Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 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. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

The Gilletts at one point had two dogs, a turtle, a fishbowl, a 55-gallon fish tank and four kids all sharing space. Sharing space, making room for others and thinking about the needs of those who inhabit and breathe deeply the air you share is a way of being with others. It is not necessarily a way of abiding with others.

While the act of sharing, the act of giving oneself, can be accomplished in deep and meaningful ways, it does not fully grasp the deeply theological concept of abiding. To “abide” is to enter a relationship through one’s connection and relationship with God. For the believer, Jesus has come and abides with us from the moment of new birth – that moment we believed and confessed Christ as our savior. The Greek word μένῃ (menē) “to abide” and its derivatives can be conveyed as “to be present, to remain, to dwell, to be kept, to tarry, to stand and/or to remain.”

To abide, in my view, is in a theological sense to bring God-Thought, God-Love, and God-Compassion to one’s relationships. In John 15 there are numerous references to the word “abide.”

---

1 John 15:4-11. NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)
The meanings range from “to remain,” “to dwell,” “to tarry,” and “to stand.” The structure of the cross reminds me of this abiding relationship. The vertical bar symbolizes God in us and us in God. This is the act of staying, the act of abiding. The horizontal bar symbolizes again the abiding relationship with all of God’s creation—both the believer and the non-believer. Abiding in God-Thought; God-Love; and God-Compassion means to be present, to tarry, to dwell with God and with those who share space with us. We are holding them and their burdens close. They hold us and our burdens as well.

Some may find it difficult to abide when they are the one wronged or demonized by others who profess God’s love. Some may find it difficult to abide when they see someone hurting. Feeling the hurt of others and empathizing with their painful reality creates difficulty.

In this era of dismay, disillusionment, division and despair, it is time not only to share space with those around us; it is time to abide and share God. It is time to peel back the layers of bad theology, spiritual hurt, church pain and learn to abide with one another. It is now time to realize that I cannot truly abide in God and God in me if I choose not to abide with those who suffer, are mistreated, or even disagree with me. It is time to abide. Abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in us produces life changing power. It is time to abide in God, God’s love and one another. God creates more than spaces for us to bear fruit.

**Reflection**

1. How do you define “abiding”?
2. How are you abiding in the ongoing relationship with God and humanity?
3. In light of the suffering we find in our communities, in what ways can you abide in God-thought; God-Love; and God-Consideration with humanity?
4. In what ways is the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) called to abide in God? Within our respective church? And with others?
5. To abide in God is to worship, and it is displayed through feelings and actions. If I abide in God, God’s word and in God’s Love: What should my outer actions look like?
6. What are three ways to deepen your abiding - relationship with God?

Rev. Dr. Donald K. Gillett, II is the President of the National Convocation Board of Trustees. He is the senior pastor of East Second Street Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Lexington, KY and the Executive Director of the Kentucky Council of Churches.