

Chapter 6

Remain in Him

When we listed the ten areas of the Entrusted framework in Chapter 4, our walk with Jesus came first. That order was deliberate. Our response to the gospel, our life in Scripture and prayer, and our place among God's people are not one category competing with nine others. Our life in Christ is the source from which faithful stewardship of everything else springs.

Yet this is the area a busy man most easily neglects. A marriage can tell us when it is being neglected. So can a body, a bank account, or an employer. Our walk with Jesus rarely sends that kind of notice. We can go weeks, offering Him a hurried prayer on the way to something else, and feel no immediate consequence. The calendar stays full, the work gets done, and we may even be doing a good deal of it in His name.

In the Author's Note, I described how long I lived that way. I believed in Jesus and knew a great deal about Him. Yet there were seasons when I barely opened the Bible my grandmother had taught me to value. Knowing about Him had become a substitute for walking with Him. I suspect I am not the only man who has made that exchange.

Before we turn to marriage, family, health, work, and money, we need to consider the relationship on which those responsibilities depend. A plan for the remaining years that leaves little room for the Lord Himself has missed its purpose.

Remain in Me

On the night before the cross, Jesus gave His disciples a picture of what life with Him would be like:

“Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

— John 15:4–5 (NASB 2020)

The title of this book refers to the years that remain. Jesus uses the same word for something more fundamental. Before He speaks of fruit, He speaks of connection. A branch cannot produce fruit apart from the vine. Its life comes from remaining connected to the vine. Likewise, our life comes from Christ, and His call to remain in Him includes trusting His words and obeying His commands.

That changes how we should approach every exercise in these pages. Loving a wife sacrificially, releasing control of adult children, giving generously, and finishing well are fruit. They grow from

remaining in Christ. If we treat them as projects of personal determination, we will either grow proud of our progress or discouraged by our failures. “Apart from Me you can do nothing” is not an insult to our competence. It tells us where life comes from.

Remaining is also something we are told to do. Jesus goes on to speak of His words remaining in His disciples, of prayer, and of keeping His commandments (John 15:7–10). The connection is His gift, and we are called to live in it deliberately. The practices that follow are ordinary ways Christians have always practiced.

One Thing Is Necessary

Luke records a visit Jesus made to the home of two sisters. Mary sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. Martha was distracted by all her preparations and finally asked Jesus to tell her sister to help. He answered her:

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; but only one thing is necessary; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” —
Luke 10:41–42 (NASB 2020)

Martha was not doing anything wrong. She was serving, and someone needed to. Jesus did not rebuke her work. He named what the work had done to her: it had made her worried and distracted, pulling her away from Him while He was in her own house.

Many of us are more like Martha than we would care to admit. We are responsible men. We show up, carry the load, and solve the problem. These are good things, and this book asks you to keep doing many of them. But the One Thing sections at the end of each chapter are not the one thing Jesus was talking about. Beneath every practical step lies a prior necessity: time at His feet, listening to His word.

The Word That Keeps Correcting Us

Paul told Timothy that “all Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NASB 2020). Notice how much of that list involves change. We do not read the Bible only to gather information or to find support for what we have already decided. We read it to hear from God and to be taught, corrected, and trained.

When I finally committed to reading Scripture every day, part of me hoped it would solve the problems I was facing. It did not work that way. What it has done, year after year, is draw me back to Jesus and show me where I need to change. That is a better gift than the one I was seeking.

A daily habit matters more than an ambitious one. A man who reads a chapter each morning, asking what it shows him about God and what it requires of him, will be shaped more deeply than one who plans to study for an hour yet rarely begins. Read whole books of the Bible so verses remain in their context. When you do not understand something, ask someone who can help, and let the plain passages guide you through the difficult ones.

If your eyesight, energy, or concentration has changed, the form can change too. Listening to Scripture read aloud is still a way of receiving God's Word. So is having someone read it to you. The point is to keep His words in you, by whatever means your circumstances allow.

Prayer Is Not the Last Resort

Throughout this book, I ask you to pray about decisions. It would be easy to treat this as a formality before the real work begins. The Gospels show us something different. We have already seen that Jesus withdrew to pray even as crowds were looking for Him (Luke 5:15–16). If the Son of God made room for prayer amid urgent need, we are unlikely to manage without it.

Prayer is how dependence becomes practical. We thank God for what He has given, confess our sins, ask for what we need, and bring Him the people we love. We also ask for wisdom about the next step. Paul urges believers to bring everything to God with thanksgiving and connects that habit to a peace that guards our hearts (Philippians 4:6–7).

You do not need impressive words. Many men pray best with a short list and an honest heart: the names of their family, the decision before them, the sin they keep returning to, and the friend who is sick. Some find it helpful to pray through a psalm or the prayer Jesus taught His disciples (Matthew 6:9–13). There will be days when prayer feels like speaking into silence. Scripture is honest about that as well and offers this assurance: “the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26, NASB 2020).

The Helper We Forget

That verse brings us to someone this book must not leave in the background. When Jesus returned to the Father, He did not leave His followers to merely imitate Him from memory. He promised the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–17; Acts 1:8). Every believer's growth in Christ depends on God's work in us, especially the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work. The Father cares for His people, the Son brings us into life with Himself, and the Spirit indwells and empowers us to live as those who belong to Christ.

Paul describes the character we hope for in exactly those terms:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” — Galatians 5:22–23 (NASB 2020)

Read that list alongside the hopes you have for your remaining years. Patience with a wife. Gentleness with an adult child. Self-control over money, food, or anger. Faithfulness to the end. Paul does not call these achievements. He calls them fruit and names the One who produces them. His instruction is correspondingly simple: “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16, NASB 2020).

Christians describe the Spirit’s work with different emphases, and I do not need to settle those debates here. What believers hold in common is enough to change how we use this book. We are not left to our own resolve. The Spirit uses Scripture to teach, correct, and transform us; He helps us pray, equips us to serve, and produces in us character we could never manufacture by willpower alone. When a chapter asks you to take a step, ask for His help before you take it and thank Him afterward for any good that comes of it.

This is also where the Remaining Years Plan belongs. A plan can organize our intentions. It cannot change a heart. Relying on the Spirit keeps the plan from becoming either a source of pride or a record of failure.

The gospel gives us a settled standing before God through Christ, received by faith, while the Spirit continues to transform the lives of those who belong to Him. We are accepted because of Christ, and from that acceptance we learn to live more like Christ. Obedience is part of that growth; it is never the price of belonging.

You Were Not Meant to Do This Alone

The first Christians “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42, NASB 2020). From the beginning, following Jesus was a shared life. The New Testament knows nothing of a mature believer who has outgrown the church.

Hebrews gives the instruction directly:

“and let’s consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” — Hebrews 10:24–25 (NASB 2020)

In a local church, we hear the Word preached, worship alongside other believers, and share in baptism and the Lord’s Supper as Christ commanded. We are known by people who can encourage us and, when necessary, tell us the truth. We place ourselves under the care of pastors or elders

responsible for sound teaching. A man writing a plan for the rest of his life needs that kind of company. I am a student of Scripture, not an authority over it, and I want my own thinking tested by the church.

Later life can make this harder. A move, an illness, a painful experience in a congregation, or simple fatigue can loosen ties that once seemed permanent. If you have drifted, the way back usually begins with showing up again. If you cannot attend because of health or caregiving, let your church know and allow them to come to you. Receiving a visit, a recorded sermon, or a prayer over the phone is still belonging.

Scripture also has a specific term for men at our stage of life. Paul instructed Titus that “older men are to be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance” (Titus 2:2, NASB 2020). The church needs that kind of man: steady, clear about what he believes, loving, and persevering. Much of what we will consider in later chapters on wisdom, testimony, and influence is that verse lived out among the people of God.

When the Practices Feel Dry

There will be seasons when Scripture seems flat, prayer feels mechanical, and worship stirs little in us. Those seasons do not mean the relationship has ended. Grief, illness, fatigue, and long stretches of unanswered prayer all affect how we feel. The psalms are full of believers who kept speaking to God even when He seemed far away.

Faithfulness in those seasons often looks unremarkable. We keep reading, even briefly. We keep praying, even if it is only an honest sentence. We keep gathering with God’s people and let their faith carry us for a while. We tell a trusted friend or pastor how we are really doing. A dry season can also be a time to ask whether unconfessed sin, bitterness, or sheer overcommitment has crowded the Lord out, without assuming that every difficulty has such a cause.

Above all, we remember where our confidence lies. It does not rest on the quality of our devotions but on Christ, who is faithful when our feelings are not.

Jesus First, Before the List

Our governing order remains **Jesus > Others > Self**. In most chapters, we ask how putting Jesus first changes how we love others. In this chapter, the first word stands alone. Before He is the reason we serve, He is the One we know. A man can organize his whole life around Christian duties and still treat the Lord as the supervisor of his projects.

Time with Jesus is not self-indulgence that takes us away from the people who need us. It is what gives us something to offer them. A husband who has been with Christ has more patience to offer

his wife. A father who has prayed for his children speaks to them differently. Nor is it a technique for becoming more useful. We remain in Him because He is worth knowing, and the fruit follows.

One Thing

Choose one practice that helps you remain in Christ, and begin within seven days. Keep it small enough to sustain. You might read one chapter from a Gospel each morning before checking your phone, pray through a short list of names at the same time each day, or return to gathered worship this Sunday. If you have been away from church, your step may be to contact a pastor or a friend who attends and ask to join them.

If you already keep these practices, do not add another just to fill a line. Instead, consider whether one has become mechanical, and ask what would help you bring your attention back to the Lord Himself.

As with every commitment in this book, the practice is a means, not a score. Missing a day is a reason to begin again the next day.

Your Remaining Years Plan

My Walk With Jesus

Record where you are honestly. These answers describe practices, not your standing before God. That standing rests on Christ.

How I would honestly describe my walk with Jesus in this season:

My present practice of reading or hearing Scripture, and what would strengthen it:

My present practice of prayer, and the people and concerns I want to bring to God regularly:

The church where I worship and am known, or the step I need to take toward one:

Where I most need the Spirit's help and not my own resolve:

The practice I will begin or renew, and when and where I will do it:

I will begin on: _____

Someone who can encourage me and ask how it is going:

My plan review date: _____

Use the review date already set for your plan. When you return, ask whether the practice is helping you know and follow Jesus, and adjust it if it is not. Do not measure the weeks by how many days you completed. Ask whether you are remaining in Him.

From the Vine to the Branches

Everything that follows in this book is fruit. We are about to consider how to love a wife, release grown children, care for a changing body, hold work and money rightly, maintain friendships, and pass on what we have learned. None of those chapters will ask for something a man can sustain by willpower for the rest of his life. They describe what grows when a branch remains connected to the vine.

For those of us who are married, the first place fruit is seen or missed is at home. Our wives may have been beside us through years of work, building, worrying, succeeding, and starting again. Providing for them matters. So does knowing them, listening to them, and being present in the life we share. The next chapter turns our attention to that relationship and asks how we can love the person beside us more faithfully from here.

If you are not married, this is not a suggestion that your life lacks its most important assignment. Your opportunities to love and serve are real, and the inventory you have begun will help you recognize them. As we turn to specific relationships, keep asking how love for Jesus should shape how you give your time and attention.

REMAINING

Chapter 6: Remain in Him — John Clark

A free reading from John Clark's manuscript. The preceding seven pages reproduce Chapter 6 and its exercises from the author's October 17, 2026 PDF. Original manuscript page numbers are retained.

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Keep following Jesus. Remain in His Word, pray, stay connected to His church, and depend on the Holy Spirit as you take the next step.