

Remain in Jesus

John 15:1-17

Key Verse: 15:5

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

This passage was written when society was agricultural and most people farmed for a living. Today, most of us are urban and we do not know a whole lot about pruning or helping branches to produce more fruit. So today, we are going to learn a little about gardening and a lot about our relationship with Jesus Christ, remaining in Him and living a loving life.

Jesus describes us as branches of a vine. You are at an age where you are growing into the kind of person you will be as an adult. You have many choices to make that will affect the rest of your life. You can choose to grow as a good branch that is connected to Jesus and bears good fruit, or as a bad branch that is dry and fruitless. Through this message may we open our hearts to hear how we can be fruitful branches, grow the way God wants us to, and experience his joy and share love with one another.

Part I. The True Vine (Jn 15: 1-3)

Verse 1 reads, **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.”** Jesus says that he is the true vine and we are the branches, receiving his life, energy and power. Jesus indicates that there are many “false vines”, which will not give us life at all. The world offers various ways that we can connect with, however only connecting to Jesus makes us grow happy and free.

So, how are we to be branches in the true vine? When we pray and ask Jesus to come into our hearts as our Lord and Savior, he will gladly do so. Once we welcome Jesus into our hearts, we are in Him and He is in us. In Jesus, we are given eternal life and the kingdom of God. It is a wonderful thing to ask Jesus Christ to come and live inside our hearts.

Jesus says that God is the gardener for the vine and that he cares for it to be fruitful. Verse 2 tells us that, **“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes (or cleans) so that it will be even more fruitful.”** How does a person become fruitful? When we believe in Jesus, God puts his Holy Spirit inside of us. This is the sign that we are

Remain in Jesus

“in him”. When we have the Holy Spirit within us we are a fruitful branch, we will produce fruit. We have the potential to do great things. However, if we do not have the Holy Spirit within us, then no matter what we do, we will never bear fruit. Such branches must be cut off. Branches were designed by God to bear fruit and a branch that is not doing what it should is only taking and giving nothing back, it drags down the entire body and needs to be cut off.

I enjoy gardening and I spend time planting a lot of things and watering, etc. For me, having a garden is like a calm oasis in a huge cement city. Even for me in my small city garden, plants need to be fruitful or they are a waste of precious space. In the case of vines, I am expecting them to produce berries in season, or else I will throw them out and plant something else. A nice friend named Erik gave me a little blackberry bush a few years back. It grew so much that it became a huge vine in the yard. It produces big blackberries that are so fresh and delicious that my whole family, (from grandma to my young daughter) enjoys them. But some branches become bad on this vine, they are fruitless ones, dry and ugly, so I have to cut them off and throw them out, or they would rob energy from the good branches. Other branches are really good, but they get way too big and out of hand, they want to take over the entire backyard, so I have to keep them trimmed and clean so they can be very fruitful.

In the same way, those who believe in Jesus are good branches. If you believe in Jesus you are VERY GOOD, you have GREAT POTENTIAL, and you can bear INCREDIBLE FRUIT. However, to do this you must be pruned. In order for you to bear fruit, God must cut off bad habits so that good ones may grow and trim away bad attitudes that fruitful ones may replace them. God must prune our anger, lust, pride, laziness, our love of pleasure, sarcasm, pessimism and dark thinking, our love for unholy impure movies, games and music. These things are like sickly leaves that drain our energy to bear fruit. These things must be absolutely cut off so that we can reach our God given potential. Sometimes through a message or a Bible passage something is tugging at your heart and you feel bad or guilty, that is God trying to prune you. Sometimes, God is using your parents when they tell you to study when you would rather play. When they take away an addicting video game, that is really God trying to prune you. We must let him do his good work. Pruning is difficult, but it produces delightful fruit in the long run.

Gaby Douglas made world history at the 2012 Summer Olympics as the best all-around female gymnast. She was the first American to ever win the gold in both the individual and all-around events. To be so successful, she had to live far away

Remain in Jesus

from home, her friends and family to focus on intense training every day. She had to go through very tough exercise and diet training to stay competitive. She experienced failure and discouragement many times, and made every excuse to her mom to let her quit. But her mother kept telling her to have faith because God had a plan for her. Gaby's faith was what gave her the strength to continue. She prayed before every event and asked God to use her, and her dedication paid off. When she won the gold medal in Gymnastics, she boldly thanked Jesus and gave all of the glory and honor to him in front of the whole world. She has even written a book called, "Grace, Gold and Glory" in which she tells young people to work hard, and have faith and you can accomplish amazing things. So pruning is indeed difficult, but the fruit that it produces in our lives is totally astounding!

Part II. How to bear fruit

Would you want to bear good fruit? The question is how can we? Verse 4 says, **"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."** How many times is the word "remain" repeated in verse 4? I counted 4 times! Jesus really wants us to remain in Him forever. Remaining in him is the only way to go. Who would want to leave their B.F.F, Jesus, anyway? He loves us so much that he even gave up his life for our sins.

Verse 5 says, **"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."**

Remaining in Jesus creates a huge impact in a person's life. For example, a bright and handsome student was fruitful in his middle school days. He was baptized in church and he confessed from his heart that the Holy Spirit gave him joy, a fruit of the Spirit. But, a couple years later, when he was in high school, he lost his joy. He fell in love with a pretty girl and he thought about her more than about Jesus, and so he lost the fruit of the Spirit, joy. He became a very sad guy instead. In Jesus, he could bear very good inner fruit, and spread great joy to everyone around him. But when he was not in Jesus, he bore no good fruit, he only shared sadness to people around him. By God's grace he attended an Easter Bible Conference in his sadness and he and his friends prayed and God answered their prayers. His fascination for the girl was lessened and he placed Jesus back to number one in his heart. He was back to remaining in Jesus and he started bearing good fruit again right away. His inner spiritual joy returned and he smiled again. Now he is a blessing and very useful. He plays joyful praise music for CBF, HBF and the UBF Sunday worship services. Sometimes he plays the drums, other times

Remain in Jesus

he conducts, sings, or plays guitar. May God bless him to always remain in Jesus and bear good fruit: love, joy, peace and power as a growing branch in the true vine.

How can we really remain in Jesus and be fruitful children of God throughout our lifetimes? The stress of this life, intense homework, peer pressure, worries, temptations, could try to pull us away from Jesus. We can remain in Jesus by studying his Word wholeheartedly. Whenever we read the Bible we grow in our relationship with Christ and we remain in Him. Through God's word we meet the living God. Through studying the Bible, Jesus becomes our best friend. We want to do what our BFF Jesus is doing, to be like him and be with him forever.

Attending Bible Conferences is also a way to study the Word and remain in Jesus. When Maria, my wife, went to Mexico City for a Bible Conference she returned home with a very bright face. She was so full of the joy of heaven. Bible conferences really help us to hear God's Words, plant them into our hearts and remain in Jesus.

Verse 6 warns us that, **“If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.”** In order to remain as healthy and fruitful branches in Jesus throughout our lifetimes, we have to stay in Jesus because he is the only one who can give us life.

We are to remain in Jesus not only when we are in church or with our parents. We have to remain in him at school, with our buddies, and at all times. We have to be prayerful and loving at school and everywhere. Remaining in Jesus sounds hard, but it is really the most blessed and great life we could ever live. When M. Jennifer Stumpf of Waterloo, Canada was in college she tried to blend in, hide her faith, and be like everyone else and give in to fear. But she decided to remain in Jesus. So, she wrote Bible verses on little strips of paper, and put them inside her pocket. She would take them out any time that she felt tempted and memorized them. In this way, she remained in Jesus at school, and now she and her family are very fruitful.

Verse 9 says, **“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”** To remain in Jesus mainly means to remain in his love. Remembering just how much God loves us gives us real strength to face the problems of life. We can remain in his deep love by remembering how much he does for us each day. I remember how much God loved me in my college days. I

Remain in Jesus

went with a team of students to visit several cities of Korea and we shared our life testimonies there. This was wonderful for me and I experienced the boundless love of Jesus and how alive he is. I learned that He is not just an old Holy man in a book from long ago. He is alive today and forever. He really is alive now as much as he was then. I was very nervous about speaking in front of thousands of people in Seoul. I felt overwhelmed by this task. It was then that Jesus came to me and showed me that He truly is alive. He gave me the power to share my life testimony well and to glorify him. He is wonderful and he defeats the control of sin and death in us. Whenever I remember going to Korea as a student and meeting Jesus personally, it empowers me. I can remain in Jesus when I remember his deep love and grace for me.

When we remain in Jesus' love then we can bear the fruit that he wants. Do you know what the number one fruit, that God wants us to bear is? The fruit that God wants us to bear is love. Verse 12 says, **“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”** When we have God's love, we naturally share it. If we would try to hold on to God's love just for ourselves, it would dry up. When we freely share his abundant grace and love, it grows and blossoms all around us. People tend to only show love to those who love them and ignore everyone else. Some people are prickly, like a cactus, and we avoid them. Yet, these prickly ones are so thirsty to experience and feel God's love shared with them. Jesus said that it is love that makes us different than everyone else in the world. Loving each other is not a suggestion or an option to consider. It is a command. May God help us to obey it with all of our hearts and to love others, just as he loves us so much.

Remain in Jesus

In this passage there are 3 things to remember:

1. Although there are many ways to live our lives, only Jesus is the true vine. Each one of us can be branches in the true vine by believing in Jesus.

2. When you believe in him, you have the potential to bear great fruit, but only when He prunes you.

3. To bear great fruit, we must remain in Jesus, grow in his love and share his love with everyone around us.

You are growing branches, and you have a decision about welcoming Jesus into your heart, about receiving God's pruning and about sharing God's love with everyone. May God help each of us to be branches in Jesus, to accept God's pruning, and to share God's love and grace with everyone around us.

Let's pray...