

Dear friends, on a memorable night described in **Jn. 13-17**, testing time had come! Jesus had washed the apostles' feet. Then He challenged them to apply the truths He'd been giving them for 3½ years. Further, He told them that one of them was going to betray Him and another was going to deny Him that very night. He also told them He was going to leave them. You can imagine the troubled hearts, the fear—of living without Him, of the future, of death. He then commanded them to stop being troubled; replace the fear and worry with trusting in the Father and trusting in Him. Plus, “I’m leaving to go prepare a place for you in My Father’s house, and, I’m going to send another Helper, One just like I’ve been with you, One who will not only be **with** you like I’ve been with you but also **in** you.” In **15:1-16:4**, we see disciples are to be rightly related to Jesus (:1-11, abiding in Him), to each other (:12-17, loving one another), and to the world (15:18-16:4, testify).

As we approach **Jn. 15:1-11**, we need to realize Jesus is only addressing His followers/disciples, and in this passage, His branches. They are in Him, ‘**every branch in Me**’ (:2), and, they are already clean/pruned (:3; see **13:10**). He’s not telling them how to become His followers; they’re already His followers. So, in this passage, Jesus is addressing only Christians. Jesus is teaching them (and us) how to be fruitful—not how to ‘produce’ the fruit but how to ‘bear’ it. In **Jn. 15:1-11** fruit looks like answered prayer, the Father glorified, loving obedience, and abundant joy. This is ‘Jesus-fruit’! He’s the Vine out of which everything results. We see His fruit also listed in **Gal. 5:22-23**. Add **Eph. 4:1-6:18, 1 Cor. 13:4-8a, Rom. 12:3-21, & 1 Pet. 4:7-11** to see what ‘Jesus-fruit’ looks like. ‘Abide’ is used 10 times in these 11 verses; abide is the key word in our walk with Jesus. When we’re abiding in Jesus and/or walking by the indwelling Holy Spirit, we’ll see Jesus’ life being lived, through us! The point is, ‘abiding in Jesus’ and ‘walking by the Spirit’ have the same effect, the production of fruit. Again, it’s not us producing it; He produces it. He’s the only One who can! If we want to see Jesus’ life and love through ours, we need to abide in Him and His love.

These verses revolve around a symbol—a vine and branches. **Is. 5:1-7** helps. Let’s together learn the importance of abiding in Jesus (:4,5,6,7, 9,10). Only as we abide in Him will we bear a good crop, spiritual fruit. Who oversees all this? The Vinedresser or Gardener. Who is He? The Father. Who is the Vine? Jesus. Who are the branches who are to abide? The 11 and all other believers. There are 2 kinds of branches: fruitless branches and fruitful branches. Some branches bear fruit (:2,4,5,8); some do not. Fruitful branches are pruned to make them more fruitful; branches that bear no fruit are cut off and burned. The Vinedresser decides what should be done with each branch!

**Read :1-6. :1 “I am the true (real, genuine) vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser.”** This is the last of the 7 “I AM” statements in John’s Gospel: I AM the true vine. God the Father as the Vinedresser does what is best for each branch. We see by His actions that He wants spiritually productive branches.

**:2 “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away [He removes any of My branches which are not bearing fruit]; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes (cleans) it so that it may bear more fruit [He prunes the**

branches that do bear fruit so they will bear even more].” Remember, fruit simply means the reproduction of the character of Jesus’ life in and through us. The Father deals with both the unfruitful branches and the fruitful. Some He ‘cleans off.’ Some He ‘cleans up.’ Realize, both operations are painful!

As with a vineyard, there are different seasons of life. Swindoll: “Seasons when we look back, reflecting. As you enter this season, you may realize your future will be no different from your past unless you make some drastic changes. You may not see a whole lot of fruit on your branches. What is the Vinedresser saying to you?” He’s certainly working with you. What is He doing? The 1<sup>st</sup> work of the Vinedresser is to remove fruitless branches. They have not borne true fruit and apparently never will. Perhaps their Christianity has consisted of words without deeds, all leaves and no fruit. We know the Father will not cast out any true disciples; they’ll be preserved to the end (**6:37-40; 10:28-29**). So this removal could be through sickness or even physical death (**1 Cor. 11:30**); it could also be through “delivering such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (**1 Cor. 5:1-5**). It’s the Vinedresser’s work. He always does what is best for His own; trust Him based on His character (**Ex. 34:6-7**).

The second work of the wise Father is to cleanse the fruit-bearing branches, and He uses His Word to do so. ‘Prunes’ and ‘clean’ are the same Greek word in **:2-3**. Prunes—He Himself works so we can bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit! This is the process by which God is working in our lives today. Yes, pruning is a drastic process, but remember this is the work of our loving Father. God removes all things in the believer’s life that would hinder fruit-bearing. Also notice, no fruit-bearing branch is exempt from the pruning.

**:3 “You are already clean [see 13:10] because of the word (logos) which I have spoken to you.”** God uses His Word as the pruning knife (**Heb. 4:12**). You are already clean, pruned. We saw earlier, the 11 had had a bath (**13:10**). They just needed their dirty feet washed; pruning was needed. **:4 “Abide (Remain, Continue) in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of (lit. from) itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you [bear fruit] unless you abide in Me.”** **Abide in Me**, an intimate connection with Jesus. And, **I in you**. What does it mean to abide? Focus on Him, talk/listen to Him, rest in Him, continue in Him. You’ve taken the bath; now keep your feet clean. Willingly go through the pruning process. Don’t fight His needed work.

“**Abide in Me**” is in the active voice; something we are expected to do. This is an active, necessary decision of the will to do what He says in His Word and to stay in touch with Him in prayer. Decisions to expose ourselves to His words in order to learn about Him and to relate to Him in prayer where we converse with Him. Recognize our dependent relationship. Continued production depends on constant union. We can’t enter the kingdom without birth from above **3:3,5**. Once in the kingdom, we can’t bear fruit unless we remain in Jesus, the Vine. Abide—same word is used in **1 Jn. 3:24 read**.

“**I in you**” We present. He produces. He abides in us & we abide in Him: It takes both to be a fruitful Christian. The fruit is the product of the Life that is already within us. We choose to abide in Him and recognize He’s abiding in

us & are relieved of anxiety about fruit-bearing. The Gardener is the One who removes and prunes. The Vine produces. We abide. ‘Rest in Him, rest in Him, your work is through, lean back on His great power, He’ll work through you.’

: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** (which means nothing!). But when we abide, we bear much fruit. We saw fruit and more fruit (:2) and now much fruit (:5,8). Fruitfulness (**Gal. 5:22-23**) should be normal for believers. The Bible nowhere equates fruit with behavior or human effort.

This is a remarkable statement: **Apart from Me you can do nothing!** It shows every believer’s helplessness apart from Jesus. We can’t bear fruit on our own; union with Jesus is absolutely necessary. It is the life of Jesus Himself reproduced in the lives of His disciples in the midst of the life of the world. The presence of fruit is visible evidence that the branch is part of the Vine. How do we abide? Simply remember we are indwelt by Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and ask Him/Them to empower us as we go through everyday life.

:6 **“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a [fruitless] branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.”** Singular: **anyone**. This stresses the responsibility of each individual. The branches which are taken away and burned = those who are Christians yet never bear fruit. The point here is ineffectiveness, losing his/her privilege of fellowship and service. Again notice, these words are addressed not to the unbeliever but to the believer. Therefore, the burned branches represent Christians who will lose rewards (**1 Cor. 3:10-15**). His/her works will be burned at the judgment seat of Christ, though he/she will be saved. To the fruitful, these words are wonderful, reassuring. Yet to the unfruitful, sobering.

**Read :7-11. :7 “If you abide in Me, and My words (rhēma) abide in you, ask [a command] whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”** For those who are abiding in Jesus, four things follow: Charles Swindoll writes: (1) powerfully effective prayers, (2) God-honoring blessings, (3) unbounded love (which shows up in obedience), and, (4) inexplicable joy!

First is answered prayer. With us abiding in Jesus and His specific words abiding in us, we may ask what we wish and it’ll be done for us. We’ll pray as Jesus did, wanting the Father’s will more than our own. We will pray consistent with Jesus’ person & will, with the desire that we might display His glory in answering it. The effective prayer promised of **14:13-14** is realized; **“It will be done!”** We find ourselves asking for the very things that God is doing because we’ve been so changed by abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in us. Our prayers will be filled with who He is and what He wants.

:8 **“My Father is glorified by this [This is how the essence, the reality, of My Father will be seen], that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”** The greatest theme in the universe is the glory of God, and to live a life that displays the essence of who God is is the believer’s highest privilege. An abundant harvest! All from abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in us. So, fruitfulness is not an end in itself but is meant to bring glory to the Father, who is glorified in the work of the Son (**13:31-32**) and by our abiding in Him. Fruitlessness robs God of the glory rightly His.

:9 **“Just as the Father has loved (agapaō) Me, I have also loved you; abide [a command, once for all] in My love.”** The love the Father has for His Son is the same love with which Jesus loves us! Wow! The intimacy between Jesus and the Father is an intimacy paralleled by the intimacy between Jesus and His followers; it’s an eternal love. That Jesus loves us with the same love by which the Father loves Him is astounding, staggering!! A love whose only adequate analogy is the love of the Father for the Son, just like marriage (**Eph. 5:22-33**). Realize that the Father loves you! Jesus loves you! We are loved! Abide!

:10 **“If you keep (obey) My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”** See **14:15**. The reality of any disciple’s profound love is to be revealed by obedience, by doing what we know to be true. Obedience and love go together (**1 Jn. 2:3,5, 3:22-24, 5:3**). One way to abide in Jesus’ love—out of love for Him, we keep His commandments (2 of them—Believe in Jesus, love one another)! We obey the one we love. The Son’s obedience to the Father is the pattern for the 11 & us: **4:34, 6:38, 8:29, 12:49, 14:31, 17:4**. Even Jesus Himself learned obedience through what He suffered and so was made perfect (**Heb. 5:8**). Jesus had no program of His own, only to be obedient to the will of His Father. He would leave that to the wise working of the Gardener who alone knows what’s needed. See **7:17**. George MacDonald: “Understanding is the reward of obedience. How is it then so few understand? Because where they know, so few obey!” Jesus delighted to do His Father’s will; we should do the same.

:11 **“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you [I have told you this so that you can share My joy], and that your joy may be made full [so that you will be filled with My joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!].”**

Abiding and obedience mark the cause of their fruitfulness; full joy is the result. “My peace” **14:27**, “My love” **15:10**, now “My joy.” Joy, full and complete. My joy made full in themselves **17:13**. Why did Jesus say these words in **:1-10**? “I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. My going to the Father ought to cause you joy because it is the Father’s will.” For the apostles, this was the most awful of nights and it was going to get worse. And yet even that night Jesus boldly offered a way to live that is like no other: a life filled with joy, regardless of circumstances. Swindoll: “Joy is the flag that flies over the castle of our hearts, announcing that the King is in residence.”

The Father and Jesus want His followers to be spiritually productive. Is this what you’re seeing in your life: prayers being answered, the nature of who God is on display, keeping Jesus’ commands out of love, and joy overflowing (a deeply felt contentment)? Answered prayer, glory to the Father, abundant fruit (including love and joy), and recognition as disciples of Jesus. Do you find yourself abiding in Jesus, trusting the Father for what’s being done in your life and in others’ lives? Let’s be much in prayer for each other in light of this passage. ‘Abiding’ is the secret of fruitfulness—God’s kind! As Swindoll says, “The secret of fruit-bearing is abiding in Jesus and Him abiding in you. Focus your attention on abiding rather than production.” Joel

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NOTES John Stott called **Jn. 13-17** “The holy of holies in the Bible.”

INTRO In the OT (**Is. 11:1**), we see “a branch from the roots of Jesse will bear fruit.” This is referring to Jesus, who is the true Vine. Also see **Ps. 80, Hos. 10:1, Is. 5:1-7, 27:2-6, Jer. 2:21, 12:10-13; Ezek. 15:1-8; 19:10-14, Mt. 21:33-43**. The OT nation of Israel proved to be unfaithful and fruitless. But in **Jn. 15**, Jesus refers to His Father as the Vine-Dresser, Himself as the Vine, and His followers as the branches.

INTRO :1-3, the Father’s care for the branches is seen as enabling the bearing of fruit. In :4-8, the branches’ union with Jesus is seen as enabling the bearing of fruit.

:1 The 7 “I AM” statements (**6:35, 8:12, 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 14:6**).

:4 “Abide (Grk. meno) occurs 11 times in this chapter, 40 times in the entire Gospel, and 27 times in John’s letters.”

:4 Listen to His Word :7, be constant in prayer :7, trust in His love :9, enjoy His presence :11.

:6 Or, the burned branches refer to professing Christians who, like Judas, are not genuinely saved and therefore are judged. See **Jn. 13:10-11** (not clean). Like tares among the wheat (**Mt. 13:25-30**). Or, referring to unbelieving Israel.

:10 “Genuine conversion is not measured by a hasty decision but by the long-range fruitfulness.”

#### Swindoll:

:7-9 As we think as God thinks, we ask for what is consistent with His plan.

:9-10 Keeping commandments and abiding in love are synonymous.

How much of God’s fruit are you seeing in your life? The secret of fruit-bearing is abiding in Jesus and Him abiding in you.

Chpt 15 The most important relationships the Christian must maintain. The believer with Christ. Abide. Union. :12-17 The believer with believer. Love. Communion. :18-16:4 The believer with the world. Hate. Disunion.

This passage is for believers only. How does a Christian become productive?

The verses revolve around a symbol—a vine and a branch. Familiar to Jews.

The main subject is abiding, not bearing fruit.

Abiding results in fruitbearing.

Seasons when we look back, reflecting—your future will be no different from your past unless you make some drastic changes. You may not see a whole lot of fruit on your branches. What is He saying to you?

You are a branch; you are a Christian; you are in Christ, His new creation. You are to abide so that fruit naturally flows. Not fruit-producing but fruit-bearing. The only command is abide in Me. A branch can’t produce fruit on its own. You can be in Christ yet be barren in fruit.

Is. 5:1-7 The Father is the Well-beloved. His vineyard is the Jewish people. What more could He do? But it produced only worthless grapes. The fruit of God was not found—justice and righteousness. Reproducing the life of God and He didn’t find it. Reproducing the life of the Vine in the branch. Jesus is the source of all life; He looks for His life being reproduced in each branch. He doesn’t command us to bear fruit; He commands us to abide.

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[Jhn 15:1 -11 NLT] 1 "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. 9 "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

**JBP 15** <sup>1</sup>“I am the real vine, my Father is the vine-dresser. He removes any of my branches which are not bearing fruit and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit to increase its yield. Now, you have already been pruned by my words. You must go on growing in me and I will grow in you. For just as the branch cannot bear any fruit unless it shares the life of the vine, so you can produce nothing unless you go on growing in me. I am the vine itself, you are the branches. It is the man who shares my life and whose life I share who proves fruitful. For the plain fact is that apart from me you can do nothing at all. The man who does not share my life is like a branch that is broken off and withers away. He becomes just like the dry sticks that men pick up and use for the firewood. But if you live your life in me, and my words live in your hearts, you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you. This is how my Father will be glorified—in your becoming fruitful and being my disciples. “I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. You must go on living in my love. If you keep my commandments you will live in my love just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and live in his love. I have told you this so that you can share my joy, and that your happiness may be complete.”