

## INTRODUCTION

John 15:1-17

Hudson Taylor was the founder of the China Inland Mission, and under God was responsible in the mid-19th century for leading hundreds of missionaries into China's interior for the first time. In 1869, when he was 37 years old, he entered a new phase of life. He began to drink more deeply at the experiential fountain of John 15:1–11. He was given a deeper, and more constant, more satisfying experience of abiding in Christ.

His son Fredrick Howard Taylor wrote in 1932,

Here was a man almost sixty years of age, bearing tremendous burdens, yet absolutely calm and untroubled. Oh, the pile of letters! any one of which might contain news of death, of lack of funds, of riots or serious trouble. Yet all were opened, read and answered with the same tranquility — Christ his reason for peace, his power for calm. Dwelling in Christ, he drew upon His very being and resources. ... And this he did by an attitude of faith as simple as it was continuous. Yet he was delightfully free and natural. I can find no words to describe it save the Scriptural expression "in God." He was in God all the time and God in him. It was that true "abiding" of John fifteen.

Jesus says, in John 15:1, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser." This is a picture, a metaphor, of what he has just said. "As I complete my work in the next hours, I become the source of all life and fruitfulness — the vine. And my Father is tending this vine. He is seeing to it that the vine will bear all the living fruit he intends. And that includes his attention to me, the vine, and to you, my branches."

### **OPEN IT**

1. What makes your home feel like home?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Piper, John. Glorifying God by Bearing Fruit in Union with Christ. February 3, 2014. https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/glorifying-god-by-bearing-fruit-in-union-with-christ

# **READ IT**

John 15:1-17

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	XPLORE IT What is the purpose of a branch? (Verse 2)
	What is the only way a disciple can bear fruit? (Verse 4)
4.	Who receives glory when a disciple bears much fruit? (Verse 8)
5.	Why did Jesus say these things? (Two reasons from Verse 11)
6.	How far should the love of a disciple be willing to go? (Verse 12-13)

## APPLY IT

#### We've Been Planted to Bear Fruit

From Steve Cole: "A while back someone emailed me a link to a funny video that was in German; but you didn't need to know German to get the point. A young woman asks her father how he likes the new iPad she gave him for his birthday. He says, "Good." But then she watches him use his iPad as a cutting board for chopping his vegetables. She is horrified as he rinses it off in the sink and puts it in the dishwasher! A caption in English informs us that no iPads were harmed in filming the episode.

In real life, it's no laughing matter when you see something costly not being used to fulfill its intended purpose, or even worse, being used for something contrary to its purpose. In our text, Jesus gives the disciples an extended allegory that reveals God's purpose in saving them: He wants them to bear much fruit. Jesus pictures Himself as the true vine, the Father as the vinedresser, and the disciples as the branches.

A man plants a vineyard for a different reason than he plants a flower garden. We plant flower gardens so that we can enjoy the beautiful flowers. But if you plant a vineyard, your purpose is to harvest a crop of grapes. Your goal is that your vineyard would bear a lot of fruit. If all it produces is flowers and leaves, your efforts in planting it have failed. So the Lord's point in John 15:1-6 is: Christ's true followers abide in Him as branches in the true vine and so bear much fruit.<sup>2</sup>

	rd's point in John 15:1-6 is: Christ's true followers abide in Him as branches in the true vine and so bear much fruit. <sup>2</sup>
7.	Who is one Christian you've seen bear fruit? What are some fruitful things you observed in their life?
8.	Read Ephesians 2:8-10. After God accomplished the work of salvation, what works does God have in mind for us?
9.	What kind of fruit would you want to see come to fruition over the next year at our church?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cole, Steven. Fulfilling Your Purpose in LIfe. January 25, 2015. https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-80-fulfilling-your-purpose-life-john-151-6

#### **Abiding in Christ**

As much as the call to the church is to "go" (the Great Commission of Matt 28:18-20 or even John 20:21), there is just as much a call to the Christian to "stay," "abide," and "remain" in Christ. To "remain" is to find one's existence and meaning by means of the provision of Christ. It is to be aware of our dependence and insufficiency, which is a state that the world tries to reverse and deny.

This command to "remain" is not a burden but a gift, an opportunity to really live and, ironically, to truly be free it is to have life as it was designed, in harmony with the Creator. It is in a real sense to dwell in the house of God, to "tabernacle" with God through Christ and by the Spirit, even if a more perfect dwelling is still to come (cf. 14:2). And this command is matched by a promise that if we remain in Christ, he pledges to "remain" with us. To remain, then, is to exist in the grace and love of God.<sup>3</sup>

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10.	Why is it sometimes hard for us to draw our strength from God? Where do you often look for strength instead?
11.	What does Galatians 2:20 tell us about this amazing new life we get to live since our old identities were crucified with Christ?
12.	Verse 6 tells us of the dire consequences of not abiding in Christ. How can believers more fully live out and enjoy their relationship with God?
	enjoy their relationship with God:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Klink, Edward W. III. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: John. 2016. 659.

13. Verse 7 sounds like a blank-check promise, but what do you think Jesus is telling us about our prayer life when we abide in Him?
True Christian Friendship
The love of God for Christians becomes the love of God between Christians. This participation in the love of God creates a Christian relationship, a Christian friendship. Such "friends" are not casual acquaintances but are in a life-sharing and life-giving relationship that finds expression in a cumulative life together. In a Christian friendship one life might even be exchanged for another, promoting this cumulative "life" by means of a cumulative love - life and love that begin and end with God and therefore give unity and meaning to everything in between. <sup>4</sup>
14. It's an absolute wonder that God would elevate His disciples to become His friends. What is better about life because we're friends of God?
15. At times, we experience loneliness and isolation. What are some core features of Christian friendship that have made you feel close and accepted around other Believers?
<sup>4</sup> Klink, Edward W. III. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: John. 2016. 660.

16. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. What aspects of Christian community from this verse show up in your life?
This is the biblical vision of the life of the church. Unfortunately, compared to most of our local churches, it is more of a dream than a reality. Can the church recover this kind of community life, where friendship is defined not by one's Facebook status but by our corporate status as sons and daughters who are friends of God - in communion with the Father through the Son and by the Spirit? We must pray to that end! For this vision is the extension of God's love that begins in the sending of his Son (3:16). It is to find its embodiment and expression within the church and is to enable the church's mission in the world. God's love is not an option; it is a necessity, a foundation to the very existence of the church and also therefore to its life together. <sup>5</sup>
17. As a discipleship church, we seek to become more like Jesus. Who is one person in our church to whom you can be like Jesus and extend Christian friendship this week?
18. Write a one or two sentence prayer, asking God to make true Christian friendship a reality in your small group.
16. Write a one or two sentence prayer, asking God to make true Christian mendship a reality in your small group.
<sup>5</sup> lbid. This study was compiled and questions were written by David Wood (Aurora Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup