ABIDE

ABIDE

TRADING A LIFE OF STRIVING
FOR THE PEACE OF ABIDING

JONAH LUSK

Abide
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ALSO BY JONAH LUSK

Make Good Tables: Work. Family. Rest. And why God cares about more than just Sunday.

Covered In Dust: Rediscovering what it means to follow Jesus.

3 Miles An Hour: How to let your pace be determined by His Spirit.

To Nana and Papal,

For the life you have lived and the family you have raised.
We are the evidence of your decision to abide in Jesus.

And we are forever grateful for you.

Love,

Jonah

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I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Jesus

PROLOGUE: TIRED OF TRYING

We're all trying.

Trying to do the right thing.

Trying not to do the wrong thing.

Trying to raise our children.

Trying to have a healthy marriage.

Trying to pay the bills and clean the house.

It's almost as if we live in a perpetual state of trying.

Which, if we're honest, leads us to a perpetual state of exhaustion.

And it's noble. Trying to do all that we do. But, sometimes, I wonder if that's what we're called to do. I wonder if this is how God designed us to live? I wonder if we've settled for a way of life that's a shell of what God intended?

If you're like me, living in America, it's hard to escape what's referred to as the "American Dream." It's the idea that if you dig deep, work really hard, and never give up, you can do whatever you put your mind to. Professional athlete? You can do it. Seven-figure income with a yacht? You got it. It's

the “American Dream.” You can be whoever and whatever you want to be, as long as you try. And if you haven’t gotten it, just keep trying. Just keep working harder. Because if it’s not yours yet, it means you haven’t tried hard enough or worked hard enough to attain it.

So, we try really hard. We work long hours. We get minimal sleep. All to attain the things we need. Or, if we’re honest, the things we have been told we need to be happy and successful and satisfied.

And don’t get me wrong. There is absolutely nothing wrong with hard work. Or, for that matter, having a vision in life for your future.

But I believe an issue arises in our lives whenever we make the “American Dream” the vision and value system of our lives as followers of Jesus.

Whenever we adopt this hard-work-no-days-off-I-can-sleep-when-I’m-dead mentality as a son or a daughter of God, we end up building a life on shifting sands. It’s an unstable foundation that will leave us broken, exhausted, and wondering why things aren’t happening the way we think they should.

It’s this mentality that causes us to search for the right equation that will give us the outcome we desire.

And this way of thinking and living seems to be prevalent in the lives of Jesus followers.

Over time, it’s easy to become conditioned to believe that what God desires from us is to work harder. To do better. To try and try again. And if we aren’t seeing what we think we should, that’s God’s way of telling us we haven’t worked hard enough yet.

So, we pick our exhausted selves up, and run harder. We pray longer. We read more. We listen to another sermon or podcast. Maybe we start fasting. All in hopes that we will achieve or receive the outcome we desire.

This is what it means to follow Jesus, right?

We're the people of God.

We never quit. We try harder. We work longer. We can sleep in heaven. But, while we're on earth, there's work to be done.

It's easy to rally a room full of Jesus followers with this message. But, I wonder if that is really the message Jesus gave to us?

Did Jesus really say "try harder?" Or, "do more." Or, "work harder."

Or, could it be possible that we have adopted the mentality of the culture around us?

Could it be possible that we have bought into the lie that what God desires is our hard work for Him, rather than our communion with Him?

Yes, there is work to be done.

But what exactly is the work to be done as followers of Jesus?

THE WORK TO BE DONE

Jesus describes the work we are called to in John 15, when He states:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." 1

Jesus makes it clear that the goal of our life and the work to be done in our life is this one word: abide.

Abide in the Greek is the word *meno*, which means to be present to, to dwell, to make your home in. 2

To abide is to set up camp. To plant yourself and to remain planted.

For Jesus, the goal of our lives is to make our home in Him.

So, if there is work to be done, it's not trying harder to do better. It's not working longer hours. And it's not exerting more willpower to do what needs to be done.

The work to be done is to abide. To remain in Jesus. To be present to Him and to Him alone.

And Jesus tells us that through our abiding in and connection to Him, fruit is produced in our lives. The fruit of the Spirit. The fruit that reveals to the world around us who God is and what He is like.

We find out what the fruit of the Spirit is in Galatians 5, when Paul states:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law." 3

It's this fruit that God desires in our lives.

Not the fruit of more money or material possession.

Yes, God desires fruit in our lives. But, contrary to popular belief, the fruit God desires does not come through working harder. Or by striving and straining. It doesn't come because we read more scripture. Or because we pray longer.

The fruit of the Spirit in our lives isn't produced through striving. It's produced through abiding.

Fruit is the byproduct of abiding. It's the result of a life lived in intimate connection to and communion with Jesus.

But we live in a world that would lead us to believe the goal of life is accumulation. We need to get all we can, do all we can, and experience all we can. And in order to do that, we have to work harder, try harder, and do more than we are doing now.

Because this is the message we are inundated with, we adopt this mentality as followers of Jesus, and we apply it to our relationship with God.

If God wants it, then I have to work harder and longer to make it happen.

If God desires fruit, I've got to produce it.

If God desires to do something in my city, I've got to pray harder to see it.

It's this "American Dream" idea that tells us we have to try harder in order to make things happen.

And it's this idea that leads us to believe that God won't move unless we do.

But what if God doesn't desire movement?

What if God desires presence?

What if God desires our presence?

To make our home in Him and to never leave.

This is what true success looks like. This is what it means to live a fruitful life.

Because if we're honest, we all want to be fruitful. To live a life that matters. To make a difference.

And the only real, lasting way to do so, is through what Jesus called abiding.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Total transparency: I wrote this book for me.

This is the message I needed to hear. This is the message I still need at this moment.

I have lived too many days trying harder to make things happen. I have seen the places in my life where I needed to grow as a husband, a father, a pastor, and a friend. So I committed to work harder. I tried more. I strained and strived to do better. But for some reason, it never happened. Or, when it did, it didn't seem to last.

I would read scriptures like John 15 and Galatians 5, and see that what God desires is fruit in my life. I would read the list of the fruit of the Spirit and commit to be more patient and loving and kind. I tried. I did whatever I could to make it happen. But I always felt depleted, exhausted, and confused.

Why can't I make it happen if I'm working so hard?
I'm trying, God. Don't You see?

As I live longer and grow deeper in my relationship with Jesus, I understand that He does see me. He does care. He

sees my striving and straining. He sees my hard work. He's proud of me as a son. But, at the same time, His heart breaks for the time I waste striving and straining to do what only He can do.

On my own I can't produce the fruit of the Spirit in my life.

On my own I can't be the father He created me to be. Or the husband who lays down his life for his wife like Christ did for the church.

On my own, by myself, in my striving and straining, I can't make it happen.

But what I've discovered is that God desires my presence, not my performance.

God desires for me to make my home in Him, not just to build a home for Him.

My desire to be who He created me to be and to do what He created me to do and to produce the fruit that glorifies Him in my life is noble. But my process for how that happens in my life has been far off-course.

See, that process is simple: abide.

And this is the reason I wrote this.

For all those who, like me, have tried and worked and strained, but can't seem to make it happen.

For all those who desire the fruit of the Spirit in their life, but can't produce it in their own strength.

For all those who desire something beautiful, but can't seem to bring it to pass.

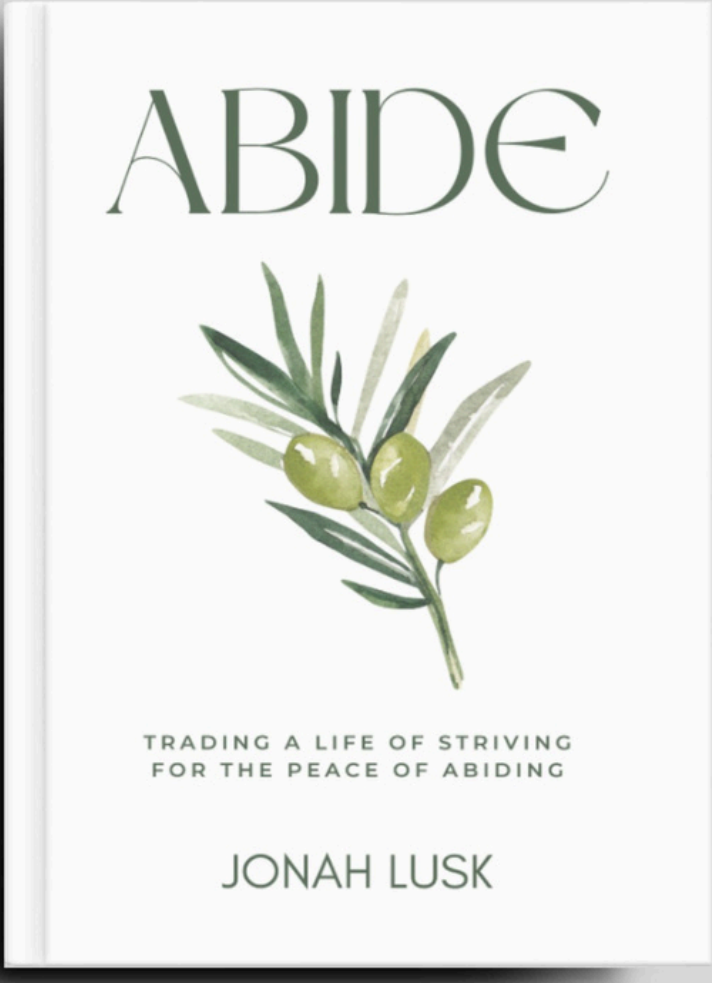
In this book, we will look at the fruit that God desires to be produced in our lives, and the process for how that fruit is produced.

Additionally, we will look at some key ideas regarding fruit that will help us on the journey.

And we will end with some practices to help us fulfill the calling on our lives to make our home in Jesus, empowering us to live the fruitful life God created us to live.

My prayer is that this book will be water for the thirsty and rest for the weary.

My prayer is that the words in this book will help you to abide in Jesus and watch as He produces in you and through you what you never could on your own.



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