



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: LESSON 16 *"COME AND SEE"*

In John 13, Jesus announced His departure to His disciples in the Upper Room. They were devastated, not really understanding where He was going or why He was going. In chapter 14, Jesus comforts His disciples, assuring them that they would not be left alone, but the Father would give them the Holy Spirit to dwell with them forever. In 14:31, Jesus says, "Arise, let us go from here." It is most likely that they got up from the table and began to make their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, which is on the Mount of Olives. They would have to travel across the Tyropoeon Valley, around the outer walls of old Jerusalem, up through the Kidron Valley, and finally up to the Garden. This path may have taken them past many vineyards, providing the backdrop for His teaching. There was also a great golden vine carved over the Temple gate, which Jesus may have used for His illustration.

Chapter 15 is a wonderful picture of the relationship between Christ and His church, of believers to each other, and believers to the world. Jesus makes His seventh and final "I AM" statement; "I am the Vine, and you are the branches." He now also calls us friends (15:15), rather than servants (13:16). These two pictures of believers reveal both our privileges and our responsibilities. Warren Wiersbe said, "As branches, we have the privilege of sharing His life, and the responsibility of abiding. As friends we have the privilege of knowing His will, and the responsibility of obeying."

I pray that as you study John 15, you will be reminded that Jesus is your true source of life, and recognize your weakness, and His strength.

First Day

1. Read John 15:1-27. After you read it through, observe and list the facts by summarizing each section in a short paragraph. Also list the repeated words and key phrases.

Section 1: Verses 1-11

Section 2: Verses 12-17

Section 3: Verses 18-27

2. How many times is the word "abide" used in this chapter? (Also count "continue and remain.")

3. Jesus was on His way to Gethsemane. He knew His time was at hand and He didn't have much time left with His beloved friends. How would you describe the tone of this chapter? What do you think Jesus was feeling? Do you detect any fear or anxiousness in His words?

4. Jesus already talked about peace, in chapter 14. Now He talks about the first two fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. What are they?

We'll stop here for today. I'm so excited to get into this chapter. This analogy is really deep and has so much meaning for you and me. Spend some time reflecting on what it means to be a branch, hooked on Jesus!

Memory Verse of the Week: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5

Second Day

Study your verse. Are you abiding in Christ?

1. Read John 15:1-11. Who is the Vine? Who is the Vinedresser? Who is the branch? (Let's make sure we get that straight!)

Jesus uses an agricultural metaphor that was familiar to them. It is important to remember that the Old Testament depicts the nation of Israel as the vine of God (Psalm 80:8-19, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21, Ezekiel 19:10-14). Jesus contrasts Himself with this well-known symbol for Israel, claiming to be the true, or genuine, vine.

2. According to verse 2, what is the purpose of pruning the branch? Why do we cut off dead wood, as well as some with fruit?
3. Does God prune us because He hates us or because He's mad at us? Why does He prune us?

4. How do you think God prunes us?

Pruning is an important part of growing. God always wants the best for us: His best. He is constantly "conforming us into the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). He "cuts away" anything in our life that is hindering that process, and stunting our growth. If it's dead, get rid of it. If it's nice, but hindering the best, it goes too. If we want to grow, we must be pruned. Simple as that. Although pruning may hurt, it will never harm us. It is always for His glory, and our good.

5. Has God been pruning you? What "tools" is He using to do it? Are you yielding to the hands of the Vinedresser?

6. What value does a branch have in itself?

7. According to this section, how do we "bear fruit"?

Note the progression of bearing fruit (15:2), more fruit (15:2) and much fruit (15:8). The believer's life should be one of continual growth and fruit bearing, which is a result of pruning. He may prune us using His Word, for His words act as a cleansing agent as they convict us (15:3). He may discipline us as well (Hebrews 12:1-11, Proverbs 3:11-12). Jesus says we can't bear fruit unless we "abide" in Him. John uses this word 40 times in his Gospel. This word means "remain, stay, or dwell within." It suggests permanence. Raymond Brown, in his book, The Gospel According to John, said, "This word is used to express the permanency of relationship between Father and Son and between Son and Christian." As the Father and Son abide in each other (6:56, 14:10-11, 15:4-10), the Son and the believer abide in each other as well. Our relationship with Jesus is patterned after the unity between the Father and Son.

8. We cannot bear fruit unless we are abiding, or "living," in Christ. What does that practically mean? How do we do that?

9. What, then, is our responsibility in our relationship with Christ?

10. What happens when we, as branches, detach ourselves from the vine?

The vine is the source of life for the branches. Without the vine, the branches die and wither away. We need to stay plugged in to the vine, like an appliance needs to be plugged in before it will work. He is the life source; we are dead without Him. I like this quote by John Philips: "A branch is not responsible for pruning itself. That is the Vinedresser's duty. A branch is not responsible for other branches, to censure them or to prune them. The Vinedresser takes care of that. All a branch does is abide and abound." Cool!

Third Day

What's your memory verse? Are you bearing fruit?

1. Read John 15:1-11 again. Can we do anything, in the Spirit, without Christ's strength? Read Philippians 4:13. Stop and ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart. Are you trying to do or accomplish anything in your life using your own strength? What will it be worth? What changes can you make?

2. Jesus talks about effective prayer in verse 7, which is evidence of abiding. Explain what He's saying here. Note the word "if." Why is that word so important in this context?

We can't take this verse to mean that we are entitled to anything and everything we want; an unconditional guarantee that God must give us anything we ask for. The key to obtaining is abiding. To quote Philips again, "The key to getting what we want, is wanting what He wants. To have Christ's words abiding in us means more than merely memorizing them. It means meditating on them until our conscious natures are impregnated with them, until they become a vital part of us, so that they enlighten our understanding, enthuse our emotions, energize our wills. When our innermost beings are influenced by the indwelling, pervading words of the Lord Jesus, then we can demand as our due and it shall be done - for the simple reason that there will be nothing out of harmony between what we want and what He wants."

3. Have you been praying in harmony with God's will? Do you seek His desires, asking Him to make them your desires? Are you selfish in your prayers, asking only for what "you" want or what "you" think is best? Think about it ...

4. How is the Father glorified in our life, according to verse 8?

5. Jesus calls us to "abide in His love" in verse 9. According to verse 10, we do that through obedience. How is love shown through obedience?

6. How can we experience the joy of the Lord, according to verse 11? (How is joy also linked to obedience?)

7. Let's stop a minute and ask ourselves the hard question. Have we been abiding in Christ? Is the fruit of obedience evident in our life? Are we living "in Christ," in "the world," or "in ourselves"?

8. What "fruit" is Jesus talking about? There are several different kinds of "fruit" mentioned in Scripture. Look up the following verses and describe the fruit it's speaking of.

A. Galatians 5:22-23

B. Romans 1:12-13

C. Romans 6:21-22

D. Romans 15:22-28

E. Colossians 1:10

F. Hebrews 13:15

9. Is there evidence of the above fruit in your life? In the last few months have you seen **growth** in any of these areas? Are you **lacking** fruit in any particular area? Spend some time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal your heart. Ask the Lord to begin that pruning process as you do your part, which is yielding to His hands.

This section, especially verse 6, raises the question of eternal security. Is Jesus saying that if you stop abiding in Him and bearing fruit, you can lose your salvation? It's important to notice the change of pronouns in verse 6. He was using "I, Me, and you." He now changes to third person, "he, them, they." He seems to be referring to a different group, most likely those who claimed to know Him, but really didn't, like John talks about in 1 John 2:19. Perhaps Jesus had Judas on His mind when He said this. The possibility of losing your salvation seems to contradict the whole meaning of abiding, which suggests "permanence." It also seems to contradict what Jesus already said in John 6:37 and 10:27-30. Chuck Smith defines it this way: "You are eternally secure as you abide in Christ." If you are not abiding in Him, obeying His words, or showing any signs of fruit, then maybe

you have never come to that saving knowledge of Jesus as your Savior. The main point in this section is the believer is called to live a fruitful life -- that which glorifies the Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:16).

10. What specifically is speaking to your heart from this section?
(What are you going to do about it?)

See you tomorrow, my friends. Isn't God's Word exciting and challenging? What a privilege to be able to study it.

Fourth Day

Study your memory verse. Is your fruit fake or real?

In our last section, we looked at the relationship between Jesus and His believers. Now we will take a look at the relationship of believers to one another.

1. Let's read John 15:12-17 together. Jesus repeats Himself here in verse 12 (13:34), and then again in verse 17. Why?

2. How are we supposed to love others? (Also read 1 John 3:16) How do we do this?

We usually read verse 13 and are instantly reminded that we are supposed to love others. This is true, but let's not miss one important truth Jesus is saying. We are told there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for a friend, then He says that "we" are His friends. Not only did He lay down His life for us, we are to lay down our lives for Him, as well as for others.

3. How do we "lay down our lives" for Jesus? (Have you been doing this lately? What place does "self" have in this equation?)

4. Love is not a feeling, but a choice and an act of our will. Jesus even loved His enemies (Romans 5:10). Is there someone in your life that Jesus is calling you to love? How do we actually "lay down our lives for Christ" as we love our enemies?

5. What distinction is Jesus making between a friend and a servant? Why does He call us "friends"?

6. What makes friends "friends"? How can you be a better friend to Jesus this week?

7. Because we are a friend of Christ's, we should be a friend to others. How can you be a better friend to others this week? Which of your "friendship skills" can be improved?

8. What were you "chosen" to do, according to verse 16?

The word "appointed" in verse 16 refers to the act of being set apart for special service. We have been set apart and chosen to go into the world and bear fruit. Paul said "We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared for us beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus told us to love one another, and that command is manifested not only in word, but in our actions. Not that we can be saved by our actions, but our actions are a fruit of our faith. (James 1:22-26).

9. Is God calling you to "go"? Is there a work that He has prepared for you and you are hesitating? Remember, true love shows itself in obedience.

10. Here in John 15, Jesus says "go and bear fruit." Jesus also said in Matthew 28:19, to "go and make disciples of all the nations." (This is called the Great Commission.) Are you "going"?

Tomorrow we'll be talking about persecution. Hmm... not our favorite subject. I pray that this week you will ponder this chapter and what it means to be a "branch" and a "friend" of Jesus.

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

Jesus moves from the topic of love to that of hatred. Jesus now warns those who are living the abiding life that they will not be popular. He doesn't say this to alarm them, but so they will expect it and know how to deal with it.

1. Read John 15:18-27. Jesus now talks about the relationship believers will have with the world. Why would the world hate us just because we love Jesus? (Read Matthew 10:25)

Jesus told them in John 13:16 that a servant is not greater than his master. In other words, friendship with Him will invite persecution from the world. He traces this hatred back to an ignorance of God (15:21).

2. Read 2 Timothy 3:12. (This is a promise, although not one that people are excited to claim.) Then read Matthew 5:11-12. How does this encourage you?

3. How should knowing beforehand that we will be persecuted help us to handle it?

4. After Jesus warns them, He comforts them by telling them who will help them during these difficult times. How can we, as believers, face this opposition? (John 14:16-18, 15:26-27, 16:7-15)

5. In your own words, explain verse 22-24.

Jesus says that their hatred is a fulfillment of prophecy, found in Psalm 69:4. These people were without excuse. They had heard His words, saw His miracles, but continued to reject the truth. With knowledge comes responsibility. Chuck Smith said, "Men will be judged by the amount of light given him." (Luke 12:42-48)

6. With knowledge comes responsibility. What does that statement mean?

7. How does this truth challenge you? (How much knowledge have you been given?)

As Jesus warned His disciples of the coming persecution, I'm sure He knew they would need comfort. He was painting a picture of a very hostile world, and He knew they would need the help and power of the Holy Spirit to be able to endure. They would not have to face it alone. As we pointed out in our last lesson, the Holy Spirit, Comforter, or Spirit of Truth "comes alongside" to keep us, encourage us, and strengthen us. The Holy Spirit's ministry is to exalt the Son of God" (15:26) and testify for Him. They, too, were qualified now to be valid witnesses because they had been with Him from the beginning (15:26-27). Their witness had to be joined together with the Spirit to be effective (Acts 5:32). This same theme is continued through our next chapter.

8. Looking back on our chapter, we find that the secret to abiding is staying in "constant contact with the Father." Would that phrase describe your lifestyle? How can you stay in better contact?

9. List three specific areas of your life that were challenged by John chapter 15.

