

Remain in Me

Jesus is the source of life and spiritual growth.

JOHN 15:1-17



...you,
...aved
...at ye are
...another.
...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.
...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life
...him, Wilt thou lay down
...ake? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.
...OF MANY MANSIONS
...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.
...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.
...³And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ⁴where I am, *there* ye may be also.
...⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way
...ye know.
...east saith
...s, to whom I
...e dipped *it*. And
...sop, he gave *it* to
...of Simon.
...p Satan entered into
...s unto him, That thou
...at the table knew for what
...e this unto him.
...e of them thought, because
...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE
...⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?
...⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am ⁷the way,
...the truth, and 'the life: ⁸no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.
...⁷If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.
...⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the



**What is one interesting thing you know about your family heritage?
How does that fact impact your family's identity?**

Many people have interest in researching their family history. Piecing together our family stories can help us understand why our family does some of the things it does, help us connect as a family, and give us identity. Jesus called on His disciples to connect to Him and His purposes. In doing so, they would find their identity.

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

As Jesus continued His discourse after the Passover supper, He taught the disciples the importance of remaining in Him. Using the picture of a grapevine, Jesus employed a common experience from Jewish life. The disciples understood the processes related to raising and harvesting grapes. Clusters of grapes grew on small branches connected to the larger vine. If a branch withered and failed to produce fruit, the gardener removed it, so it did not hinder the rest of the grapevine. He then pruned the vine so new growth would produce even more grapes. With this analogy, Jesus emphasized the necessity for the disciples not only to set up their lives within Him, but also for them to be fruitful spiritually as a result. Doing so glorifies the Father.

One aspect of abiding in Christ involves love for Him and for one another. When believers abide in Christ, His love naturally produces reciprocal love for Him. We demonstrate our love for Him by loving one another. Another characteristic of remaining in Christ is to abide in His word. Genuine love for Jesus can be observed by obedience to His commands. Knowing He loves us, we follow His words

because they are good and are intended for our good. Joy results from a loving obedience to Christ. We cannot keep Jesus's commands if we do not know or understand them.

People who abide in Christ should be ready for opposition. Those who reject Jesus not only resist Him, but also hate everyone associated with Him. They do not accept His words or acknowledge His works. Refusing God's love in the gift of His Son, these adversaries turn their animosity toward those who follow Christ. Believers should count themselves blessed to suffer with their Lord so the Father may be glorified in them.

JOHN 15:1-17

1 “**I am**^A the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2** Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. **3** You are already **clean**^B because of the word I have spoken to you. **4** Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the **vine**,^C neither can you unless you remain in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. **6** If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the **fire**,^D and they are burned. **7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be **complete**.^E **12** This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. **13** No one has greater love than this: to **lay down**^F his life for his friends. **14** You are my **friends**^G if you do what I command you. **15** I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn’t know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. **16** You did not choose me, but **I chose you**.^H **I appointed**^I you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. **17** This is what I command you: Love one another.”

Key Words

- A. The last of Jesus’s seven “I am” statements (see 6:35; 8:12; 10:7,11; 11:25; 14:6).
- B. Holy and accepted by God
- C. The vine (Jesus) mediates life between the gardener (the Father) and the branches (believers).
- D. A parallel passage can be found in Ezekiel 15:1-8. Fire is often used in the Bible to denote judgment.
- E. Full to the brim; perfect; accomplished
- F. Jesus demonstrated love by laying down His life. His followers are called to sacrifice for others.
- G. Abraham (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8) and Moses (Exodus 33:11) are called friends of God because of their obedience. Jesus offered the same opportunity to all who obey His commands.
- H. In first-century Israel, disciples typically selected a rabbi to follow. Jesus broke protocol by choosing His own pupils.
- I. Set aside for a specific mission (see Luke 10:1; Acts 1:23-26; 22:10,21; 2 Timothy 1:11).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Pruned

(John 15:1-8)

Believers are being pruned by God so they can be more fruitful.

How does the Father prune us so that we can be more fruitful?

How does remaining, or abiding, in Christ change our perspective on pruning?

2. Joy

(John 15:9-11)

Believers find joy through obedience.

How does a person's obedience to Jesus produce joy?

What substitutes does the world offer and how do they compare to the joy produced by obedience to Jesus?

3. Love

(John 15:12-17)

Believers love others because they are friends of Jesus.

How does a friendship with Jesus lead to abiding fruit in a person's life?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss how the group helps one another remain connected to Jesus.

How can the group encourage each other to joyfully obey even in the seasons of pruning?

What can be done to improve in this area as a group?

KEY DOCTRINE: Sanctification

Sanctification is enabling of the believer to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. (See Romans 8:15-18; 1 Corinthians 2:12.)

BIBLE SKILL: Compare uses of the same word.

Use a Bible concordance to identify other instances of the use of the word translated "abide" or "remain" (Greek word *meno*) in John's Gospel (such as John 1:38-39; 8:31; 11:6; 14:10,17). How does the use of this word in these other passages help you gain a clearer understanding of what Jesus was teaching in John 15?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 15:5. What does it mean to “remain in” Jesus?

On the last night of His life, Jesus was preparing His disciples for when He wouldn't be with them anymore. In John 14, He told them repeatedly that He was going away (vv. 3,19,28). Now, in John 15:5, Jesus tells them to remain in Him. Other translations use the word “abide.”

Do you think the disciples were confused? How were they supposed to remain in Jesus if He wasn't going to be with them anymore?

There is a difference between remaining “in” and remaining “with.” If you are married, you know that you are in a covenant relationship with your spouse even when you are physically separated. You remember your vows and your commitment; no matter where you go, you are someone's husband or wife.

What are some ways we remain in Christ?

Give each group member five “fortune cookie sized” strips of paper. Lead them to write “Remain in Jesus” on each one, and place them in different places (wallet, computer monitor, tucked under watch, etc) to remind them of John 15:5.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 15:1-3

Underline the words “true vine,” “gardener,” and “branch.”

The Old Testament referred to Israel as a vine God planted: “I planted you, a choice vine from the very best seed” (Jeremiah 2:21; see also Isaiah 5:1-7 and 27:2-6). Jesus referred to Himself as “the true vine,” which stood in stark contrast to the fruitlessness of Old Testament Israel. The Father was “the gardener” or the vinedresser. Everything that was produced thus depended on God.

Verse 2 outlines the Father’s role as gardener. Removing unfruitful portions of the branch and pruning it were essential tasks in vineyard husbandry—the entire purpose of the branch is to produce fruit. Left untended, it will produce a lot of unfruitful growth, which the Master Gardener prunes. We should be careful not to misinterpret what Jesus was saying. He was not talking about a true believer being cut off from the kingdom. The emphasis is on God performing the work necessary to produce more fruit. The disciples were “clean,” meaning the pruning had already been done in them. This cleaning occurred as they had absorbed what Jesus taught in their years together.

In what ways has the Father pruned you so that you can be more fruitful?

Day 2: John 15:4-5

Identify the key to spiritual fruitfulness.

Jesus introduced the focus of His teaching, the necessity of remaining or abiding in Him. The verb *remain* in verse 4 is an imperative and emphasizes being constantly present. Having identified His role and the Father’s as the vine and the gardener, Jesus clarified the disciples’ role—they were the branches. He also spoke of a reciprocal relationship; He remains in His disciples and His disciples remain in Him. The outcome of this relationship is that the branch will produce fruit. Apart from that shared connection, disciples can do nothing, meaning they can produce no fruit.

The opposite is also true. Not abiding, not remaining in Him, or not staying connected results in a nonproductive vine. Without the connection and steady supply of nourishment, the vine produces no fruit and eventually withers (v. 6). For believers, this is a reminder of the necessity of regular Bible study, prayer, and discipleship. Without these a follower of Christ cannot thrive spiritually.

How do these verses encourage you?

Day 3: John 15:6-8

Note the contrast between verses 6 and 7.

These three verses contrast those who remain or abide in Christ with those who do not. Those who do not abide, those not connected, face judgment. The external evidence of their being disconnected is fruitlessness. In speaking of the unfruitful, Jesus was not talking about believers who have periods of unfruitfulness in their Christian walk; this can happen to any believer. Instead, Jesus was referring to persons who have never been believers but who still appear among the faithful. These are, as Jesus said in another parable, tares that sprout up alongside the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30).

Verse 7 provides the contrast to verse 6. Those who abide in Christ and adhere to His teaching ultimately grow in their Christlikeness. These faithful believers experience answered prayers as their requests are in keeping with God's will and in accordance with the character of Christ (see 14:14). As we abide in Christ and bear much fruit, God is glorified (v. 8). Through this abundance of abiding we also prove to be Christ's disciples.

How does abiding in Christ change your prayer life?

Day 4: John 15:9-11

Look for the connection between obedience and joy.

Remaining in Jesus and His love is lived out by being obedient to what Jesus taught. This obedience is the external evidence of the internal love relationship we have with Christ. Jesus modeled this obedience by keeping His Father's commands. We don't obey so He will love us. We obey Him because we love Him who first loved us (1 John 4:19).

The reward and capstone of living in this loving and intimate fellowship with Jesus is joy—His joy. For Jesus to speak of “my joy” when He was just hours from the cross may seem illogical. Having joy at such a moment emphasizes that such joy is possible only when one is being obedient to God—not because one is having blissful experiences. The joy Jesus experienced and that He offers is unquenchable, even in the face of pain. Disobedience, though, blocks this joy, as David found out (see Psalm 51:12). The word *complete* carries the idea of being fulfilled and satisfied to the maximum amount. Jesus later prayed His disciples would “have my joy completed in them” (John 17:13).

How has your obedience to Jesus produced joy?

Day 5: John 15:12-17

Compare John 15:16 to 15:7.

Jesus again turned His focus to the disciples loving one another (13:34). This command, “love one another,” is stated in verses 12 and 17, thus framing the teaching of Jesus in these verses. The repetition underscores how essential this loving relationship is for His disciples.

Jesus had earlier said no one would take His life from Him; He would lay it down on His own (10:18). The time was near for that to happen. He would soon endure the ultimate expression of self-sacrifice; He would “lay down his life for his friends.”

Concerning His friends, Jesus said they were to love selflessly. Second, they were to obey what Jesus commanded. Third, friends of Jesus receive the truth He teaches. Fourth, Jesus’s friends have heard His call to go and produce fruit. To go carried the idea of fulfilling the Great Commission—to go into all the world and make disciples. Producing fruit that remains comes because Christ’s followers ask the Father in His name. This establishes the vital link between prayer, evangelism, and disciple making.

How do you relate to Jesus differently as His friend than you would as only a servant?

APPLY THE TEXT

Examine your life for evidence of abiding fruit, joy in obedience, and answered prayer. What keeps you from experiencing these things to a greater level? How can you abide with Jesus to a greater degree?

