



## Abide in Me; Bear Much Fruit

### John 15:1-11

Last Sunday morning, we finished our exposition of 2 Peter. Next week, we will begin the book of Jonah. However, before we get into Jonah, I want to spend one more week addressing the topic of Christian growth, which was so prevalent in the book of 2 Peter. For those of you who have been with us, you know that I have entitled that theme of 2 Peter with these words, "Know and Grow." Throughout our study of this epistle, we saw over and over again, how Peter exhorted us to know the truth and to grow in godliness. This morning, we are going to look at the topic of Christian growth once again. Our text is John 15:1-11.

These words come in the context of the Upper Room Discourse, which is the name given to chapters 13 through 17 of the gospel of John. In that upper room, Jesus spoke intimately with his closest disciples, shortly before His death, teaching them their final lessons. It was there that Jesus demonstrated true servanthood for them all to see, in washing their feet. It was there that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. In chapters 14 and 16, Jesus comforted His disciples, by telling them about the Spirit, who will come and help them. In chapter 17, Jesus prays for them. In chapter 15, Jesus talks with the disciples about their growth in Christ.

In many ways, these words are like Peter's words in 2 Peter. First of all, they are dying words. 2 Peter was one of the last things that he ever wrote to the churches. Likewise, these words in John 15 are some of the last words that Jesus ever spoke to His disciples. Shortly after Jesus spoke these words, He was betrayed by Judas, found guilty by the Sanhedrin, and crucified upon a cross. Being His last words, we would do well to pay close attention to them.

Additionally, both 2 Peter and John 15 are addressed to loved people. Peter addressed his readers in 2 Peter on several occasions using the word, "Beloved," that is, his loved ones. You could almost feel his affection for his people building, especially in chapter 3, when he used the term three times. Likewise, the words of Jesus are spoken here to his friends. In verse 14, Jesus called these men his friends, those for whom His heart burned.

Furthermore, both 2 Peter and John 15 deal with the importance of Christian growth. Peter's epistle was all about growing in Christ. In the same way Jesus speaks much about growing in John 15, describing the process as similar to fruit being produced upon the vine. Please read carefully what Jesus told His disciples

John 15:1-11

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 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. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

There are two dominant themes that come in these verses: (1) Abiding in Christ; and (2) Bearing Fruit.

The first theme, abiding in Christ, comes up ten times in these 11 verses. For instance, you can see it in verse 4, "Abide in Me." You can see it in verse 6, "If anyone does not abide in Me" It comes up again in verse 7, "If you abide in Me." You say, "What does that mean? What does it mean to abide in Christ?" It means that we trust in Christ. It means that we rest in Him. It means that we commune with Him. It means that we live our lives in constant dependence upon Him. We seek Him, learn of Him, love Him, and obey Him. We abide in Him. We remain in Him.

**Such abiding, and such remaining, is the key to our spiritual growth**, which the second dominant theme in these verses. First we "Know" Him and then we "Grow" in Him (doesn't it sound like 2 Peter?).

Jesus speaks much in these verses about Christian growth. Jesus doesn't use the word "growth," but He does use the word, "fruit" some 6 times in these verses. In using this term, Jesus is describing the process by which we grow in Him. Jesus talks about bearing fruit in verse 2, verse 4, verse 5, and verse 8.

As I sought to outline this passage, I found it very difficult to outline. Jesus doesn't speak about abiding in Him apart from talking about the fruit that we will bear as we abide in Him. And, as Jesus talks about the fruit we bear, He doesn't do so apart from talking about our abiding in Him as the key to producing the fruit. He weaves these two major themes together, going back and forth and showing their relationship with one another. And so, today, I don't have an outline. We are simply going to walk through this passage, unpacking and illustrating the words of

Jesus verse by verse, as we see these two concepts flowing together.

Now, at this point, it would be good to mention what sort of fruit we are talking about here in John 15. Many times, when people hear the word "fruit," they often think, "converts." They often think "reproduction." While that can be the case, I believe that the fruit that Jesus is speaking about here goes far beyond merely the making of converts. A better understanding of fruit is this: **Fruit is the manifestation of the life of Jesus in us.**

This definition is consistent with the flow of the passage before us. A branch is connected with the vine. As the life of the vine flows through the branches and so is fruit created. And so, I believe that the fruit concerning which Jesus is speaking in this passage is the working of Christ in our lives. More love to Jesus is a sign of fruit (verse 9). Obedience to the commands of Jesus is a sign of fruit (verse 10). Joy in God is a sign of fruit (verse 11).

This is consistent with the fruit of the Spirit, which consists of attitudes, such as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). The author to the Hebrews speaks about fruit as that which flows from our lips in praise to God (Heb. 13:15). This is the fruit that the Lord wants to see in our lives. He does it through Jesus.

Now, let's begin digging into the text. In **verse 1**, Jesus says, "**I am**." We really need to stop there. The first two words of verse 1 are very significant in John's gospel. "I am..." It is the seventh and last time that He says "I am." He said, ...

"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).  
"I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).  
"I am the door" John 10:7).  
"I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).  
"I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).  
"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).  
"I am the true vine."

All of these statements are pictures of who Jesus is. Jesus is the bread of life, from which those who eat, will live forever (John 6:51). Jesus is the light of the world, by which those who follow, have the light of life (John 8:12). Jesus is the door, through which those who enter will be saved (John 10:9). Jesus is the good shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep and knows who His sheep are (John 10:11, 14). Jesus is the resurrection and the life; he who believe in Him will live even if he dies (John 11:25). And now, we see that Jesus is the true vine, through which those who abide in Him will bear much fruit (John 15:8).

In John 15:1, Jesus paints the picture for our text. He says, "**I am the true vine**, and My Father is the vinedresser." Jesus pictures Himself as a grapevine, alive and vibrant and growing. Jesus pictures His Father as the vine dresser. That is, the one who cares for the vineyard. Down in verse 5, we get another detail of the scene. "I am the vine, you are the branches." We receive our life from the vine and bear fruit for the vine. All of our lives, we are under the constant care of God, the Father.

Now, at this point, we must point out that this is only a picture. It's like the other "I am" statements of Jesus. Jesus isn't really bread. But, just as bread gives life here on earth, so also does Jesus give life to us in heaven. That's the analogy. We feed on bread. So should we feed on Christ. Furthermore, Jesus isn't really a hard, wooden door. But, just as we enter through doors to go from inside to outside, we must go through Jesus to enter eternal life. Both of these pictures illustrate for us a truth about Jesus. But, you need to be careful how far you press the analogy. Don't go looking for the meaning of the wheat or leaven in the bread, as if Jesus wants for us to press the symbolism that far. Don't go looking for the significance of the doorknob, or attach too much significance to the hinges of the door.

The same is true here in John 15. Jesus is the true vine, but this doesn't mean that He is green and needs sunlight to grow. We are his branches (verse 5), but that doesn't mean that we are the only form of life He has. The skill of Bible interpretation is to know how far to press the analogy and when to stop. There are many who have pushed the analogy too far and have run into theological problems as a result. But if John 15 teaches us anything, it is of the vital union that we must have with Jesus Christ if we are going to bear fruit for Him. Jesus says, "I am the true vine." That is, He is the source of all spiritual life. He is the source of all spiritual growth.

The next phrase in verse 1 speaks about the one caring for the vineyard, God, the Father. We read, "**My Father is the vinedresser**." That is, God is the one who cares for the vineyard. A vineyard without a vinedresser is a mess. Perhaps you remember the scene in Prince Caspian, when the children return to Narnia. They find themselves in a deserted Cair Paravel, which used to be a beautiful castle. But, after hundreds of years of neglect, it was run down and overgrown with weeds. The vinedresser keeps the vineyard from turning into disarray. He pulls the weeds, and He prunes the branches.

In fact, this is what **verse 2** speaks about. "**Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away**;" In this verse we see the importance of producing fruit in our lives. If we have no fruit in our lives, we will be taken out of the vine.

It's right here that many have thought that this verse teaches that you can lose your salvation. I believe that they press the analogy of the vine and the vine branches too far. Now, without a doubt, there are those who fall away. Jesus was dealing that that very issue as He was speaking these words. Judas was there at the beginning of the Upper Room Discourse in chapter 13. Jesus had washed his feet. Jesus had predicted his betrayal. Then, he left to betray Jesus.

And yet, "Jesus knew from the beginning [those] who ... did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him" (John 6:64). To be sure, Judas was one of Jesus' disciples, but he didn't believe. He never trusted Jesus. He was in it for himself, and not for the glory of God. But, Judas did fall away. He fell away in the sense that he abandoned Jesus and betrayed him. As a result, God, the Father, doing His duty as the vinedresser, took him away, according to the first half of verse 2.

Judas was "in Jesus" in that he was with Him and walked with Him. But Judas was never "in Jesus" as a true disciple. And so, he had no fruit, and was taken a way. In our study of 2 Peter, we saw how the false teachers were like this. They were in the church, teaching and leading people. They knew a lot about Jesus. But later, as they returned to their former lusts and were entangled in them, they returned to a worse state than before. This is the idea of being taken out of the vine. Those who only appear to be in Christ will be removed, so that there is no doubt as to who they are.

Notice who is removed from the vine. It is those who have no fruit. Such fate is tragic. And the burden of John in recording these things for us is that we might have fruit. He writes at the very end of the gospel why he wrote it. He said, "these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). In this gospel account John is putting forth Jesus as the Christ showing Him as we was, a worker of miracles, a teacher of wisdom, one who was crucified for us. He calls us to faith in Christ. And when we believe, we will have life. And when we have life, we will have fruit.

So, what about those who have fruit in their lives? They are not left alone. We read in the second half of verse 2 that **"every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit."** This might be a bit surprising to you. Wouldn't you think that if you were producing fruit in your life, that God would be satisfied with you? The answer is, "No. He isn't." He wants you to grow. The vinedresser, isn't really content merely to see fruit. The vinedresser wants to see abundant fruit. To do so, the vinedresser will prune his vines.

I don't know much about pruning produce. But, I do have a friend who does. This week I called my friend, who grew up on an apple orchard, where his father owned and operated the orchard. And so, I called him this week and asked him about the pruning process. He told me some fascinating things about pruning trees.

He said that they go out during the winter months, when the tree is dormant. The pruning process consists of cutting off many branches, so that the quality of the fruit might increase. He said that in the process of choosing which branches to prune, various factors are taken into account. When the tree is young and small, he told me that they cut off about every branch, except for the main trunk, so that the future of the tree will grow straight up and strong. Once the tree is large enough, he said that he looked for the major arteries, attempting to cut off everything, except for four major branches, each stretching out in a different direction, so that the tree would be balanced.

As the tree grows, it is in constant need of pruning. As he approached a tree, he first looked for the dead branches and would cut them off, because a tree will always try to revive the dead areas. Then, he looked for those branches that would be useless. For instance if a branch was growing straight up, it was totally useless. First of all, any fruit on the branch would be minimal, as the nourishments traveling through the tree would have to fight against gravity to reach the fruit. Second, any fruit that is produced on the plant will destroy the branch by the weight of the fruit. After cutting off the dead and useless branches, he will cut off any other branch that impedes the growth of the four major arteries of the tree. There are times when perfectly good branches are cut off from the tree, simply because it's growing in the wrong place.

One of the things that my friend stressed with me was how much of the tree is actually cut off. He told me that when you go in and start pruning a row of trees, at first you can't see through them, even with all of their leaves off in the wintertime. But, by the time you are finished, if you look through the row of trees, you will even wonder if there are any trees left. But, the pruning process is good for growth. He told me of a time that a certain section of his apple orchard wasn't producing very good apples. They were about the size of golf-balls, and you can't sell such apples. So, they went in that winter and really pruned them down. And the next year, his entire family was amazed at how beautiful the apples were from those same trees the next year, plump and juicy.

Now, Jesus wasn't talking about pruning apple trees. He was talking about pruning grape vines. But, I'm sure that many of the same principles apply. Because the same principle applies for all plants. A few years ago, my wife trimmed the bushes in the front of our house. She was advised to trim the plants really low. So, she about took out everything that was growing in our front sidewalk, taking the plants down to about 2 inches from the ground. We were both amazed at how strongly the plants came back the next year. This is the point of verse 2. "every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit."

By way of application, it means that God brings troubles and trials and stresses into our lives, to cut off the dead portions of our lives, to cut off the useless portions of our lives, and to cut off those things we are doing that are good, but not good enough for Him. God does all of this so that we would have more fruit in our lives.

It may be that God has struck you down in recent years, pruning your branches way down to the ground. He has done so because He want to see you have ever more fruit in your life. Moses was 40 years in exile. The exile surely made him a better leader. Joseph spent more than a decade in prison. Surely, he too grew to trust the Lord during these days as well. Paul was 14 years in Arabia. His time there gave him great wisdom to lead the churches. Peter denied Christ three times, only to be restored a few days later. When Peter came back, his fruit was much better than it had been before, as now he was willing to speak with great boldness for Christ (Matt. 26:69-75; Acts 4:13).

So, church family, welcome the day that God brings pain into your life. Know that He is doing so that you might increase your fruit-bearing. This is why Peter was able to bring the message of 1 Peter, "Suffer Now, Glory Later." We can rejoice at the sufferings today, because we know of the glory that will come later. This is why Paul can say in Romans 5:3, "We exult in our tribulations." What a strange thing to say. But, Paul continues to explain why it is that we exult. "knowing that the tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope" (Rom. 5:3-4). Tribulations and trials and pains produce fruit in our lives. In this case, the fruit of perseverance, proven character, and hope.

The classic text on these things in James 1:2, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." This, then, which leads to a refining of our character.

So, if you are walking with the Lord, submitting to Him, and the trials come, please realize that it may not be God's discipline in your life. It for you. Now, it may be discipline. It may be that you have been may be God's pruning of your life, so that He produces more fruit walking into

your life to bring you back. But, it may be God's pruning work down the wrong path, neglecting Him, and He is bringing trials during a later winter season of your life, so that you will produce more fruit

A great illustration of this comes in 2 Corinthians 1. Paul tells of how he was afflicted and then, comforted by the Lord. As a result, God produced in him the fruit of compassion, He could minister to those who were afflicted. He wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

The obvious question at this point is simply this: Is God producing fruit in your life? Are these things in your life that you can only explain by saying, "God is at work in me." Do you know the pruning work of God in your life? If you don't see the refining work of God, you may well question whether God is in your life or not. I think that's the reason why Jesus said in **verse 3** to His disciples, **"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."** Jesus is here seeking to encourage His disciples that they are true branches, connected to the true vine. They have been cleansed of their sins, because they have heard the words of Jesus and believed in the words of Jesus.

Verse 3 is talking about the cleansing of the gospel. If you are going to bear much fruit, you need to know this cleansing first of all. You need to be grafted into the vine by faith in Christ. If you don't see fruit in your life, it might very well be that you have never been cleansed by the word of Jesus. And so, I exhort you this morning to believe on Him. Trust in Him.

Should you trace through the gospel of John, you would see Jesus beckoning people to come to Him. He spoke to Nicodemus and told him that "God so loved the world, that whoever believe in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus spoke to the woman at the well and told her, "whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). To the crowds, Jesus said, "The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world" (John 6:33).

Time after time after time again, Jesus called people unto Himself. Believe in Him. Eat of Him. Drink of Him. Trust in Him. Abide in Him. The reality of trusting in Jesus is a cleansed life. Now, the cleansed life doesn't mean a life without problems. In fact, when things are going well with your walk with God, you may expect the pain of pruning to come your way. See, God cuts us down, even when things in our lives are going well and we are blossoming. But, he does so with a purpose. He does so, that we might produce more growth.

When God struck Paul down with a thorn in the flesh, it made Paul weak. And God told him, "Power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). See, when we are weak, then God is strong to work in us and through us. Do you want to see fruit in your life? Then, abide in Jesus.

Jesus continues in **verse 4**, **"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me."** Apart from Jesus, we simply aren't able to bear fruit. You can try it. You can stick a branch in the ground, apart from the root. I guarantee you, its not going to grow. It's going to wilt and die. So it is with us. Unless we are connected with Jesus, we simply won't grow. We won't bear fruit. It's as simple as that.

You can't grow to be like Jesus if you aren't abiding in Jesus. You can't become a master musician without practicing. You can't become a master chef without cooking. You can't become a great basketball player without ever going into the gym. You can't bear much fruit in your spiritual life without spending time with Jesus.

Now, the amazing thing is that many people try to do this very thing all the time. They have no communion with Jesus. Their time reading His word is nothing. Their time spent praying is nothing. Their time spent thinking about Him is nothing. They spend no time pursuing other avenues of growth: book reading, sermon listening, private worship, Christian fellowship, serving other, or any other sort of fruit building activity in their lives, and yet, the expect that they are going to grow. They come to church on Sunday, thinking that a few hours, one day a week is going to sustain them. Their Bible is neglected. Christian fellowship is ignored. Communion with the Lord is non existent.

Would you ever do that with food? Would you ever try to survive a week on a few hours of eating one day a week? D. L. Moody said, "A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough for the next six months, or take sufficient air into his lungs at one time to sustain life for a week. We must draw upon God's boundless store of grace from day to day as we need it." [\[1\]](#)

Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). We would do well to pray, "Give us this day our needed grace." Sadly, people try to live their lives like spiritual camels. They drink in God every now and then and expect to have enough nourishment to last for weeks at a time. You can't live like this. You can't flourish like this. Jesus said, "Abide in Me." (v. 4)

So important is this point, that Jesus says that same thing again in **verse 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."** Whenever something in the Scripture is repeated, it means that it is important. We ought to take note. Do you want to bear much fruit? Then abide in Jesus. Do you want to bear much fruit? Then take heart in what Jesus said, "apart from Me you can do nothing."

To bear fruit, you need to be connected to the vine. To bear fruit, you need to be a conduit. God's life need to flow through you. We don't create our own fruit. On the contrary, God's life works in us to create the fruit. We are the branches, we get our life from the vine. The vine is the source. The vine is our strength. Without the vine, we are nothing. A branch cut off of the vine will wither up and perish. Just go out sometime and try it sometime. Lop off a branch from a tree and let it sit on the lawn. Just look what happens to the leaves. They wither up and die.

I have cut down a few trees in my lifetime. I have seen what branches that have been cut down look like a few days after they have been sitting in the lawn. They are dried up and shriveled. I remember one particular tree that I cut down in the middle of summer. It was a fairly large birch tree. I remember looking at the stump a few hours after we cut the tree down. It was soaking wet. The roots had gathered the

water from the ground and it was sending the sap up the trunk. The only problem was that the tree was no longer there to receive the sap. But, the trunk kept giving and providing. As I remember, this went on for several days. Finally, it dried up. I thought, what a great picture of the vine. See, there's life in the vine. There is life in the trunk. There is life in the sap. Should we separate ourselves from the trunk of the tree, God is still there, providing everything that we need pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). But, without the close connection there is no source of life. If we drift away from the source of our lives, then we won't receive the nutrients we need to bear fruit. If today finds you drifting, come back to the stump, where the sap is oozing out, just waiting to be licked up by your branch, that you might grow and bear fruit.

So don't think that you can do it on your own. You can't. I'm telling you you can't. Read my lips, you can't bear much fruit on your own. Apart from Christ, you can do nothing. If you want to try, then **verse 6** is for you. Jesus said, **"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned."** Again, this is a repetition of verse 2, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away." In this case, Jesus speaks about what happens to those branches that are taken away, they get burned.

When I talked with my friend about the pruning of the apple trees, he talked about the mounds and mounds of branches that were left between the rows. He said that after pruning a row, you would have several complete trees worth of branches between the rows. Now, on their property, they had a natural valley, where they would pile up all of their branches. He described their valley to be the size of six houses. Whenever they fill this valley, they called the fire department and tell them, "We are going to burn the valley."

After the fire department comes, they set the valley on fire. The fire department watches what takes place, ready, just in case the fire burn out of control. So great is the heat, that you must watch the fire burn from a distance. As soon as the fire department is convinced that things are under control, they take their fire engine home and wait for another day to be summoned to watch the fire burn again. Such is the fate of those who don't bear fruit. You don't want to go that way. Instead, you want to go the way of **verse 7**, where, Jesus talks about what abiding in Christ looks like.

Jesus said, **"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."** In this verse, we see a give and take relationship. We are abiding in Christ. His words are abiding in us. We are praying to Him. He is answering our prayers. Are the words of Jesus abiding in you?

There's no other way to have them abide in you apart from Bible intake! This can take a variety of forms. It can be as simple as reading your Bible. You can take in the Bible by listening to the Bible on an mp3 player. It can be memorizing a particular passage of Scripture, that keeps it on your mind. It can be in studying something in the Bible. It can come through listening to sermons or reading a Christian book. These are the ways that the words of Jesus will abide in you. If your Bible sits on the bedside table all week long, the words aren't going to jump from the table into your minds by accident. You must give some attention to His words.

Abiding in Christ's words, however, is more than merely experiencing Bible intake. To be sure, that's where it begins, but abiding in Christ's words goes beyond. Having the words of Jesus abide in us, means that they come in and reside in our hearts. We think about them. We meditate about them. We drink on them. We trust in them. We rest. We experience His words transform us.. Peter wrote, "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2).

Such abiding in the words of Christ gives fuel to our prayers. You can't be mighty in prayer without being mighty in the word. [\[2\]](#)

What about praying? Are you praying? Are you communing with God throughout the day, constantly offering up to Him prayers? Are you seeing answers to prayer? This is abiding in Jesus. There is true communion with Him. Is God working in your life?

Fathers, what is your home like? Are you helping your children to cultivate these habits in their lives? Are you modeling such a life before them? Are you teaching them how to walk with the Lord in these ways? Family worship is a great way to do this. I'm talking about gathering your family for Bible reading and prayer together on a regular basis. I know that in the business of life, it is easy to lose track of this. But, it's important. It's important for your own life. It's important for your family's life. When these things are taking place, God is glorified.

Now, let's look at **verse 8, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."** I love the motivation given here in verse 8, God's glory. The glory of God is at stake. When you abide in Him, and when He bears fruit in your life, then God is glorified.

It's one thing to come here each Sunday morning and sing praise to God. That's wonderful. God's word calls us to that. But, it's another thing to walk with God throughout the week and so bring glory to Him by the fruit that He is working in your life. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). As you are doing good works, you are doing it in such a way that people aren't attracted to you. Rather, they are directed toward your heavenly Father, who has produced these things in your life?

Did you know that being at peace with one another gives glory to God? Did you know that growing in your patience with your children gives glory to God? Did you know that the acts of kindness that God works in you gives glory to God as it is witnessed by your family and by those at work? Did you know that your moral goodness gives God glory as you turn away from evil and do good? It glorifies God because any goodness that you have isn't coming from you, but from God working in you. Did you know that your faithfulness in depending upon the Lord, even God is pruning you, gives glory to God? This is so, because there is no other explanation behind your trust, but God. Others might expect you to follow the counsel of Job's wife, "Curse God and die!" (Job. 2:9).

Did you know that your ever-growing self-control gives glory to God? That self-control that won't eat that extra cookie or to be diligent in exercise or not to lash out at your children in anger, is glorifying to God? These sorts of things glorify God because they put God's work on display in you.

Verse 8 tells us that such things prove that we are His disciples. It is obvious to us. It obvious to the church. It is obvious to you family. It is obvious to the world. You can't hide a life that's abiding in Christ. When we are bearing fruit, it's obvious that we are His disciples. Do you remember 1 Peter 3:15? "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" Why would people ask such a question? Because your life doesn't compute! You are responding to things in your life so differently than most people. Such difference can only be explained because God is at work in you. And when people ask you, you can give glory to God by explaining that it is His working in your life that explains your life. It's all God!

**Verse 9** talks about love. It talks about divine love. Jesus said, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love." With these words, Jesus tells the great divine love story. There is perfect love between the Father and the Son. That love was expressed by Jesus loving us in coming and dying for us. He didn't love us when we were beautiful or attractive. He didn't love us for what we could do for Him. He didn't love us because we loved Him first. No, it's the opposite, "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Christ loved us when we were dead in our transgressions and sins, when we were his enemies. He loved us when we ignored Him and had nothing to offer Him. And Jesus says, "Abide in My love. Think upon My love for you. Dwell upon it. Meditate upon the greatness of my love to you."

Recently, I gave a book to my wife entitled, "Because He Loves Me," written by Elyse Fitzpatrick. The subtitle of the book is "How Christ Transforms Our Daily Life." I gave it to her to help her abide and grow in Christ. I don't know much about the book, but I love the title. It helps direct us to the motive of our life of love to others. In the first chapter, Fitzpatrick writes, ...

It's essential for us to think about God's love today because it is only his love that can grant us the *joy* that will strengthen our hearts, the *courage* that will embolden us in our fight against sin, and the *assurance* that will enable us to open up our lives to him so that he might deal powerfully with our unbelief and idolatry. If we're not completely convinced that his love is *ours right now*--fully and unalterably ours--we'll always hide in the shadows, focusing on our performance, fear in his wrath. Prayer will be hard because we won't want to approach him or be transparent before him. Witnessing will be a chore, for who would want to talk to others about a god who is demanding, angry, or cold? If we don't consciously live in the light of his love, the gospel will be secondary, virtually meaningless, and Jesus Christ will fade into insignificance. Our faith will become all about us, our performance, and how we think we're doing, and our transformation will be hindered. [3]

The message is simple, "Abide in my love." Such abiding will lead to obedience, which is the focus of verse 10, "**If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.**" Abiding in Christ isn't merely mental. Oh, it is mental. It starts with thinking and dwelling upon the truths of Christ. But, there are some actions to it as well. But, the actions flow from a heart. It is knowing the truth first. Then, it is growing in godliness (just like 2 Peter).

Here, in verse 10, Jesus says, "Abiding leads to obedience." Keep the commandments of Jesus. What are they? Perhaps the best way to understand this is to look over at verse 12 in this context. Jesus said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Do you want to keep the commandments of Jesus? Be a lover. Be one who loves. Lavish your love upon others.

Christ always commands us in the way of love. When Jesus was asked, "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied with the following, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Then, Jesus concluded by saying this: "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:36-40). In other words, you can trace every command in the Bible back to these two thoughts. Every commandment will be either an expression of love toward God, or an expression of love toward others.

Finally, we will look at **verse 11, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."** This is a great verse to end my message. It tells us why Jesus told these things to His disciples. His aim was to see them have joy! In other words, abiding in Christ is the path to happiness. My message today hasn't come to burden you with Bible reading and prayer and things to do, just trying to please the Lord. No, my message this morning has come by way of encouragement to lean upon Jesus and abide in Him and everything else will flow from it.

Do you want to be happy? Of course you want to be happy. But, you are happiest when you are abiding in Him. A few months ago, Frank Yonke preached on 1 Peter. One of the questions that he asked was this, "Do you want to be more holy at the end of 2009 than you are at the beginning of the year?" That question really resonated in my heart, because that's my supreme desire. I know that I'll be more happy the holier that I am. The more that I see God working in me, the happier I am going to be. So, for your own happiness, know that abiding in Christ is the best path to that end.

Now, the world is telling us the direct opposite. The world is telling us that other things are the path to happiness. It's the attractions of the world, the things of the world, and the events of the world that are going to make us happy. The world tells us that a big house and spending much money is the key to happiness. But, Jesus tells us the opposite. The path to happiness is abiding in Christ.

Did you know that such things actually bring God's joy into your life? Verse 11 says, "so that My joy may be in you." As we abide in Christ, His joy comes into us. The Scriptures often command us to be happy in God. "Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:1). "Delight yourself in the in the LORD" (Ps. 37:4). There is no other way to do this than to abide in Christ and experience His joy working in you.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 22, 2009 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] I don't know the original source of this quotation, but it is all over the internet ascribed to D. L. Moody.

[2] George Müller gives a great illustration of the connection of the word and prayer. Here is a lengthy quote in which Müller gives testimony to his own experience, which is taken from his diary entry on May 7th, 1841. He writes, ...

While I was staying at Nailsworth, it pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost, though now . . . more than forty years have since passed away.

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit. Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning.

Now I saw, that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental, communion with the Lord. I began therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God; searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that though I did not, as it were, give myself to *prayer*, but to *meditation*, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me, that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference between my former practice and my present one is this. Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer.... But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began really to *pray*. I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it! ) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter before me. No private intercourse with a brother stirred me up to this matter. And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is *to obtain food for his inner man*. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as every one must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man: not *prayer*, but *the Word of God*; and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.

When we pray we speak to God. Now, prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire, and the season, therefore, when this exercise of the soul can be most effectually performed, is, after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us, to encourage us, to comfort us, to instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us. We may therefore profitably meditate, with God's blessing, though we are ever so weak spiritually; nay, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation for the strengthening of our inner man. There is thus far less to be feared from wandering of mind, than if we give ourselves to prayer, without having had previously time for meditation.

I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow-believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I had ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials and the temptations of the day come upon one!

(Taken from Autobiography of George Müller: Westminster Literature Resources, pp. 152-154)

[3] Elyse M. Fitzpatrick, "Because He Loves Me," p. 24.