

Worksheet #16: John 15:1–27

Summary: John 15 continues the Farewell Discourse, yet here Jesus broadens his focus beyond the work of the *paráklētos* (ch. 14) to describe his own relationship with the Father (15:1) and the relationship of the Godhead to the disciples (15:2). In vv. 1–17, he employs the image of a vineyard to describe these relationships. Jesus describes the Father as the “vinedresser” and himself as the “true vine” (15:1). The Old Testament frequently symbolizes Israel as a vine, and Jesus’ self-designation as the “true vine” here implies that Jesus is the new Israel, the “channel through whom God’s blessings flow.”¹ He describes the disciples as “branches” that “bear fruit,” while those who “do not bear fruit” are taken away by the Father (15:2). In 15:3–17, the vine metaphor describes how disciples ought to live. Jesus calls disciples to “abide” in the vine. The word translated “abide” is the word *ménō* (meaning “remain, stay”), which we saw in 14:17 where it describes the Spirit’s indwelling of the believer. This term is heavily clustered here in the description of the believer’s relationship to Christ. Those who remain in Christ will bear fruit, and this fruit serves as evidence that they are Christ’s disciples (15:8). A chief example of this spiritual fruit is in the way that Jesus’ disciples will love one another (15:9–17). This gives evidence that Christ has chosen and appointed them (15:16), thus providing one objective means for assurance of salvation.

Bearing fruit will also bring the scorn of those outside the vine in “the world” (15:18). Believers are to remember that the world’s hatred for them is based upon its hatred for Christ (15:19). As a result, believers should anticipate persecution and endure it boldly with the Holy Spirit’s help (15:26).

Abbreviated Outline² (current passage in bold):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE WORD MADE FLESH (1:1-18)
- II. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH (1:19-12:50)
 - A. *The Forerunner and the Coming of the Messiah* (1:19-51)
 - B. *The Cana Cycle: Jesus’ Inaugural Signs and Representative Conversations* (2:1-4:54)
 - C. *The Festival Cycle: Additional Signs amidst Mounting Unbelief* (5-10)
 - D. *Final Passover: Climactic Sign, the Raising of Lazarus, and Other Events* (11-12)
- III. THE BOOK OF EXALTATION: PREPARING THE NEW MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND THE PASSION OF JESUS (13-20)
 - A. *The Cleansing and Instruction of the New Covenant Community, including Jesus’ Final Prayer* (13-17)
 - 1. Cleansing the Community (13:1-30)
 - 2. **The Farewell Discourse (13:31-16:33)**
 - a. Jesus’ Departure and Sending of the Spirit (13:31-14:31)
 - b. **Jesus the True Vine (15:1-17)**
 - c. **The Spirit and the Disciples’ Witness to the World (15:18-16:33)**
 - 3. Jesus’ Parting Prayer (17)
 - B. *The Passion Narrative* (18-19)
 - C. *Jesus’ Resurrection and Appearances, Commissioning of Disciples* (20:1-29)
 - D. *Concluding Purpose Statement* (20:30-31)
- IV. EPILOGUE: THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF PETER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE (21)

¹ Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 448.

² Adapted from Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 307–308.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Consider some of the following references to Israel as a “vine”: Ps. 80:9–16; Is. 5:1–7; 27:2ff.; Je. 2:21; 12:10ff.; Ezk. 15:1–8; 17:1–21; 19:10–14; Ho. 10:1–2.³ How does the ministry of Christ contrast with the ministry of Old Testament Israel? How is it similar?

2. Summarize the role of the Father as described in 15:1–2, 8–9, 15–16.

3. How should we understand the reference to “every branch in Me that does not bear fruit” (15:2, 6)? How do these branches contrast with the fruit-bearing branches (15:2bff)?

4. Is there any case in which the Father will deny the requests of true disciples, according to 15:7? How can this work?

5. How does John 15:12–17 help us to understand 1 John 2:3–8, 3:22–24, 4:21, 5:2–3?

6. How does John 15:18–25 help us to understand 1 John 3:13–21?

7. What does it mean for the Spirit to “testify” of Christ (John 15:26)? Why would that lead to the disciples “bear[ing] witness” (15:27)?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage tell us about Jesus? How does it help us to understand “his place in the sweep of redemptive history”?⁴

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

³ References obtained from D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 513.

⁴ Carson, 102.