



## CHRONIC JOY® DEVOTIONAL

### BLESSED IN DEPENDENCE

By Lee Ann Zanon

If I could choose, I would rather be strong than weak. I would love to be free from persistent physical limits and nagging anxiety. Yet, because of chronic pain, I typically don't have a choice.

Ongoing health struggles (whether of body, mind, or both) present challenges far beyond our control. Amid the challenges, however, we do have options. We can either worry ourselves into despair or lean into the Lord's help and care. For me, it's a matter of admitting my desperate dependence on His strength and grace on both good days and bad.

Our world may promote independence as the ultimate goal, but I am discovering new realms of blessing through trusting in God rather than myself. My soul finds peace as I let go of expectations, release the weight of concerns, and remember His promises. Jesus' invitation and instruction to abide in Him offer fresh hope:

*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. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me, you can do nothing.* (John 15:4-5)

The word *abide* implies a willingness to remain or dwell with Christ – staying connected and near, drawing from His power and wisdom rather than our own. The guaranteed outcome of a fruitful life (pleasing the Lord and fulfilling His purposes) brings deep comfort.

One of the most disappointing aspects of chronic pain is a decreased ability to serve others, as I did for most of my life. Social interaction is limited to a maximum of two hours in quiet settings a few times weekly. Caring for our four young grandchildren (who live nearby) is possible just one at a time for short durations. I am thankful I still have these abilities, but I wish I could do more.



Considering what I can offer, the idea of bearing much fruit (John 15:5b) seems impossible. Yet Scripture tells me it is *certain* as I abide in Jesus. In his classic book, *Abiding in Christ*, Andrew Murray observes, “...the dependent posture honors Him and opens the heart to let Him work ... putting ourselves quietly into His hands ... neither lagging behind nor getting ahead of Him.”

Jesus concludes His invitation to abide with powerful words of promise: *These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* (John 15:11)

He lovingly awaits our simple expression of faith. Savior, *I abide in You.*

In my experience, consistent prayer and Bible reading are essential to abiding in Christ. Journal writing is also important to process thoughts and feelings day by day. I have recently started using Chronic Joy's printable resource, *50 Prayer Journaling Prompts*. It offers specific statements as a framework for reflection. Examples include:

- Jesus, I am grateful for ...
- Lord, my soul needs ...
- God, the hardest part of my illness is ...
- Father, I feel Your hope when ...

I invite you to explore this avenue for cultivating closeness with Christ. I pray it is helpful to you, as it has been for me.

#### PRAYER

Lord, You are the vine, and I am a branch. Please teach me to abide in You moment by moment, depending on You for all I need. Thank You for Your great love and the good plans You have for my life. Thank You. Amen.

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What is your initial reaction to the word *dependence*?
- How might *abiding in Christ* look in your daily life?
- Choose one of the journal prompts from above that most resonates with you. Write it below, along with any initial thoughts.

