

Bearing the Fruit of Love
Sunday School Lesson
John 15:1-17
January 11, 2026

On July 7, 2005, there were a series of four coordinated suicide attacks carried out by Islamist terrorists that targeted commuters travelling on London's public transport during the morning rush hour. Three terrorists separately detonated three homemade bombs in quick succession aboard London Underground trains in Inner London. Later, a fourth terrorist detonated another bomb on a double-decker bus in Tavistock Square. Apart from the bombers, fifty-two people from eighteen different nationalities were killed and nearly 800 were injured in the attacks. At the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games, Emeli Sande sang the hymn, *Abide with Me*, as a tribute to the victims of the 7/7 terrorist attacks.

The author of the hymn, Henry Francis Lyte, was an Anglican cleric. For most of his life Lyte suffered from poor health, and he would regularly travel abroad for relief, as was customary at that time. An article in *The Spectator*, 3 October 1925, says that Lyte composed the hymn in 1820 while visiting a dying friend. It was related that Lyte was staying with the Hore family in County Wexford and had visited an old friend, William Augustus Le Hunte, who was dying. As Lyte sat with the dying man, William kept repeating the phrase "abide with me...". After leaving William's bedside, Lyte wrote the hymn and gave a copy of it to Le Hunte's family.

The belief is that when Lyte felt his own end approaching twenty-seven years later at the age of 54, as he developed tuberculosis, he recalled the lines he had written so many years before in County Wexford. The Biblical link for the hymn is Luke 24:29 in which the disciples asked Jesus to abide with them "for it is toward evening and the day is spent". Using his friend's more personal phrasing "Abide with Me", Lyte composed the hymn. His daughter, Anna Maria Maxwell Hogg, recounts the story of how "Abide with Me" came out of that context:

The summer was passing away, and the month of September (that month in which he was once more to quit his native land) arrived, and each day seemed to have a special value as being one day nearer his departure. His family were surprised and almost alarmed at his announcing his intention of preaching once more to his people. His weakness and the possible danger attending the effort, were urged to prevent it, but in vain. "It was better", as he used to say often playfully, when in comparative health, "to wear out than to rust out". He felt that he should be enabled to fulfil his wish, and feared not for the result. His expectation was well founded. He did preach, and amid the breathless attention of his hearers, gave them a sermon on the Holy Communion ... In the evening of the same day he placed in the hands of a near and dear relative the little hymn, "Abide with Me", with an air of his own composing, adapted to the words. Just weeks later, on 20 November 1847 in Nice, then in the Kingdom of Sardinia, Lyte died. The hymn was sung for the first time at Lyte's funeral. Special thanksgiving services to mark Lyte's bicentenary were held in Taghmon and Killurin churches. Although Lyte wrote a tune for the hymn, the most usual tune for the hymn is "Eventide" by William Henry Monk.

Purpose Statement: To discover what it means to abide completely in Jesus

I love this hymn although it is rarely sung in churches anymore. You will find it on page 700 in the United Methodist Hymnal. The word “abide” is used ten times in the first ten verses of this passage. That should give us a strong suggestion for what Jesus believes is required to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. If you wanted to take this seriously, how would you begin to start?

1. The author suggests we begin by reading and studying the Word of God. How can you know who Jesus is if you are unaware of all the things he says and does? Reading a daily passage through the Upper room or Word for Today or another devotional resource helps you begin the day “abiding in him.” I would add that studying the word with a group of people is important. This can be through a Bible Study Group or a Sunday School Class. At the end of every lesson are suggested scripture passages for each day.
2. Our lesson suggests we need to go do the work of God. No, that does not mean lecturing other on what they should or should not be doing. You would be much better off going to the grocery store and just greeting people warmly. Some people volunteer at hospitals, you can schedule to work at the food pantry or get on a Sue's Table team. You can also send cards to those on the prayer list or encourage those who are having a rough spell.
3. Abiding in Jesus means you obey the will of God. We all have our issues to work on as well. Who have you harmed and do you understand the damage your actions or words have done. Repentance is more than saying I'm sorry. If we seek to understand the damage or words or our actions have done to another, it will make us less likely to repeat the behavior.

If we are truly attached to Jesus, our life will be an encouragement to others just as Jesus' life was an encouragement to others. We all leave footprints on this earth. We leave on the hearts of the people we love, we leave them on the hearts of the people we work with in our jobs, our churches, and our community organizations. We leave them on the lives of the people we see on a routine basis – our doctors, pharmacists, store clerks, restaurant owners, neighbors, teachers, etc. What kind of footprint have you left? Is it a foot print that reminds them that they are a beloved child of God because that is the footprint that is left of someone who abides in the true vine.

Friends, let's close with the first and last verses of *Abide with Me*.

*Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

*Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.*