodness of creation.

If Jesus is the vine, we are branches connected to Jesus. Jesus obviously lived in a world before factories and machines, but I want to sit with this metaphor today. What if we see

ourselves not as cogs in a social machine, geared around productivity, but branches connected to a vine, created to be fruitful? How does that change how we see the goal of our daily lives?

You and I are creatures. We are organic. Like a plant, we need water, food, and we use that to create energy. Jesus calls himself a vine - and us branches - to remind us of this fact, that we are organic and connected to something bigger. That our bodies require energy, maintenance, and restoration. Jesus asks us to stay rooted, to stay put, to abide with in the vine. Jesus calls us to be fruitful and invites us to abide on the vine.

Let's go ahead and read starting in verse 1.

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. -- John 15:1-8

That bit about the branch that is cut off and thrown into the fire stood out for me. Maybe it's my traditional upbringing or maybe it is the fear of being removed from the vine, but either way I do not want to ever be in that boat. I feel like sometimes we think God is just out there cutting off branches throwing us into the fire or into hell. When we read this passage, we focus on God as the primary actor. God is the one going around, cutting us off. But this passage isn't primarily about God. Jesus focuses on US, on whether or not we're REMAINING. So the question is not, "Will I be cut off and thrown into the fire?" The question for us is, Are we remaining?

Why does the vintner cut branches and throw them into the fire? It's not punishment. It's for the health of the vine. A branch that has stopped producing fruit isn't doing what branches were created to do. It has become worthless. The only good it has left once it is no longer producing fruit is to be removed, thrown into the fire to release all the energy that is left.

This is why remaining is the focal point of Jesus' message. By abiding in the vine, we remain fruitful. Branches don't produce fruit unless they stay connected to the vine. We don't think of our relationship with Jesus as something that's always on-going. We think of ourselves more like cell phones than branches. We want to disconnect from the wall and go about our day, slowly draining our energy. At the end of the week, we hop back in for a recharge, hoping we get enough juice to get us through next week.

But we're not cell phones. We can't disconnect ourselves from the vine and run on batteries. If we stay disconnected, we don't have the energy, the Spirit, the life to do God's work in the world. We'll just burn ourselves out until we can no longer produce fruit. What is being cut off from the branch and thrown into the fire if it is not burn out?

Burnout is a symptom. Burnout show us we are not abiding in Jesus. Burnout is a warning light, signalling that we are organic and we're not remaining connected to our source of life. If we don't abide with the vine, we will burn up. We aren't machines we can't just plug in and be ready to go in an hour. We can't just go to church once a week and expect to be okay.

Our world treat us like we are machines, like we are just a expendable, and we can just be replaced when we are used up. Even our metaphors are machine like...."blowing off steam, self starter, automated." We "gear" our minds and bodies like we are machines. All the while we neglect our spirituality and our souls.

Jesus uses this example of the vine, of the branches, this living growing, organic thing to help us understand that abiding is the way. He shows us that in life to receive energy and to be connected means we can give back without worrying about burnout.

Okay so if being connected to the vine is a better way, how do we do that? In everyday terms for us what does it mean to be connected to the vine? What does it mean to abide, to stay?

For us abiding is found in spiritual practices. It does not work though if God is not present in the practices. If we do not stay connected in the vine.

Let's break this down just a little, so inward disciplines like prayers, designed to help us reflect on ourselves inwardly, reflect on what we have done and what others are doing around us, prayers facilitate us turning ours spiritual and inward postures back towards God. Fasting allows us to focus on training our bodies to submit to God. Rather than being ruled by our desires, we learn to submit our desires and cravings to God's way. Study of scripture helps us learn how we are part of God's story. Study opens space for the Spirit to renew our minds, making us more loving, patient, kind and gentle. All of these disciplines make space for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. To work through us, through the vine and help us to be fruitful. These practices make space for us to turn, reflect, and invite God continually in our lives.

These are not processes and another to do list, these are the things that actively keep us connected to each other, that keep us in relationship, that help to make us whole. These are the practices that transform us from humans doing into humans being, what I mean by that is this is what humanizes us again, which is good and what God intended for us. Work, relationships, actually doing things is not bad in and of itself, but if we frame our lives around these things and don't practice the humanity, don't celebrate the organic nature of ourselves and why that is Good we will miss out and just head toward burn out.

If you are still skeptical, if you are still not sure that abiding, that staying instead of going is better, than you may be buying into the lie that everyone else has set up. That we are machines, that we are only built to release energy and when we are done we can be thrown away.

You may be thinking, "I don't have TIME to add more things to my to-do list." I get it. I feel the same way. So let the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. challenge you as they challenge me.

He famously said, “I have so much to do today that I had better spend another hour on my knees.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

This is not another to do list, this is not another thing to do and how can we fit it in our schedule. Dr. King is saying I don't have time for anything else if I don't have time for this. First is abiding, first is creating space for the Holy Spirit to move and interact in our lives.

Could you imagine that remaining connected to Jesus every day is THAT important? That if you don't begin with Jesus, nothing else you do matters? Friends, it's true. The living vine is our source of life. When we remain connected to him, our lives overflow with spiritual power. When we cut ourselves off, we're on the road to burnout.

I was buying into the lie of productivity. I was maximizing every minute of my time, but I was cutting out all the things that made me fruitful, my quiet time, my prayer, reading my bible, time with my friends, time with my family. I cut out everything that did not lead toward me producing and being productive. I bought into the lie and all I got for the past two years is burnt up.

So I reset my priorities, I have since been taking the past 3 month of off school to re engage my friends and family, to get further rooted, and to spend time being fruitful. To spend time abiding. To stay connected to the vine and to shed those parts of my life that said I need to be a machine. To start my priorities, goals, and decisions in the vine, filter them through God.

How often do we filter and order our days organically instead of productively? How often do we start with our spirituality instead of cutting it first?

Often times when we do this, things change, we don't always just stop things or cut things out. We might repurpose the things that we do.

When we start with abiding it will help us to shape, decide, and use these things to abide instead of head towards burn out.

Our own bodies, minds, and spirits are screaming out that this is wrong. We are not built to be machines, we are not built to just run and run and run. Almost everything in our culture has been built in this way. Our education system grooms us to be ready for a job, our jobs train us to do more and more with less and less. All the while we are just breaking down mentally and physically. Biology tells us that our culture is lying, that we are not machines.

What if we started saying no to some things? What if we refused to treat ourselves like machines? What if we refused to get caught into this continual cycle of productivity? Instead of listening to what the expectations are that have been set all around us, what if we listened to the God that invites us to stay, to abide, or to remain? What if we turned our focus towards abiding.

When Jesus said I am the way, the truth , and the vine, Jesus invites us to stay, stay, stay. Jesus invites us to abide in the vine, to feed off of God's divine providence, to drink from the living waters, to bear fruit within our community and continue to give while we stay.

So we can continue to follow what our culture tells us, what our jobs tell us, or we can stay, we can abide within the vine.

Communion + Examen

When Jesus wanted to affirm his love for us, he didn't give us a bunch of instructions. He invited us to a table. The Communion Meal insists we stop and remember we're not machines. We're bodies that need food and drink and the life-giving power of God. Jesus invites us to his table to sit with him. To stay a while. To remember he is our true vine, our source of life.

We come to the table today at Jesus' invitation. You don't have to be a member of Catalyst to receive communion with us today. If you're willing to remain with Jesus, to make some space for the Spirit to transform you and give you true life, then you're welcome to come to the table this morning.

Before we approach the table, I'll lead you in a prayer of Examen. These are four questions that help us reflect on how we'll respond to Jesus invitation today. I'll ask you each question, give you some silent space to reflect prayerfully, and then I'll pray for us all as we approach the table.

1. When in the last week did I make space to abide with Jesus?
2. When in the last week did I treat myself like a machine that doesn't need rest?
3. When in the next week will I be tempted to treat myself and others like machines?
4. How can I make space to abide with Jesus this week?

Prayer

God you have gathered us today that we might stay with you awhile. We have heard the invitation of your son, Jesus, calling us out of the productivity-driven world that causes us to burn out. We have heard your vision for our lives: that we would rest with you, that we would have fruitful lives that overflow to the world around us.

We approach your table this morning as a people hungry and thirsty for that life. We approach to receive your meal, bread and wine that you offer as your very body and blood. We pray these wafers and juice we receive become a spiritual food, that they nourish our spirits. Give us the grace we need to be your people, united as one family and ready to be about your work in our world.

We offer these prayers and approach your table this morning in the name of your son, Jesus

Assignment -

*Thanks to givers and servers

*Newcomers' Lunch

As you go this week I just want to send you home with a little homework, I want you to spend 30 minutes this week and reflect on what is keeping you busy? Then I want you to see why you don't have space to stay, to abide within the vine. Also grab one of our spiritual practice guides on your way out, this is a great tool that you can use to start practicing abiding.

Go in the grace and peace of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit