



How ABIDING Led to Discipling

You can find Hema just about anywhere you look at Carmel - Uptown with CarmelKidz on a Sunday morning, the Student Center on Wednesday nights or even online leading a ZOOM Women's Bible Study! Since coming to Charlotte over 20 years ago, Hema has been committed to serving the Father...and not just at Carmel. She gives her time to others in the community and supports her native country of India with prayer, fellowship and outreach opportunities through the Indian Fellowship. Hema and her husband David, have helped lead this ministry for the last 20 years - to support, encourage and minister to Indians living and working in Charlotte. All while caring for her family and friends!

How does she do all this? "It is really living out of God's grace," says Hema. She lives for Him and with a willingness to surrender to His perfect plans for her life. She does this through faithfully abiding in Him, reading His Word and praying.

At the invitation of a friend, Hema began attending a "Bible Study Fellowship" (BSF) study where they were studying the book of John. As she started she felt so overwhelmed, unsure of what she was reading (though she had grown up in a Christian family). She cried out in prayer "Lord, You are the Author, please teach me!" And in that moment it seemed as soon as she opened her eyes she got it! **So what part of John was she reading?** It was **John 15:1-5** which says:

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away,
and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.
Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.
Abide in me, and I in you. 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. Whoever abides in me and I in him,
he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*



God was challenging Hema to let go of every other "first" no matter how good it may have been. She knew right then that God was telling her *"I must be first and your dependency must be on Me. It is not wrong to have other things in your life but remember you have a direct line to Me! Use it and I will guide you."* And our loving God would not let her move forward - in her Bible reading or her ministry activities - until she surrendered to Him. In that moment of wrestling with God, she renewed her commitment to ABIDE in Him!

So, with God first, Hema asked Him to fill her with His Word and transform her heart so she could begin serving in ministry through His power and not out of her own strength. She prayed, *"Use me where You want to use me Lord... I want to teach a Bible Study, but I don't want to do it unless You would have me do it."*

So what did God do? He heard, responded and moved her somewhere she wasn't expecting. God opened the door for Hema to lead and mentor older teens and women (a big change from her days in working in WEE School and volunteering with special needs kids)!

She began volunteering in Student Ministry and also mentoring a college student. Now she leads Women's Bible Studies, mentors 3 women and is studying God's Word 1-1 with a former co-worker who is asking a lot of great questions!

As Hema looks back she can see how God had been preparing her. She was always interacting with the moms of special needs children in WEE School, she was encouraging them and pointing them to God. She was loving and caring for Indian women and mothers who came over from India. Through lunches, dinners, Christmas parties, and other times of fellowship she was encouraging these women with His love and His Word - whether she realized it or not.

Most importantly, she was abiding in His Word, being filled with His love as her heart was obedient...**and that was all He needed to work in and through her!**

Between every new thing God has called Hema to, there has been a season of patience and still waiting before the Lord as He shaped her for what He had next as part of His perfect plan. She says this time of waiting is important. It is a time to simply be with God and a time of preparation for what is coming...and that is only possible when abiding in His presence.

Hema's advice to us all - "Do not run on empty!" She openly, humbly admits that unless she sits in His presence, studies His Word and prays to Him, she could not serve others!



WHO IS HEMA HOPPER: Hema and her family (Husband David, son Abhi and daughter Aru) have been part of the Carmel Family since April 2000. She loves Jesus and her family, is a prayer warrior, comes from a 7th generation Indian Christian family and was a one-time DJ.

Find Hema the next time you are at Carmel to learn more about her days as a DJ and about the Indian Fellowship she and David have helped lead for the past 20 years. She has amazing stories of God's faithfulness to share!



Carmel is committed to making disciples of those Nearest, our Neighbors and the Nations.

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