



CHRONIC JOY® DEVOTIONAL

Abide in Me

Independence, Chronic Illness & Dependence on the Lord

By Hailey Hudson

*I am the vine; you are the branches.
If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;
apart from me you can do nothing.*
(John 15:5)

I've always been a very independent person. Independence is something I value and is a big part of my personality. I want to do things for myself and not have to rely on anyone, but over the last few years, chronic illness has been chipping away at my independence more and more.

For the past several months, I haven't been allowed to drive because of my seizures. I now have to rely on family and friends or pay for an Uber if I want to go anywhere, even if I just need to quickly run to the grocery store for a few simple items.

This loss of independence is especially hard to swallow in my early 20's. You expect to lose these abilities when you're a senior adult, not a young twenty-something. It makes me feel frustrated and left behind that I can't do this part of life for myself anymore.

This situation, however, has made me realize something: we're all completely dependent on God. We like to think we can handle life on our own, but really, we need help — and a lot of it. None of us would ever get anything done without the Lord.

In John 15, Jesus was speaking to His disciples at the Last Supper. He used the analogy of a vine. Think about the anatomy of a grapevine: the vine grows out of the ground, the branches grow out of the vine, and the fruit grows on the branches. If you cut a branch off the vine, it won't bear fruit by itself. It has to be attached to the vine. In other words, it is dependent on the vine.

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Similarly, we cannot produce fruit unless we abide in Jesus. God created us; He puts the breath in our lungs (Job 33:4). Without Him, we truly can do nothing. This might sound like a sobering fact, but in reality, knowing we are fully dependent on the Lord and that He is in complete control should be a freeing feeling. We know that God is good and He cares about us; He is working all things together for good (Romans 8:28). Being so dependent might make us feel helpless, but when we remember God is sovereign and He has good in store for us, it gets easier to faithfully surrender our idea of independence into His hands.

When you're struggling with feelings of resentment, anger, sadness, or any negative emotions as you consider any loss of independence in your life, turn your heart toward the Lord. Remember that all of us, even people who are not chronically ill, are truly dependent on God for everything -- and abiding in Him is the secret to producing fruit.

I don't know when I'll be allowed to drive again. Even when I'm cleared by my neurologists, I still struggle with drowsiness, vision issues, and other symptoms that make it difficult for me to drive myself anywhere I want to go. Perhaps every time I get into a car, I'll remember what I've learned: we are all utterly dependent on the Lord -- and this place of dependence and surrender is the best place we could possibly be.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- How has chronic illness affected your independence?
- How does that loss of independence make you feel?
- Do you truly trust God and depend on His goodness to meet your needs?

PRAYER

Dear God, I sometimes feel frustrated and upset when my physical symptoms prevent me from doing the things I'd like to do and force me to get help from others. I pray that my limitations would serve as a reminder of my dependence on You. Remind me that I can do nothing without You. Thank You for how You guide me and sustain me. I know I can fully depend on You and trust Your goodness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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