

Abiding in the Vine

John 15:

1. I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.
 2. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every {branch} that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.
 3. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.
 4. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither {can} you unless you abide in Me
 5. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing
 6. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned
 7. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
 8. "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples.
 9. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.
 10. 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. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and {that} your **joy** may be made full.
- Verse 16: "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

Background of Text:

Post Judas, Pre-garden – trip to the Garden: Chapter 14 closes with "Rise, let us go" and Jesus and the disciples seem to have left the upper room located in the SW corner of Jerusalem and then they worked their way in a FULL MOON (Passover) through vineyards that surrounded the city, down through the Kidron Valley and up to Gethsamane's garden on the Mount of Olives.

Jesus had been speaking about returning to the Father, about leaving, about his death...and the disciples were both confused as well as saddened. He also had said repeatedly, "you in me and I in you" but they did not seem to grasp what he meant. So, he picked up a vine and said these words we just read.

The vineyards were illuminated by the full moon of Passover. It would have been a twilight kind of scene. And the vines would have been pruned back for the spring growth that was soon to come. In fact, the branches may have been in the process of being pruned, some pruned back and others with their full year of branches and vines intertwined along the cords and the stakes.

This time of year here in Madison and Geneva, you can see the results of a vineyard's proper care; in fact, harvest of the concord grapes has just finished except for some left on the vine for the "frozen harvest." Watch those full looking vines after the leaves die off and observe the massive intertwining of the branches and vines. And then take notice in late winter or early spring when the vineyard owners go out and prune the vines back. It is this process of pruning that Jesus had noticed and was using as an illustration for his disciples.

There are some principles that we will try to take home from this passage today.

1. **We were created for bearing Fruit.**

- a. Jesus did not come to die for us so that we could have an easy life.
- b. We were not set free for our own comfort.
- c. Jesus came to save us from sin, its effects and its consequences
 - i. From self rule
 - ii. And from our separation from God.
- d. Imagine this picture –
 - i. A vine grows its branches which are so happy they are a part of the vine. In fact, they grow very attractive leaves, and the vines get long and fat. Each vine compliments the other on how good they look.
 - ii. But because the branches have gotten long and fat, it means that the energy from the root of the plants has been wasted on branches and there is not enough energy and nutrients left over for fruit bearing.
 - iii. We have in the center of our woods an area where the deer like to hide. It is filled with old, abandoned grapevines that tower up the trees and hang like lace from branches above.
 1. But you will never ever find grapes on these vines.
 2. It is because they have been left to their own devices and have never suffered the discipline of pruning.
 3. They have no left-over energy from their vine growth to produce fruit.
- e. God did not send His son just to make our lives comfy and happy.
 - i. And He didn't come to make it so we can use our *left-over energies* (if we have any) for Him.
 - ii. He came to prune us so that we would bear FRUIT.

2. What is Fruit?

- a. Your fruit is the result of the root.
 - i. It is the purpose of the vine to bear branches that bear fruit.
 - ii. The root is the life-within us.
 1. Mt. 7:16-17 says, "You shall know them by their fruits."

2. It has been said that you will find out what is inside someone when you shake him – what is inside comes spilling out.
 3. If you want to see what you are made of, look how you respond when trouble, stress, difficulty strikes.
- b. Fruit can be equated to
- i. The acts of love we do.
 1. Titus 3:4 says, “Let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they many not be unfruitful.”
 - ii. The prayer life we maintain.
 - iii. The way that we live – do we blend in or are our lives a contrast?
 1. Nabisco witness?
 2. Are you different enough that others will notice?
 - a. Not just by what you DON’T do.
 - b. But by what you DO do.
- c. Fruit must last.
- i. John 15:16 “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should last.”
 - ii. Only two things last forever...The word of God and the Souls of Men.
 - iii. What fruit can we produce that lasts?
 1. That which is done for the kingdom of God.
 2. We can accumulate homes, cars, clothes, success, recreational items...yet they will rarely last much more than a few years after we are buried.
 - a. The things we have are here to be used not accumulated.
 - b. But people are here not to be used but to be loved.
 3. When you live for yourself, the evidence is in what is around you.
 4. When you live for others, the evidence is in the lives that are around you.
3. How do I produce fruit?
- a. Fruit is the product of ABIDING in Christ.
 - i. What is abiding?
 1. When I was a young Christian, an older man with whom I worked gave me a piece of advice I have not forgotten. He said, “don’t focus on all of the do’s and don’ts in life; focus on your relationship with Jesus Christ. If that is good, then everything else will fall into place.”
 - ii. Abiding is as foundational to living the Christian life as “by grace you are saved” is to Christian salvation.
 - b. Two elements to Abiding in Christ.
 - i. Me in Christ – (v. 5 “he who abides in me and I in Him)
 - ii. Christ in Me - (v. 5 “he who abides in me and I in Him)

- iii. I used to think that if just I did the “prayer thing” and “read my bible” that I was abiding.
 - 1. These things are VERY IMPORTANT to the spiritual health and well being of a Christian. Don’t underestimate their value. If these disciplines are not a part of your life, then you are missing out on a valuable part of abiding.
 - 2. But the disciplines are a MEANS to an end, and are not the goal.
 - a. We don’t go to prayer or bible reading to say, “Bob was here today.”
 - b. My ticket is punched, I can go on with my day as I please.
- iv. There are two distinct components of abiding.

1. Me in Christ:

- a. I must first trust Jesus Christ to become My Savior. I must come to a point where I enter into a relationship with Him where He is the reason I live.
- b. I should pray and read the bible regularly to hear God.
- c. (Ps. 1:1-2) “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But **his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.** He is like a tree planted by streams of water, *which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*”
 - i. Did you catch that?
 - ii. Delight is in God’s word; meditates (mentally chews) on the word.
 - iii. Resulting in FRUIT BEARING and PROSPERITY.
- d. Obedience: Not just listen to God’s word but live it:
 - i. “If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love.” (Jn 15:10)

2. Christ in Me:

- a. Colossians 1:26-27, “the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this MYSTERY, which is CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory.”
- b. This is Christ working, living through you.
- c. It occurs as a result of
 - i. *Moment-by-moment listening*
 - 1. Not self-absorption
 - 2. Obey when you hear, and you will hear more clearly.
 - 3. Shut out the voice of God = Grieve the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Which is the opposite of *Walking by the Spirit*

4. Obstacles to Fruit Bearing:

a. You don't realize you are barren of fruit

- i. ½ of Christians produce NO fruit at all.
- ii. 1/3 bear some fruit
- iii. 5% bear the fruit that changes the world.
 1. Why is this so? Are we so consumed by our busy-ness and pursuit of our own comfort and happiness that we aren't abiding in Christ?
 2. Scarier yet is that most of the Christians who are not bearing fruit would tell you...oh sure I am... I go to church! Or I don't swear or steal or do drugs! Aren't I good?
 3. Fruit, as we described earlier isn't about the don'ts, it is about the do's: of loving and ministering to other people's needs.
- iv. If you aren't bearing fruit, you should expect discipline from God for the purposes of restoration.
 1. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit he takes (airo) away."
 - a. It doesn't mean "cut off" as some translations make it out to be. The same word is used to describe the disciples picking up the 12 baskets of bread and fish fragments.
 - b. It means to pick up.
 2. A real vine may not be producing fruit because...
 - a. it comes loose from the trellis and falls on the ground where it gets wet, dirty, and mildew inhibits the production of fruit.
 - b. The vinedresser doesn't destroy a branch during fruitbearing season! They are much too valuable now.
 - c. He washes the leaves, binds the branch in cloth and ties it to the trellis again. Before long, they begin to bear fruit.
 3. So, we become "loose" from the trellis of our relationship with God.
 - a. We get caught up in life's distractions and pleasures.
 - b. We get consumed by a sin – such as bitterness, anger, or a consuming habit.
 - c. And our ability to bear fruit is compromised.
 - d. God has to discipline you – to bring you back to fruit bearing.
 - e. If you are harboring sin in your life, you will be unable to bear fruit.
 - i. Abiding will keep you from sin but
 - ii. Sin will keep you from abiding in Christ, and choke off the potential for fruit, very much like a weed.
 4. Won't you return to the Vinedresser today before you bear the pain of discipline?

- b. We may not be attached to the vine at all.
1. Remember...no fruit, no root?
 2. If you are doing whatever you want and are not experiencing God's discipline, you may not in fact even be a child of God! The bible says that "Him who he loves he disciplines."
 3. 2 Cor 13:5-6 says, "Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves! Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless of course you FAIL the test?"
 4. If you are comfortable doing what you want to and don't feel any remorse, you have failed the test. The bible is clear that a Christian cannot CONTINUE in sin. It is an unbearable experience for him. The most miserable person on earth is a Christian who is outside of God's will.
- c. You may think you can produce fruit by your efforts.
- i. V. 5 "apart from me you can do NOTHING"
 - ii. Do we see fruit as our work?
 1. It is the work of the WORK of the ROOT not the branch! (Eph. 2;8-9)
 2. Fruit is the natural result of a branch abiding in the vine.
 3. Fruit is the supernatural result of a person abiding in Christ.
 4. An apple tree doesn't strain to produce apples. ARRG. Can you see it now, an orchard of apple trees straining and groaning to produce apples? No way! The fruit is the result of the branches getting their nutrients from their roots.
- d. We run from discomfort (pruning).
- i. Pruning is the process of getting the most from the branches. His word is his pruning tool. (v3).
 - ii. Pruning/discipline is painful. It is necessary though. V. 2 says, "Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more FRUIT."
 1. Pruning is a process of adding by subtracting.
 2. Pruning cuts away waste. (works of the flesh).
 3. Our natural inclination is to produce branches and leaves. And without pruning we will not produce fruit.
 - a. God's ways aren't our ways!
 - b. If you die, you will live
 - c. If you subtract, you will add.
 - iii. Mature branches often require the most intensive pruning!
 1. It is easier to produce busy-ness than to obey God's prompting.
 - iv. Differences between pruning and discipline
 1. discipline – is about sin, wrong doing, so that we may bear fruit.
 - a. Our response – repentance
 - b. When will it stop? When you repent.

- i. Sin: flesh, rebellion, disobedience, carnality.
- 2. pruning – is about self, right actions, so we may bear more fruit.
 - a. Our response – give God permission.
 - b. When will it stop? When God is finished.
 - i. Self: dying to our desires, letting Jesus rule, seeking God’s help.
 - c. Pruning is SEASONAL. It does come to an end for a time, but we need to expect it as part of our lives.

5. Benefits of Abiding

- a. MUCH Fruit (Jn 15:5)
 - i. “I am the vine and you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears MUCH fruit.”
 - 1. To your fullest capacity, which is increased with each subsequent pruning!
- b. FULL Joy (Plero)
 - i. Joy is the internal, supernatural experience that is independent of circumstances and rises from our spirit. The word for full (plero) means to utter fullness, overflowing.
 - 1. Makes cars, girlfriends, homes and things we buy or use seem trivial and meaningless once you have experienced this joy.
- c. Answered Prayer (Jn 15:7)
 - i. Jesus promises prayer to those who abide.
- d. We get JESUS, & not just what He can give us.
 - i. It is easier to work than it is to abide. But only what is done IN CHRIST (NOT FOR HIM) will last.

e.

6. Your decision:

- a. Are you bearing fruit...fruit that will last?
 - i. Are you a part of the vine or after examining your life, you recognize that you have been living independently from God, pushing Him away and running your own life?
- b. Are you ready to give God permission to prune your life so that you can bear fruit?
- c. Are you ready to surrender from the discipline and say to God, “I am turning away from my sin, I surrender all”

If so, I will be down front as our praise team sings our song of invitation. I will ask you to stand prayerfully and quietly and obey the prompting of God to come forward for prayer either at the kneeling rails or to come to me and I will pray with you for God’s answer to your need. If you recognize that you need to say “yes” to God, to allow Jesus to be your Savior – you can do that today, step out of your pew and walk forward. Don’t wait, come on the first stanza. Jesus is waiting.

Lets pray.

Lets stand...come and allow Jesus to change your life.