

Everywhere

1. Warm-up question: Pastor David began Sunday's sermon with Fleetwood Mac's hit song "Everywhere." The key refrain in the song says, "Oh, I want to be with you everywhere." Tell us about the first time you fell in love with someone. Did you want to be with them everywhere?
2. The last thing Jesus said to us before he ascended into heaven was, "I am with you always." Matthew 28:20. We normally think of this as a promise that Jesus' power will be with us wherever we go, and that's true. But David invited us to see an even deeper dimension to what Jesus says. This was Jesus saying that he wanted to be with us – with you – everywhere. When you want to be with someone everywhere that means you're madly in love with them. In your heart of hearts, are you able to believe Jesus loves you that much? Suppose someone asked you, "Why does Jesus love *you* so much?" What would you say? How would you explain it?
3. David told us the story of a famous 14th century Christian mystic named Julian of Norwich. When the world was falling apart around her – after losing her husband and baby to the Bubonic Plague, and as she lay dying – she experienced a series of visions that gave her a profound sense of the presence of God (even in the midst of disaster) and filled her with joy, desire, hope, and love. Julian began referring to Jesus as our "true Mother" because he is the one from whom we receive our beginning, our true being, protection, love, and eternal life. Here is a famous quote from Julian.

"This is truly the maker, the lover, the carer; for until I become one substance with him (her), I can never have love, rest, or true bliss; that is to say, until I am so bound to him (her) that there may be no created thing between my God and me."

What do you think Julian means? Try to put her quote in your own words.

3. First John 4:16 says, "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them." In John 15:5, Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." Both verses use the key term "abide" to describe how we should relate to God. The Greek word for "abide" means to "take up permanent residence or to make yourself at home" with God. The Hebrew word for abide refers to interpersonal relationships in a shared space: "keeping house together, marry, marrying." So that abiding in Jesus means sharing life with Jesus and spending quality time with him.
 - a. Prayer is one of the key ways we can spend quality time with Jesus. In Matthew 6:6, Jesus said, "When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to God in secret." Pastor David said that here Jesus is reminding us of the importance of finding quiet places to share intimate time with God. David said, "This is part of abiding, spending quality time with Jesus. It's not just about talking or making a laundry list of prayers. It's being very intimate, being vulnerable, sharing all of who you are, listening, reflecting, becoming more

self-aware, and even learning to love yourself and others better.” But we often find it hard to take quiet time with God for prayer. Why is that? Are we afraid of it? Is it because we don’t know how? Are there things we worship more, so we don’t want to carve out the time for God? How would you answer?

- b. We often pray, “God show me your will for my life?” Suppose instead we prayed, “God, please make my will your will.” How is that different? Do you think it’s a better way to pray?
 - c. Amidst all her suffering in the aftermath of the Bubonic Plague, Julian of Norwich repeated this mantra, “All will be well and all manner of things will be well.” But how can we accept (and feel) that all is well when we and others suffer so much? Rev. Joan Wright Howie puts it this way, “Living in the life of God fosters a sense of wellness in all things. This sense of wellness in knowing God provides a foundation for actions that transform the world.” What do you think she means? Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. David suggested that “abiding” in God can be viewed as having three components. **Continuance** means staying consistently focused on the presence of God and how God calls us to live. But how do we develop that focused? That’s why Connection is so important. **Connection** is spending quality time with God building intimate relationship. Because ultimately we are completely **Dependent** on God. We cannot live and love well apart from robust ongoing Connection to God. Again, remember what Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5.
 - a. What are some things you currently do to connect with Jesus in quality ways?
 - b. Is there something more you’d like to do to develop a better connection?
5. David taught us a body prayer that comes from the Order of Julian of Norwich. You’ll find the prayer on p. 3. Let’s pray it through, doing the motions together. Then discuss the questions below:

How did this way of praying feel to you? What did you think, feel, or receive as you prayed? Do you think this might be a good way for you to pray sometimes? Why or why not?
6. Now let’s read back through Sunday’s scripture, I John 4:16-21, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. What does verse 18 mean?
 - b. What does verse 19 mean?
 - c. What does verse 20 mean?

Body Prayer from the Order of Julian of Norwich

Have a narrator walk your group through the steps of the prayer, by reading aloud what's printed below, and pausing for 15 seconds of silence as we contemplate each step in the prayer.

- **AWAIT** (hands at waist, cupped up to receive): Await God's presence, however it may come to you. (Reflect for 15 seconds.)
- **ALLOW** (reach up, hands open): Allow a sense of God's presence) to come ...or not...and be what it is. (Reflect for 15 seconds.)
- **ACCEPT** (hands at heart, cupped towards body): Accept as a gift whatever comes or does not come. Accept that you don't know everything, that you are not in charge. (Reflect for 15 seconds.)
- **ATTEND** (hands outstretched, ready to be responsive): Attend to what you are called to, willing to be present and be God's love in the world, however God calls you to.

First John 4:16-21

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the Day of Judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Those who say, "I love God," and hate a brother or sister are liars, for those who do not love a brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.