



# Watchman Prayer Alert

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; All day and all night they will never keep silent. – Isaiah 62:6

## Lessons from Kittens

Rigby, a beautiful tiger striped kitten came to live with us. Within a couple weeks, we noticed that Rigby was putting on weight and was not very friendly.

Surprise! A month after adopting our young cat, she delivered five baby kittens!

They are adorable and completely helpless. Newborn kittens cannot see for the first week or so. They do a cute little army crawl, but cannot stand well or walk. They huddle close to the mother cat and spend their time sleeping and nursing. If you dare to pick one up, it cries incessantly until you return it to its mother. If you handle it, you may also face repercussion from the mama, too. They put on weight rather quickly, and I'm told they will be ready for their new homes about 8 weeks after birth. For now, however, they are completely dependent on their mother for all their needs.

Rigby nurses, grooms and shelters all five kittens. She has become more docile now that her kittens have arrived (unless she feels her little ones are threatened).

Watching this process reminds me of Jesus' discussion with His disciples after the last supper. He said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me." (John 15:4)

### What is "abide"?

Abide means to remain, to stay, to tarry, to continue to be present, to be kept, to endure, to survive. It can be used in reference to a place (for example, stay here) or time (for example, to last forever)

Like the branch which must remain attached to the vine, and the kittens which must be present with their mother, so we can only survive when we continue to be present with Jesus.

Let's take a few moments to examine how John uses the word "abide" in his writings.



### What are we to abide in?

First of all, John makes it clear that we are to abide in Jesus. Continuing His discussion with the disciples, Jesus said, "Abide in Me [Jesus].... I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15:4-5,7)

Just as the vine is the source of strength and nourishment for the branch, so Jesus is our source of power, too. He tells us to continue with Him, to remain with Him, to live with Him, to abide with Him. As a result, we will become fruitful.

*"The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming, (1 John 2:27-28)*

John is describing the Holy Spirit anointing that lives inside of us and instructs us. The Holy Spirit coaches us on how to abide with Christ. The result of this lifestyle of abiding is confidence in Christ's righteousness and a shame-free existence.

We are also commanded to abide in Jesus' love. He told us, "*Just as the Father has love Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*" (John 15:9) When we truly begin to fathom the absolute depths of the love that Jesus has for us, we begin to exist, remain, live and abide in it. His love is perfect, complete and selfless. In that love, we find our identity as children of God who have nothing to prove. We haven't earned that love, and we don't have to. He freely gives it to us, because He decided to love us. That love is unending and doesn't change. And we are invited to remain in that place of perfect love.

*"We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."* (1 John 4:16) What a promise!

Finally, we are told to abide in Jesus' Word. Jesus said, "*If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.*" (John 8:31) This is critical. We must continue to feed our spirits on the Word of God and the commands of Jesus. It is so easy to get distracted, that we must make a concerted, daily effort to stay in and abide in the Word. John said, "*I have written to you young men because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*" (1 John 2:14) Abiding in the Word of God is our assurance of victory over the enemy.

There is an even bigger bonus. "*The one who does the will of God lives (abides) forever.*" (1 John 2:17) By continuing in the Word and fulfilling God's purpose in our lives we ensure that we will live with Him forever.

### **How do we abide?**

Now that we've establish what we are to abide in, we may be wondering how do we do it? John offers some wisdom for us here, too.

*"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."* (1 John 4:15) Above all else we must accept the humanity and the divinity of Christ if we are going to truly remain in Him, in His teachings and in His love. If we do

not believe He is who He said He is, we will never continue on with Him.

Jesus went so far as to say, "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.*" (John 6:56) While this sounds confusing, I believe He is saying that if we devour His teachings, His lifestyle and His ways, and if we make them a part of us, then we will endure with Him. He lives through us as we live in Him.

Next, Jesus said, "*If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.*" (John 15:10) One way to remain close to Jesus is to do what he commanded us to do. In fact, "*The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him.*" (1 John 3:24)

He gave us a lot of instructions we need to pay attention to. However John gives us a few more specifics on this one. John wrote, "*If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.*" (1 John 4:12) So an important aspect of abiding in Jesus is truly loving each other the way Jesus loved us. John didn't stop there. He actually put some feet on this statement.

John says, "*Whoever has the world's goods and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"* (1 John 3:17) So true love of our brother and sisters and of God is expressed through tangible means and actions.

*"The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him."* (1 John 2:10) This statement reinforces the idea that abiding with Jesus is inexplicably tied with loving each other, and somehow that selfless love protects us from sin.

### **What is the evidence of abiding?**

If these instructions were not enough, John goes on to document for us the results of abiding in Christ. If we abide in Him, then this evidence should be obvious in our own lives.

*First, "no one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."* (1 John 3:16) Since we are human, we are all prone to our sin nature. In this instance John is talking about abiding in habitual sin. If we are abiding in Christ, we are not abiding or indulging in a lifestyle of sin. If we are continuing in a pattern of sin, then we have not

experienced God, and we do not know Jesus, and we are not abiding in Him.

On the flip side, by remaining with Jesus, we defeat the works of the enemy in our lives. *"The word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one."* (1 John 2:14)

*"Everyone who believes in Me [Jesus] will not abide in darkness."* (John 12:46) Jesus is the Light of the world, and by remaining with Him, we walk in the Light.

*"The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."* (1 John 2:6) Jesus walked in integrity without sin. He was perfect before God, and He is our model. When we continue in Him, we also will live a holy life.

Next, when we *"love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us."* (1 John 4:12) Not only do we walk in the Light, but we also become conduits for the genuine love of God. His love is completed through our thoughts, our hands, our voices and our actions.

Finally, when we abide in Christ, we find that we are filled with the Holy Spirit. *"By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."* (1 John 4:13) The Holy Spirit active in our lives, teaching us, consoling us and leading us is evidence that we are faithfully continuing in Jesus. *"That is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him, because He abides with you and will be in you."* (John 14:17) The Holy Spirit abides with us and we know Him. We know His voice. We feel His breath on us.

*"We know by this that He [Jesus] abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."* (1 John 3:24) The Holy Spirit working in our lives is evidence that we are abiding (continuing, living, remaining) in Jesus.

In fact, by abiding in Jesus, we experience the presence of the entire trinity abiding with us. Not only does Jesus abide with us and the Holy Spirit abides in us, but we also have God the Father abiding with us. *"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."* (1 John 4:15) In the same way, John also said, *"Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father."* (1 John 2:24)

By keeping Jesus' commandments, by loving each other, by walking in the way that he walked, we find that we have fellowship with all three members of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When we abide in Jesus, we will see the results in our lives. *"...As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me."* (John 15:4) As we remain in Him, we have all access to the throne room of Heaven. *"If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."* (John 15:7) The emphasis here is on the abiding, not the asking. However, when we have the mind of Christ and are in tune with the Holy Spirit, the requests we make of the Father will be in line with God's own will in our circumstances. Our focus must be on continuing with Jesus and remaining in His Word. Then the requests we make are aligned with the heart of God.

### **Blind babies**

As the blind, helpless kittens snuggle with their mother, so we need to understand our infancy in this spiritual world. Like the kittens aimlessly scooting around guided only by the purr of the mama cat, so we are helpless and listening for the gently voice of the Spirit.

As the kittens cry for help when they fall over or wander too far away, so we cry for the Jesus to help us.

When someone picks up a kitten from the safety of the brood, it cries loudly for assistance from its mother. So too, we cry out in our trials for the only One who can meet our need.

Just as the mother cat suckles the young kittens, providing all the nourishment they need to grow and thrive, so Jesus stands ready when we reach out to Him to meet our needs, too.

We have grown up in a physical world where we live comfortably. We also exist in a spiritual realm that we cannot see and don't fully comprehend. If we want to live forever with Jesus, we must remain in His Word, continue in His love and abide in Him. Then we will enjoy the fellowship with the Godhead and with each other both now in this realm and then forever in the next.

