



Perfecting Discipleship: Discipleship and Fruitfulness

It's All About the Fruit
Discipleship is not about me, my gifts or achievements. It's about what Jesus produces through me: Remaining fruit.

Introduction: After telling the disciples that He would not leave them alone but send another Helper after He ascended into heaven, Jesus now uses the metaphor of a vineyard to explain this new relationship.

NOTE: Some take John 15:1-8 from the perspective of 'judgment' upon believers or those who claim to be believers at the end of the age (or before). There may be an eschatological [end time] component to this passage—but I feel the real point of the metaphor is to teach the nature of **fruitfulness** and how God creates that in believers.

A. Our Appointment *John 15:16*

1. Disciples are 'chosen' and 'appointed' [ordained] to bear [bring forth] remaining fruit.
2. It takes time for fruit to grow to maturity.
3. This prayer is specifically associated with our ministry to other people. The disciple is an intercessor for others.

B. Our Preparation *John 15:1-2*

1. This is an ongoing refining work of the Father [**the vinedresser**] to produce fruit-bearing disciples [the **branches**].
2. Jesus is the **vine**—the **source** of the disciples power and strength.
3. **The Father's refining work** :2-3
 - a. **Lifting up:** The Greek word here is better translated 'lift up' than 'taken away.' Vinedressers do remove some branches—but only dead ones—those that are withering are taped up or propped up so that they get more sunlight and air until they are strong again.
 - b. **Pruning:** Branches that bear fruit need pruning to maximize growth. The Word continually cleanses [prunes] :3

C. Our Responsibility: Abide *John 15:4-8*

1. Unless we abide [remain, dwell, live] in Jesus and He in us—we will not be able to bear any REAL remaining fruit. :4-5
2. What happens when someone does NOT abide in Christ? :6
 - a. **His fruitfulness withers up.** Sin has interrupted the flow of the vine to the branch. He is cast out as branch [fruit producer] not necessarily as a believer.
 - b. **They are thrown into fire.** Notice that it is NOT God doing this. It is 'they' that are doing it. The **they** are those who delight to see the 'righteous' fall and brought to shame. *Psa 11:2; 22:16; 37:12*

Note: It is possible to turn away from the faith as an apostate. See Heb. 4:4-8.

John 15:16

:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

John 15:1-8

:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."

:2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away [*lit. 'lifts up'*]; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

:3 You are already clean [*pruned*] because of the **word** which I have spoken to you.

:4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

:5 "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

:6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

:7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

:8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

There is no circumstance of life in which we cannot abide in Jesus.

The Greatest Source of Power

“Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do ...” (*John 14:13; 15:7*)

Am I fulfilling this ministry of intercession deep within the hidden recesses of my life? There is no trap nor any danger at all of being deceived or of showing pride in true intercession. It is a hidden ministry that brings forth fruit through which the Father is glorified.

Am I allowing my spiritual life to waste away, or am I focused, bringing everything to one central point—the atonement of my Lord? Is Jesus Christ more and more dominating every interest of my life? If the central point, or the most powerful influence, of my life is the atonement of the Lord, then every aspect of my life will bear fruit for Him.

However, I must take the time to realize what this central point of power is. Am I willing to give one minute out of every hour to concentrate on it? “If you abide in Me ...”—that is, if you continue to act, and think, and work from that central point—“you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (*John 15:7*).

Am I abiding? Am I taking the time to abide? What is the greatest source of power in my life? Is it my work, service, and sacrifice for others, or is it my striving to work for God? It should be none of these—what ought to exert the greatest power in my life is the atonement of the Lord. ***It is not on what we spend the greatest amount of time that molds us the most, but whatever exerts the most power over us.*** We must make a determination to limit and concentrate our desires and interests on the atonement by the Cross of Christ.

“Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do” **The disciple who abides in Jesus is the will of God, and what appears to be his free choices are actually God’s foreordained decrees.** Is this mysterious? Does it appear to contradict sound logic or seem totally absurd? Yes, but what a glorious truth it is to a saint of God.

MY UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST

Oswald Chambers

(1874-1917)

June 7