

## Upper Room – Part 8

### The Vine and the Branches

#### John 15:1-17

#### Upper Room Review:

1. Jesus taught of the necessity of His departure and what that would bring them. John 13:31-38 [a place being prepared and the promise of His return](#)
2. Jesus taught the fact of another wonderful Comforter in the person of the Holy Spirit who would continue to lead them on earth. John 14:1-11
3. Jesus taught of the greater works they had before them. John 14:12-21 [Jesus will go on with much to say about what and how these greater works will be accomplished.](#)
4. Jesus taught of the how God would make them effective workers and give them great peace. John 14:22-31 [Through prayer, loving one another, obeying His commandments](#)

As Jesus continues the Upper Room discourse in John 15, there are four words that the themes maybe reduced:

1. Fruit Bearing v. 1-8
2. Love v. 9-17
3. Hatred v. 18-25
4. The Comforter v. 26-27

**I. Fruit-Bearing – John 15:1-8** The main point to this parable is “the necessity of vital union between Christ and the disciple looking to fruit-bearing.” Shepherd p. 553 This is our way of giving God glory and our main duty of life. In this John 15:1-17 the word “fruit” will be used 6 times. This passage is on the disciple of Christ and their fruit bearing, not on salvation. It is spoken to the 11 disciples who are “washed by the word” in the context of Christ explaining their future life without Him. Other parables and teaches of Christ deal with salvation and the everlasting punishment of those not believing in Him, but as I have studied, desiring to stay in the context, it seems most likely Jesus is using these illustrations and thoughts to teach the fruit He desires of His followers and the glory they should bring to God, the Husbandman. Also, it is good to keep in mind when studying a parable of Christ, not to make more of the lesson than one main theme. Taking each part and action of a parable and turning it into a spiritual application can become problematic. So as we move through the study of the Vine and Abiding in Christ, stay with the theme Christ has established and the audience in the Upper Room.

**“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman (vinedresser; owner, caretaker, master-pruner). Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” John 15:1-3**

4 Main Objects/Players in this Illustration of Christ: 1. “true vine” 2. “husbandman” 3. “branch” 4. “fruit”

“true vine” – GK – genuine; not counterfeit, not fake; original; all others are copies; These were revolutionary words. Throughout the Old Testament Israel was pictured as a vine. Ps. 80:8-9; Is. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Hos.10:1 God had called them to justice and righteousness but they did not obey and went their own way. Jesus is the true vine full of justice and righteousness – eternal fruit. Israel had rejected the true vine when they rejected Him.

“husbandman” – God the Father is the **invested owner** who does the works to insure His desired fruit; takes off useless growth; ties up new growth which strengthens the tender shoots; cleans and tends to leaves;

“branch” – all those who are followers of Christ; being in Christ is a spiritual fact for all believers

There are two types of branches: 1. fruit-bearing v. 2, 8      2. fruitless v. 2, 6

Theologians disagree concerning the fruitless branches and their standing with God in this text. Are they Christians or not? It is consistent with Scripture to see the non-fruit-bearing branches to represent professing believers living a life as a Christian but who really don't know Christ or love God. We would call them a “culture Christian” only. These deceived pretenders would face the judgment of God in the lake of fire with all other unbelievers, but being careful to stay with the main theme of the parable, that of fruit-bearing. It is also consistent with Scripture to see these fruitless branches as Christians who have made themselves useless to God through **unbelief, the sin of bitterness, or worldliness.**

**unbelief** – we see unbelief in the faithless Christian living in worry and anxiety. They often have lost hope in God's power and cut themselves short from being an abundant fruit-bearing Christian. Paul said in Phil. 4:6 to be “careful (anxious) for nothing” but by prayer we will find the peace of God. Don't lose hope in the power of God, He will do the work through you as you yield to Him and trust Him with your life. Have faith in your Father! Remember, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Hebrews 11:6

**sin of bitterness** – a believer that has harbored unforgiving, cynical anger will not be an effective fruit bearing for God. This unforgiving Christian is sinning against the direct commandments of Christ. Over and over again Jesus taught on the importance of forgiveness and the pit-falls of bitterness. Loving and forgiving others is of utmost importance to bearing fruit to the glory of God. Hebrews 12:14 tells the Christian, “Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:” Do you want to show the unbelieving world the Lord? Follow peace with all men and holiness!

**worldliness** – these Christians have “yielded” their lives to “instruments” of unrighteousness unto sin. But Romans 6:13 encourages the believer to “yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” Paul goes on by saying to the church in Rome, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” God's will is fruit in the life of His followers and that is accomplished by obedience to His word. “Mortify the flesh” ; “put off” sin; “put on” righteousness – Col. 3:1-17; **Don't** follow the world closer then you follow Jesus; **don't** live for self and not live for God; **don't** be cold, be hot; **don't** serve mammon and not serve God; **don't** live for pleasures of this world and not for the joy of the Lord! “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” I John 2:15-17

“fruit” – the natural output of life, reproducing of oneself; it is the environment of the plant and tending of it that will determine the amount of fruit. We see three different fruit illustrated: “Fruit” v. 2, 4, 16; “more fruit” v. 2; “much fruit” v. 5,8 The illustration of fruit in the life of the believer is often used in the New Testament. 1. Growth in holiness and obedience - Rom. 6:22; Phil. 1:11 2. Christ-like character – Gal. 5:22-

23 3. Christian service – Col. 1:10 4. Praise – Heb. 13:15 5. Witnessing and discipling – Rom. 1:13-16; John 4:36; 15:16; Phil 1:22; Col. 1:6 Staying in the context of the Upper Room, we remember that Jesus has just revealed that the disciples will do “greater works” than He. Jesus’ works and words were centered on revealing the Father to the world and bringing people back to a relationship with Him. Though fruit in the life of the believer are all these things (as seen above in No. 1-5), it seems the context holds the truth of disciple-making as the core of this teaching. All works of fruit in the life of the follower of Christ will ultimately lead others to Him! As Christ ascended into heaven on the Mount of Olives, He will command the disciples to go into all the world and make disciples. God loved the world, gave His Son into the world, has commanded His followers to declare these truths to the world and will insure fruit by tending to the branches!

“taketh away” – moves it out of the way so it does not take from the objective of fruit-bearing; Late in the growing season, the worker (master-gardener) will come through the vineyard and cut out all branches full of life-sucking shoots and leaves but that will hold no fruit. This will put the energy of the plant into the fruit harvest. These empty branches are not only useless but inhibit a good harvest. God is the Master Pruner. He knows just where, when, how much, and just the perfect way to produce fruit, whether in tending to fruit-bearing branches or removing of fruitless branches. This is not enjoyable to the branches, it is disturbing, many times stressful, but it does enhance the objective of the plant, fruit-bearing! Truth is, believers desire to bear fruit for the Lord, talk of it, look to do it, but don’t care to go through a pruning process! If believers refuse to confess sin and obey God, He has taken them early in death. I Cor. 11:30

“purgeth it,” – Gk – not necessarily “cuts off”; more of a generic term meaning tending vines – cleaning up (tending) the vines for the purpose of fruit. Anything that needs to be done to ease and protect fruit production; from cutting away dead or weak leaves, tying up branches, digging around the roots, cleaning or removing dirty leaves Same word is used in Heb. 10:2

“more fruit” – This “purging” is done to fruit-bearing branches so they will produce more fruit! God’s blessing for bearing fruit is the attention needed to the branch for it to be even more fruitful! God is working to bring us to perfection. He is gentle, patient, and loving. He purges as we willingly submit to the wise Master Gardener so we may produce more fruit!

“Now ye are clean through the word” – Here Jesus is speaking to the disciples and saying, “Now (Gk – permanence, forever) you are made clean because of the message I have given you.” This is setting them apart from those who have not received His word. Thinking of Judas, Jesus had said to the disciples, that not all of them were clean. (John 13:11) But with him gone, they were all clean, believers in His words. This is true of all believers. I Peter 1:22-25; Ps. 119:9-11

In this next passage Jesus will repeat several facts He has just taught. This highlights the importance as He builds His teaching on fruit-bearing.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. **(conclusion to point)** Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” John 15:4-8

“abide” – Gk – remain, stay around, continue; vs. 16 the same word is translated “remain” Jesus commanded them to remain in Him. Their fruitfulness would depend on their future relationship to Him. As believers we have the privilege of sharing His life and responsibility of abiding. (Spurgeon was known to stop, even in a busy street, to confess a ungodly thought. So dear to him was a close, abiding relationship with his Lord!)

“branch cannot bear fruit of itself” – this is a simple fact of nature – the physical and spiritual The ability to produce fruit comes from life outside of itself—the vine!

“much fruit” – In John 14:20, Jesus had told the disciples of the wonderful position of being in Christ, and now he tells us what the outcome is of that position – bearing much fruit! Bearing much fruit is not a new type method or memorizing a series of steps, it is abiding in Christ. Then we will have the power to bear **much** fruit! Jesus had used this illustration before in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.

“for without me ye can do nothing.” – Christ is the source of fruit. Our relationship with Jesus needs to be one of utter dependence. Jesus had spoken concerning the disciples doing “greater works” than He. Here Christ gives the key for the “greater works” and that is abiding in Him. It is not our clever words or eloquence, it is not our intellectual depth, our fruit is nothing of ourselves! It is Christ and our abiding with Him. 2 Cor. 3:5 Do we cherish, guard, and protect this relationship? Are you desirous of fruit bearing!?

“abide not” – Remember the Lord wants us to bear much fruit. If we are not abiding in a close union with Christ, we have chosen to live for wood, hay and stubble when it comes to eternity. (1 Cor. 3:5-15; 2 Cor. 5:8-10) We don’t have to live fruitless, defeated lives. Refuse to live for fuel which burns! The Power and Life is available, the choice is ours. 1 John 3:23-24

“cast into the fire” – “cast” – Gk an energetic, disappointed throw There is no use for branches but fruit or fuel. The disciple cannot depend on their own resources. It is Christ’s life that works through us! Examine yourself often; the weakness of our soul can hinder fruit bearing!

*“The sooner we as believers discover that we are but branches, the better we will relate to the Lord, for we will know our own weakness and confess our need for His strength.” Warren Wiersbe*

“ask what ye will” – Again, Jesus is repeating an important lesson. See John 14:13-14 As believers are controlled by God and His Word, they will know and in obedience submit to the commands of God. Prayers will be an outflow of this knowledge and as these requests are offered from the known will of God so they will be answered. So answered prayer and fruit bearing becomes a test to the connection one has with Christ. OT version of this verse – Ps. 37:4 In 2 Cor. 12:9-10, Paul was so in tune with the will of God that he realized the thorn in his flesh was from God. He understood the truth trials and weakness can make us dependent on God. He left off His prayers for the removal of the thorn because He understood the truth of God’s word. Our prayer might be something like, “Help me Lord to bear the fruit you desire of me. Help me be faithful as a witness to family, friends, and sensitive to your leading and the opportunities to build believers. Help me to see the hurting, the needy new Christian, being patient, and in all things build unity among believers as you desire.” It is noteworthy that the unlimitedness of prayer is conditioned by our abiding in Christ and His words.

“Herein is my Father glorified,”/“that ye bear much fruit;” - This final statement should give us incentive to abide in Christ. Jesus’ great desire was to glorify God, now His great desire for the 11 disciples was the same! As Christians, our objective is to give God glory! How do we do it----- by bearing “much fruit”! God loves to save souls, He loves to see lives changed and His people live obediently for Him. This gives His glory!

“so shall ye be my disciples” – Gk – “so shall ye keep on becoming my disciples” this is a on going, progressive process. Growth and strengthening of our faith is one of the greatest blessings of our union with Christ. It continues to fruitfulness and answered prayer. Rearranging verse 8 gives a different perspective. *“Bearing much fruit shows that ye are my disciples, herein is my Father glorified.”*

## **II. Love – John 15:9-17**

**“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy ( GK - the joy that is mine) might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” John 15:9-12**

“As the Father hath loved me” – This fact has been repeated often and was the driving force of Jesus’ obedience to His Father. John had recorded the love the Father had for the Son. Don’t forget this, God loves the world and the church, but He also loves the Son! (John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 17:24) It was a comfort and motivator to Christ and He desired that for us. (John 17:26) The love of God should give us comfort and motivate us to obedience in the same way it did Christ. Love has been a motivator since time began, in Gen. 29:20, the Bible says that Jacob worked 7 years for Rachel and it seemed but a few days, why? His love for her! Don’t let troubles and temptations quench your love for God and doubt His love for you! Jude 21

“continue ye in my love” – Jesus will tell His disciples how to “continue ye in my love”. It is accomplished in verse 10, “If ye keep my commandments,” This love is not connected to a sentiment or even in faith but

obedience to Christ's commandments. Jesus has been the great example as He obeyed His Father's will, He came to earth and would die as the redemptive lamb for the sins of the world. (John 14:31; 10:18; 6:38; 17:4) Believer, "continue" in nothing else; accept no other substitutes to "continue" in your life. No other love will give peace, joy, and productivity for the love of Christ is **divine!** The opposite is true when giving ourselves to other loves, for that love is only of the **world**; then will come unrest of soul, regret, and fruitlessness!

"If ye keep my commandments" – This is not a suggestions; it was the very rule and heart-beat of Christ in His relationship with the Father and should be the same for us! J Vernon McGee said, "Obedience is essential to abiding." JVMcGee pg. 467

"your joy might be full" – The desire of Christ for us is eternal and complete joy! Our joy is complete when we obey Christ. It was Jesus' greatest joy to obey His Father (John 17:13) The world's joy is empty and fleeting but God's joy eternally fills the soul.

*"Living life attached to Christ keeps us anchored and level-headed in both success and adversity. He walks beside us, and as we realize all comes from Him and all can be taken, we can proceed on our journey full of joy and eternal peace."*

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." – Jesus repeats His "my" commandment again to help them understand it better. This important commandment is attached to abiding in His love! His love entailed sacrifice and sacrificing for others is a mark of a mature believer! The Epistles are full of references to love and unity among believers as being highly important in the plan of God. Why? Because, believer's need the support of one another to succeed in our mission of service and in our testimony to the world. (John 13:34-35)

*Love for Christ drives obedience -> Love for unbeliever's drives witnessing -> Love of believer's drives discipleship*

Jesus has spoken on love, joy, and peace; all fruit of the Spirit! Now He will continue to explain His love to the disciples in wonderful terms. He had called them His "little children"; now He calls them "friends".

**"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for (Gk - on behalf of) his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do (Gk – keep on doing) whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you (no longer) not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained ( Gk – appointed/set apart for a special service ) you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another."** John 15:13-17

"lay down his life for his friends." - This is the supreme evidence of Jesus' love for His Father and mankind. In reality, Jesus laid down His life for His enemies. (Rom. 5:8, 10) Men have died for other men, but here the God-man, Christ, laid down His life for wretched sinners, or as Isaac Watts said "such a worm as I". Christians

are called to show the same kind of sacrificial giving to one another, even in the giving of their life. This is not necessarily dying for someone. It more likely would be giving their days, months or years, their strength, and their energy. (I John 3:16) “Self sacrifice is the high-water mark of love.” Shepherd p. 555

“Ye are my friends,” – Throughout the ministry of Jesus, He was the Master (Teacher) and the eleven were the disciples (followers). Now He calls them His friends! What a wonderful new position they found themselves on the eve of the Savior’s death. The reality is we all have few, dear friends. We may have acquaintances, or relatives, but even our closest friends fail us, hurt us, disappoint us, move away and certainly they can’t read our minds or know our every need. The Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe said, “Our friendship to each other and to the Lord is not perfect, but His friendship to us is perfect.” WW pg. 286 It is a true high honor to be called His friend.

“for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” – The bridge to friendship was the path of full disclosure of all information Christ had heard from His Father! There were no secrets between friends! As friends, we have the privilege of knowing His will and the responsibility of obeying it. Even though they are called to obey Christ they are still His friends in that He revealed all to them. (John 1:18; Matt. 11:27) This principle was true in the Old Testament. (Psalm 25:14; Prov. 3:32) Abraham was called “the friend of God” (2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23) so we who follow Christ have the privilege to be called His friend. Jesus died for His friends. (John 10:11, 15, 17)!

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,” – Friends chose each other! But in the case of our friendship with Christ, this action of love is based on the grace and goodness of Jesus! Neither the disciples nor we cannot hold any pride in our hearts because we get to go to heaven. It is only because God chose us. It was no merit of our own! (Eph. 2:8-9) The precious fact is that Jesus took the initiative to make us His friends! He chose us! The early 20<sup>th</sup> century English pastor and evangelist, G Campbell Morgan said, “He chose me; therefore I am His responsibility.”

“and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:” – Jesus’ friends are set aside for the work of bearing fruit. Again, Jesus brings in fruit bearing as part of our “ordained service”! This is a privileged position. He had chosen them out of the world (John 15:19) to produce lasting (remaining - abiding) fruit. What a wonderful promise! He chose us out of the world to obey Him, to bear fruit, share in His love, be pruned by the Father, and to answer our requests. All this to see fruit that would permanently remain! The disciples had seen many follow along with Jesus over the past three years; great crowds had come and gone. But here they are promised abiding, remaining fruit!

*“Stay close to the vine, close to your friend, because without Him you can do nothing!”*

“ask of the Father in my name,” – We are to ask in Jesus’ name to accomplish this work fruit-bearing. All we do should be done in Jesus’ name, not in ours! The apostles followed this pattern. (Acts 3:6; 4:10)

“This is my commandment, that ye love (Gk – “keep on loving one another) one another, as I have loved you.” This is the third time he is repeating this command. (John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17) This commandment is highly important to Christ. The writers of the Epistles will be very clear on the importance of love and unity among the brethren. (I Thess. 4:9; I Peter 4:8; I John 3:11) Unlimited prayer and much permanent fruit is possible as we keep His commandments, and here is the one commandment Jesus has **repeated** and **repeated** and **repeated** in this, His Farewell Address!

*“How can you love God and not love those close to His heart.”*

*John R Rice*

### **Believer’s Application:**

1. Are you part of the vine or not? Are you a person living a “church culture” or “Jesus culture” like Judas? Judas lived with Jesus and the disciples (left his former life and lived in a Jesus culture), he spoke with Jesus (like as one would pray today), he taught of Jesus (like one might use their time and energy to teach Sunday school or do mission type work), and he served Jesus. Even the disciples (like church friends) could not detect the lack of believing faith in Judas. But in reality Judas was only a member of the “Jesus culture”, not a true, washed believer. Earlier in His ministry Jesus spoke of these who seemly believed that they were connected to Him. “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” These false believers were tragically self-deceived! The Bible is plain that there are characteristics of a true follower of Christ. We are told to examine of ourselves in 2 Cor. 13:5, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

### **Here are a few Abiding Characteristics**

1. Belief in Christ as the Son of God and recognize His death for you on the cross is your only hope of eternal life. I John 4:13-16; 5:1; John 1:12; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:14; Rom. 5:9-10; Rom. 3:24-25; I Peter 1:18-19 This is the first step in ones obedience to God. Submitting to His plan of Salvation for the souls of man.
  2. Obeying the Word of God. I John 2:3-6; 3:24; 5:3-4; John 14:23; Rom. 8:10
  3. A continuing to live and grow by faith. I John 2:24; Gal. 4:19; Rom. 8:16  
A life that grows, matures, and produces fruit.
  4. Loving other believers. I John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 21; 2 John 1:5; Phil. 2:2; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 15; I Peter 1:22; 4:8 This point is so much apart of this passage!
2. God the Father is the Master Gardener that prunes and purges His branches with precision to promote more fruit. How does He accomplish this work? Here are a few ways He will promote fruit in the life of a believer.
1. Convict and cleanse by His Word – Ps. 119:9, 11; John 15:3; Eph. 5:26-27
  2. Chastening of the Lord – Heb. 12:5-11

3. Strengthen your faith through difficulties – I Peter 1:6-8; James 1:3-4; Rom. 5:3-5;

3. Romans 6 give several considerations concerning unity of Christ (v. 5) and the successful Christian walk.

1. “Knowing this” (v.6-10) – realize our sinful life is crucified (put to death) with Christ. We have the power to serve Jesus not our flesh!
2. “Likewise reckon” (v.11-12) – consider you are alive to God through Christ and dead to sin!
3. “Neither yield” (v.13-16) – present yourself to God not sin.
4. “obeyed from the heart” (v.17-21) – the first obedience that gives one the power over sin is salvation. It is obeying “that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” other words the Gospel of Christ!

The conclusion is verse 22! We now have our fruit unto holiness! If, as believers, we obey the truth of God our fruit will be right and our end eternal life!

4. Jesus saw His disciples as His friends, but in the mind of Paul, he saw himself as a servant (slave) of Jesus Christ. Paul saw himself indebted to Christ for life! How do we balance the thought of “friend” and “slave”?

The Greek word for “friends” in this verse is “a friend at court” in other words the inner circle around a ruler/king. This term is used by John the Baptist when describing himself and Christ. (John 3:29) This term “friend” was as a best man at a wedding; one who is close to the groom knows the secrets but needs to obey him. There is no conflict between being obeying the wishes of the groom and being a friend of the groom at the same time! The best man delights in obeying the groom. Same in the court of a king or cabinet of a president! The members of the court are friends with the leader. They desire to see the will of the ruler to go forward. The friends give advice but will bow to the direction of the leader and will help to see that their will be carried out! There is no conflict between workers and friends. That is what we are to be, an attentive friend and servant of Christ. This is all built on a relationship of love and obedience.