

Home Group Leader's Notes

Week of February 6, 2022

John 15:1-17

Sermon Series: *This is Love*

This passage was and is life changing for me. On a night when He was going to the cross, when His agony was peaked, He loved them (us) to the end. He revealed the most important promise about how we to live on this earth: "abide in me, and I in you." And we get to do this TOGETHER for the rest of our lives.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What comes to mind with the idea of living a fruitful life?

This could be about character, productivity, impact, etc. (The idea of bearing fruit is a focus in this passage.)

LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

Read through John 15:1-17 and consider the following questions.

What is your first impression of this passage and how it fits into Jesus' evening with His people?

This passage is freighted with essentials. Though I don't walk through these questions in our group meeting, I will often ask people to share their first impressions.

Jesus referred to a vine/vineyard. Who did the vineyard represent in the Old Testament? What do we learn about that vine? (Psalm 80:9-16; Isaiah 5:1-4; Jeremiah 2:21)

In Old Testament imagery, Israel was a vineyard. Most of the time, Israel was pictured a negative light, as being without fruit.

In Jesus' final "I am" statement in John, He declared that He is the "true" vine. This means that God's covenant is now with and through Jesus. He has taken the place of Israel as God's vine.

How is Jesus described as the "true" (genuine) vine in Psalm 80:7-8, 14-17?

Notice the statements that reflect Jesus, the Son of Man.

How are the branches described in this passage? (2-6)

Attached to the vine, fruitful or not, pruned or removed.

What is the test that branches are rightly connected to the vine? (2, 4-5, 8, 16)

The obvious test is whether they are bearing fruit.

What does it mean to bear fruit? How is the fruit described? (1-17; see also 14:12)

Fruit = continuing Jesus' ministry to make disciples, to further His work. Notice that specifics are not given. Rather, the focus is on what happens when we abide in Jesus as He abides in us.

How is our relationship with Jesus compared with Jesus' relationship with the Father? (8-10)
How is fruit-bearing a fulfillment of Jesus' work?

We glorify God by bearing fruit as Jesus' disciples. Abiding means abiding in His love by keeping His commandment, which in this passage, is to love one another.

What is Jesus' central "command" in this passage? How is this connected to following Jesus' command to bear fruit? (15:12,17, cf. 13:14-15, 34)

His central command is to "love one another." Love is at the essence of God. When we love one another, we make Jesus known as our glorious God. (As Jesus said in chapter fourteen, we love Jesus by obeying Him out of love.) So, if we are going to bear fruit in our lives, this command is our calling card, the *sine qua non* of disciple making.

How might we describe what it looks like to "abide" or "remain?" What are the specific evidences that someone is abiding / remaining in Jesus? (1-17)

Jesus referred to the following:

- We "remain" in Jesus (abide, stick with, stay attached to). This means that we live trusting in Him for our very lives, believe and live as Him as "the life." (14:6)
- We trust in His pruning to bear fruit
- We believe and live out the truth that we cannot bear fruit apart from Him
- His words remain in us, we follow His teaching, we pray according to His teaching (7)
- We obey His commands as Jesus obeyed His Father (10)
- His command: "Love each other as I have loved you." (12)

Why do you think Jesus addresses the topic of love and friendship at this point of the evening? (12-15)

Jesus was helping them to understand the intimacy of abiding. Jesus was teaching them that they are now related to Him as He is to the Father. Just as the Father made known to Jesus what He must do and then Jesus obeyed the Father, we are to do likewise. Jesus invited them into this same relational intimacy.

SELF-REFLECTION

When you read and understand this passage, how do you feel about yourself? Do you feel like you are abiding in Jesus? Do you feel like you are bearing fruit that lasts? Do you feel like you are teaming up with other people to abide and bear fruit together? How can we help each other?

These are essential and intimate words from Jesus. While Jesus does not give specifics of fruit bearing, I think we can look back and see if we are abiding in Him as He describes.

Jesus taught this to a group of people and the statements are meant to be taken individually and collectively. We are meant to follow Him, love, and obey Him, TOGETHER.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

NOTE TO SHEPHERDS: Remember to be selective with discussion questions. These are only ideas. You might want to use some of them or come up with your own.

People have widely varied views about how to relate to God. How is Jesus' relationship with His disciples described in this passage? What should be the result of that relationship?

These discussion questions are meant to help us collaborate on what our life of abiding together should look like. That is, very intimate with Jesus and one another, obedience that flows from love, believing prayer because we're abiding in Him, and most of all, loving each other.

Jesus made an inconceivable promise in John 14:12. How could we explain how this happens?

The 'how' is found in John 15 – WE ABIDE IN HIM TOGETHER.

These commands are made to multiple people, they are plurals. We are meant to abide together. How does this affect how we view what it means to abide in Jesus? To bear fruit?

This question is meant to address our distant independent ways in America.

How are Jesus' "friends" described? What does it mean to be "friends" with Jesus? How does this fit with Jesus' call to abide/remain in Him?

Jesus reveals that as "friends," we live in an intimate relationship where we hear from and obey God

I pray that our Father will lead us in this call to the intimacy of abiding in Jesus and seeing God bear fruit through us. Grace to you.

Steve