

## Introduction

A couple weeks ago one of my daughters was helping me prune all the roses and limelight hydrangeas in my mother's yard. She asked me how long I have been interested in gardening. I believe that I began to take an interest when I took a couple courses in agronomy in order to earn my PGA Class A card in 1985. Over the years I have grown in my knowledge and interest in gardening, and specifically in fruit-bearing trees, bushes, vines, and plants. We plant some flowers, flowering bushes, and flowering trees, but most of what I grow is for consumption. My wife and I discussed the kinds of fruits and berries that we like to eat, and would grow in our climate and soil, and that is what we planted.

The example that Jesus uses for our text today is the pruning of grapevines so that they produce fruit. This discussion takes place on their walk from the Upper Room, where they celebrated the Passover, to the Mount of Olives. At that Last Supper, Judas left to go betray Jesus. Even though Jesus pointed Judas out as the one betraying Him, many of the disciples thought that he had gone out to buy supplies, or to give something to the poor. Then Jesus encouraged them not to let their hearts be troubled. He told them three times that if they love God, they will keep His commandments. He ended the passage saying that He did exactly as the Father commanded Him, so that the world would know that He loves the Father. Then, He said, "Get up, let us go from here." Jesus and His disciples got up from where they had been gathered in the upper room, and they began their walk to the Mount of Olives.

(Jn 14:31) "but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here."

They went out from there, and most scholars agree that they headed towards the Mount of Olives. At that time, there were many vineyards along the way to the Mount of Olives, and this may have prompted the use of the vineyard in the discussion. It was the Passover, which also meant that there was a full moon. They could easily see the vineyards as they walked to the Mount of Olives.

This discussion is normally included in the Upper Room Discourse, but it probably should not have been included in it since it was not held in the upper room; it was held on their trek to the Garden of Gethsemane. These discussions should probably have been broken down like this.

Name	Upper Room Discourse	Walking Discourse	Olivet Discourse
Traditional	John 14-17	NA	Mt 24-25, Mk 13, Lk 21
Suggested	John 13-14	John 15-17	Mt 24-25, Mk 13, Lk 21

In our passage He is going to give us some keys to bearing fruit, but the purpose of having a vineyard is for fruit. Throughout the message I will be giving some explanations to give a better understanding of what Jesus is saying. I have titled the message today, Keys to Bearing Fruit. We are going to look at the purpose of bearing fruit, some principles of bearing fruit, and third, the proof of bearing fruit.

## Keys to Bearing Fruit

1. Purpose of bearing fruit
2. Principles of bearing fruit
3. Proofs of bearing fruit

(Jn 15:1–11) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. {2} 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. {3} You are already clean 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, so 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, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. {6} 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. {7} If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. {8} My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples. {9} Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. {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. {11} These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.”

(Jn 15:12–17) “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. {13} Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. {14} You are My friends if you do what I command you. {15} No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. {16} You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. {17} This I command you, that you love one another.”

## 1. Purpose of bearing fruit

Jesus begins this discussion by saying, “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.” One of the symbols of Israel was the vine. Some of the coins at that time had a vine or a cluster of grapes on them. Jesus made it clear that He is the true vine. God’s promise of the seed of Abraham referred to Christ. Jesus referred to the Father as the vinedresser. The Greek word is *georgos* (Strong’s G1092), which comes from *geo*, meaning earth, and *ergon*, which means work. God is a worker of the earth, or a farmer, or in this case, a vinedresser. God is looking for fruit. He planted the vineyard to grow fruit. He did not want just any fruit; He wanted good fruit. When I planted our vineyard, it was to bear fruit. I did not plant it to just take care of vines. I did not need more to do just for the sake of taking care of something. I was the vinedresser and I planted grapevines to bear fruit for us.

(Jn 15:1–2) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. {2} 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.”

We see examples in the Old Testament of Israel being referred to as the Lord’s vineyard. In Isaiah 5:1-7, he prophesied about God singing a song about His vineyard, His well-beloved vineyard. It was a parable where He was expecting it to produce good grapes, but it produced worthless one. In verse seven, he wrote, “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus, He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold a cry of distress.” God was looking for the fruit of righteousness from His vineyard. He was expecting good fruit, not worthless fruit.

(Is 5:1–7) “Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. {2} He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it and also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected *it* to produce *good* grapes, But it produced *only* worthless ones. {3} “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. {4} “What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected *it* to produce *good* grapes did it produce worthless ones? {5} “So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. {6} “I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.” {7} For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.”

In this example, God is also looking for fruit; that was the purpose of having a vineyard. When I planted my vineyard in New Mexico, I planted all seedless varieties. After two years, I began to get grapes from my vineyard. Unfortunately, many of them had seeds. I had ordered all seedless varieties, so the fruit was not what I was looking for. God is looking for fruit from His vineyard, and so He prunes His vineyard to bear fruit. Just as I was looking for seedless fruit, God is looking for a particular type of fruit.

At the end of the passage, Jesus said, “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.” You and I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit. That is what the Owner and Vinedresser wants: fruit.

(Jn 15:16–17) “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. {17} This I command you, that you love one another.”

Jesus went on to say, “so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another.” God is looking for the fruit of love. In Galatians 5, when Paul gave the fruit of the Spirit, love is the first one mentioned. God wants good fruit, and love is just one fruit that He is looking for in us. In fact, many scholars title this entire section from John 13 through John 17 as Love.

(Ga 5:22–23) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

In John 15:11, Jesus said that He had spoken these things to them so that His joy would be in them. Joy is the second fruit of the Holy Spirit. Then, in John 14:27, Jesus told them that He was giving them peace, which is another fruit of the Holy Spirit. God is looking for good fruit, and that includes the fruit of the Holy Spirit manifested in our lives.

(Jn 15:11) “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

(Jn 14:27) “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

What is the purpose of bearing fruit? In verse eight, Jesus tells us why bearing fruit is so important. He said, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.” Bearing fruit is important because it glorifies God. I believe that all of us want to glorify God in our lives. We want everything that we do to bring glory and honor to God. When we bear a bountiful crop of good fruit, God is glorified. If we bear bad fruit, God is not glorified. God is looking for fruit, good fruit. He is the Vinedresser and he prunes fruit so that it bears more fruit. He wants good fruit and lots of fruit.

(Jn 15:8) “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul wrote, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” That is what all of us want in our lives; we want everything we do or say to bring glory to God. When we bear much fruit, good fruit, and it remains, it brings glory to God.

(1 Co 10:31) “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

## 2. Principles of bearing fruit

I just finished all the winter pruning of our orchard and vineyard. In general, we prune for both structure and fruitfulness. We want the maximum amount of energy going into the fruit-bearing branches, and we want to remove the branches or cordons that are not going to produce fruit.

When Jesus used the example of pruning vines, His disciples would have been very familiar with taking care of a vineyard; they lived in an agrarian culture. However, it is clear that He is not giving them a message on the literal pruning of grape vines. In our passage, Jesus used the word *kathairo* (Strong's G2508), which means to purge or clean. It comes from the root word, *katharos* (Strong's G2513), which means pure or clean. My wife's name is Karen, which means pure in heart, and it comes from this Greek word, *katharos*. The word that is used in Greek for pruning is *kladeuo*. When pruning trees, vines, or shrubs, the Greek word, *kladeuo*, is always used. It comes from the Greek word, *klados*, which means branch. Because Jesus used *kathairo*, He was making it very clear to the disciples that He was talking abouts spiritual fruit and spiritual cleansing. The focus was on purification for a more fruitful life. God removes things in our lives that hinder us from bearing fruit. God cleanses us so that we can be more fruitful for Him.

Before giving some keys, I want to make a couple of important points. In the passage, there are basically two types of branches on the vine: fruitless branches and fruitful branches. When Jesus said that fruit bearing branches were cut off, the whole branch was not cut off; it was cut back. God does not remove fruit-bearing Christians; He simply cleanses them for better fruit. When Jesus said that every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. These fruitless branches represent people that are not genuine believers. Judas has been with Jesus and the other disciples for three years, and He is no longer with them. He was not a genuine believer. In fact, Judas was a thief (Jn 12:6). When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, He said that not all of them were clean. Judas had been with Jesus, and had healed people and experienced many things being a disciple of Jesus, but he was not a genuine disciple, and ultimately left Jesus.

God does not remove a Christian for not being fruitful. Our salvation is not based upon our works. Our salvation is based on grace through faith in God, not as a result of works (Eph 2:8-9). Jesus was referring to those that appear righteous, and talk the talk, but are not genuine believers.

We find another example of this in John 6. Jesus had just fed the multitudes, and there were many people following Jesus, who would be known as His disciples. However, they were not true disciples because they did not believe. When Jesus said that He was the Bread of Life and unless one ate His flesh and drank His blood, they would not have life. So, “many of His disciples, when they heard this said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?” Jesus said, “But there are some of you who do not believe.” Jesus knew “from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.... As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.” They were not believers and when difficult statements or circumstances came, they left.

(Jn 6:53–66) “So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.... {60} Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?”... {64} But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. {65} And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.” {66} As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.”

#### **a. Removal of Fruitless branches**

The first key that Jesus mentions is the removal of branches that do not bear fruit. He said that every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. Grape vines are very aggressive growers and will put out lots of branches and suckers every year. Many of these branches are not going to be producing fruit, and yet they are using a lot of the energy and nutrients. Therefore, vinedressers remove the branches that are not bearing fruit so that the energy goes into the fruit-bearing branches.

(Jn 15:2) “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.”

In verse six, 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, these are fruitless branches, because the branches that abide in Him bear much fruit. The branches that do not truly believe and are not abiding in Christ, are thrown away as a branch and dry up. In the natural realm, these fruitless branches are pruned and removed, and burned. These branches may have disease, fungus, bacterial disease or other things which could spread if left there. So, the vinedressers remove them and burn them so that there is no potential risk to the healthy grapevines.

(Jn 15:6) “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.”

There will be a separation of the wheat from the tares, of the sheep and the goats, and of the fruitful branches and the fruitless branches. We will all stand before the Lord and give account. Some of these will say, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” Jesus will answer and declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.” Not all of the removing and casting of the branches may happen right now; some of it may be later when we all stand before the Lord and give account.

(Mt 7:21–23) “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. {22} Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ {23} And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

## **b. Cleansing of Fruitful branches**

The next area of pruning was for the branches that were bearing fruit. The vinedresser prunes those branches so that they may bear more fruit. A vine can have too many branches that are bearing fruit, and if we do not prune some of them, the fruit will be small, and may not mature. The vinedresser must determine how many grapes can be grown by the plant, and then prune off the rest. I do this kind of pruning in the winter time, before the season begins. Then, in the summer, when the vines are growing, much of the growth that is not going to bear fruit must be pruned off so that the energy goes into the branches with fruit.

(Jn 15:2) “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.”

The application that I see is that we need to look at our lives and determine what produces fruit. If there are things in our lives that consume our time, energy, and resources yet do not bear fruit, we should do some pruning. God wants the branches in Him to bear fruit, and these things will rob us from bearing fruit. There is nothing wrong with recreation, and playing pickleball or golf. However, if it consumes us, and robs us of time with our wife, husband, children, or other priorities, we should consider pruning those branches. God wants our energy to go into the things in our lives that will bear fruit.

When I lived in New Mexico, I had thirty grape vines, and eighteen fruit trees. It took time to water and care for all of it. When God said to me to plant a vineyard in the East Mountains, He was speaking of planting a vineyard church there. Since I was working as the manager of a training company, putting in sixty plus hours a week, I was very pressed for time. It takes time to meet with people and invite them to be a part of a church plant. It takes time to prepare messages every week. It takes time to prepare for leadership meetings and to train future leaders in the church. I distinctly remember having a conversation with the Lord about my time and everything going on in my life. It was going to be plants or people, but it could not be both. We had a 20-degree night on June 2, and all my fruit trees and grapevines were killed instantly. I did not replant any of them. God pruned these things out of my life at that time. I am grateful that God has allowed me to have fruit trees and vines in this season of my life, when I am not working two full-time jobs.

In our lives, we may be bearing fruit, but we could be bearing more fruit if we pruned some of the things and focused more on the things that produce bigger and better fruit. A good example of this is in Acts 6, where the Hellenistic widows were being overlooked in the serving of food. The apostles wisely appointed seven deacons to handle this responsibility, and said that they would focus on the preaching of the word and prayer. These were priorities for them, and they did not want good things, like the serving of these widows, to rob them of the highest priorities in their life.

(Ac 6:1–4) “Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows

were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*. {2} So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. {3} Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. {4} But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

There is another type of pruning of branches that is implied. When Jesus used the word, *kathairo* (Strong’s G2508), which means to cleanse, He wants us to remove the impurities in our lives so that we can bear more fruit. It is not just our activities, but it is the way we live. It is the way we think, and the way we talk. We may be bearing fruit, but our language may not always glorify God. We may be bearing some fruit, but we do not always keep our word and show up late for appointments. We may be bearing some fruit, but we have a tendency of being impatient. These things hinder us from bearing fruit, so God wants to cleanse us from these things.

In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, he told them that in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. The wood and earthenware vessels were used in food preparation in the kitchen, but they did not serve guests with those vessels; they were not vessels of honor. Then Paul talked about the application. He said that if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master for every good work. What things was Paul talking about? He said to flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” Paul used the Greek word *ekkathairo* (Strong’s G1571), which has the same root word as the word that Jesus used in John 15. It means to purge out or clean out. God wants to cleanse us of these things that keep us from being usable vessels that bring honor and glory to God.

(2 Ti 2:20–23) “Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. {21} Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. {22} Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. {23} But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.”

How does God prune or cleanse us of these things? In the next verse, Jesus said, You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. When a person believes in Jesus, they are forgiven of their sins and become clean. If you recall, at the Lord’s Supper when Jesus washed their feet, Peter wanted Jesus to cleanse his whole body, and Jesus said that those who are clean only need to wash their feet, and that they were already clean, but not all of them. Judas was not a believer and he was not cleansed from his sins. We get an initial cleansing by believing in Christ and receiving Him as our Lord.

(Jn 15:3) “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”

(Jn 13:8–11) “Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” {9} Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, *then wash* not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” {10} Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all *of you*.” {11} For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

To remain clean, we must continue to wash our feet. As we walk through the affairs of everyday life, our feet can get dirty, and we need to wash them. John said that if we say that we have no sin, we lie and the truth is not in us. However, if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us and to cleanse us from our sins. We have to regularly repent and confess our sins to God, so that we maintain fellowship with God.

(1 Jn 1:8–9) “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. {9} If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

### **c. Abiding to bear fruit**

Fellowship with God is extremely important. The next thing Jesus said was, “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.” Our fellowship with God is essential in order to bear fruit. If we are not abiding in God, we cannot bear fruit. However, if we abide in Him, we will bear much fruit.

(Jn 15:4–7) “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. {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. {6} 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. {7} If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

What does it mean to abide in Jesus? The Greek word for abide is *meno* (Strong’s G3306), which means to abide, remain, dwell, and continue. We have to remain in Christ. We must continue in Christ. We must abide and dwell in Christ. Our life must be centered around Christ. He must be the source of our joy, hope, strength, and life. When things get tough, we remain in Him and depend on Him for the wisdom, strength, and endurance. When things go great, we rejoice in Him and give Him thanks.

There are some practical aspects of abiding in Jesus. In verse seven, Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” When we abide in Christ, we must spend time in God’s word. We need to fill our hearts and minds with the word of God. His word must live in us. We need to read His word every day. Reading His word every day is not enough; we need to memorize, meditate, study, sing, and apply His word. The Barna statistics that came out this past year showed that the majority of people who go to church and claim to be Christians do not have a Biblical worldview. Unfortunately, the church is not abiding in Christ, and His word is not abiding in them.

Earlier that evening, Jesus told His disciples, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.” He went on to say that if we keep His word, He and the Father will come and make their abode in us. Keeping God’s word is critical in our abiding in Him, and His abiding in us.

(Jn 14:23–24) “Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. {24} He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.”



I love what Paul wrote in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Paul was exhorting us to abide in Christ, and for His word to abide in us. Notice that when the word of Christ richly dwells in us, there is fellowship with one another, and worship of God with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. All of these things are key components in abiding in Christ.

(Col 3:16) “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Another practical aspect of abiding is prayer. Notice that Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” Earlier that evening, Jesus told them that whatever they ask in His name, He will do it. We abide in Christ through prayer. Prayer is essential in our fellowship with God. Prayer is not just asking what we wish, but it also includes listening to the Lord. When God’s word abides in us, our prayers become centered around God’s desires and will, i.e., His name, which is why our requests will be done.

(Jn 15:7) “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

(Jn 14:13–14) “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.”

Jesus did not just exhort the disciples to abide in Him and to keep His commandments, He told them that He had kept the Father’s commandments and abided in His love. Jesus did what good leaders do; they are an example to those that they lead. How did Jesus abide in the Father’s love? He kept His commandments. He was obedient in all things to the Father.

(Jn 15:9–10) “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. {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.”

But Jesus also abided in the Father through prayer. We find in Mark 1:35 that “in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place and was praying there.” This was not a one-off thing; this was something that Jesus did regularly. In Luke 5:16, we find that Jesus “would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.”

(Mk 1:35) “In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.”

(Lk 5:16) “But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.”

Jesus fellowshiped with the Father. In John 5, Jesus said that He could do nothing of Himself, unless it was something He sees the Father doing. Then He said that the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing. Where did the Father show Jesus these things? It was in the wilderness when He would spend time alone with the Father in prayer. Jesus was able to do all the works that He did because He was abiding in the Father and in His love.

(Jn 5:19–20) “Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. {20} For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.”

In John 7:16, Jesus said that His teaching was not His own; it was from the Father who sent Him. In John 12, He said that He did not speak on His own initiative, but spoke what the Father commanded Him to speak. He only spoke what the Father told Him to speak. Jesus always abided in the Father.

(Jn 7:16) “So Jesus answered them and said, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.”

(Jn 12:49–50) “For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. {50} I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

### 3. Proofs of bearing fruit

In John 15:8, Jesus said, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” Our fruitfulness proves that we are Jesus’ disciples. Our fruitfulness shows that we are abiding in Jesus, because without abiding in Him, we can do nothing. Our purpose is to bring glory to God, so bearing fruit proves that we are Jesus’ disciples and are abiding in Him.

(Jn 15:8) “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples.”

There are many ways that we prove to be Jesus’ disciples. In John 8:32, Jesus said that when we abide in His word, it proves that we are His disciples. Continuing in His word is a key to abiding in Jesus, and a key to bearing fruit, and that fruit is a proof that we are His disciples.

(Jn 8:31) “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;”

Next, Jesus reminds them of His commandment to love one another, just as He had loved them. Earlier that evening He had given them this new commandment to love one another. He said that it was by this that all men would know that we are His disciples. Our love is yet another proof that we are Jesus’ disciples.

(Jn 15:12) “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”

(Jn 13:34–35) “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. {35} By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

In John 15:13, Jesus gave them a measurement of love. He said that “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down His life for his friends.” When we lay our lives down for one another it proves our love, and therefore proves that we are disciples of Jesus.

(Jn 15:13) “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

Jesus’ example of laying His life down for us became the example that all of us are to imitate. In Ephesians 5:1, Paul wrote, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us.” A little later in his letter, Paul used that example again, telling husbands to love their wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her. When a husband lays his life down for his wife, he is proving his love for her, and that he is abiding in Christ. When we lay our lives down for others, it is proof that we are abiding in Christ’s love, and it proves we are His disciples. The only way that we can bear this fruit is to be abiding in the Vine.

(Eph 5:1–2) “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; {2} and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

(Eph 5:25) “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,”

There were several proofs that Jesus gave of our abiding in Him. First, we would bear fruit, much fruit. Second, we would have our prayers answered. Next, Jesus gave another proof. He said, “You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

(Jn 15:14–15) “You are My friends if you do what I command you. {15} No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

Friendship suggests many things, but at the top of this list is trust. We share things with friends that we do not share with others who we do not trust. Jesus said that when we obey Him, we are His friends and He tells us what He is doing, and what He has heard from the Father. Friends can share difficult words with one another because they know that they have each other’s best interest in mind, because they love at all times. Solomon wrote, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”

(Pr 27:6) “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”

(Pr 17:17) “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

## **Conclusion and Applications**

Jesus finished by telling them that they did not choose Him, but He chose and appointed them to go and bear fruit, and for their fruit to remain. God’s purpose in our lives is to bear fruit. He chose us and appointed us to go and bear fruit. When we bear fruit, God is glorified.

(Jn 15:16–17) “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. {17} This I command you, that you love one another.

It is not any fruit; God wants good fruit. At the top of His list is love. He commands us to love one another, just as He loves us. Love is the ultimate fruit that He is looking for. God wants all the fruit of the Spirit; He wants the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. God wants justice and mercy. God wants lives that bring glory and honor to Him.

(Ga 5:22–23) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul wrote, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” God is looking for transformed lives that reflect His character, nature, and image. That brings glory to Him.

(2 Co 3:18) “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

The key to our fruitfulness is to abide in the Vine. We must spend time with Jesus. We must spend time in His word, and His word must abide in us. The church today needs to hear this message. God wants good fruit in our lives, and we must abide in Him and His word in order to bear fruit. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. When we abide in Him, our prayers are answered. When we abide in Him, God discloses Himself to us, and Jesus reveals what the Father is doing to us. There is trust, friendship, two-way communication, and fruitfulness. Best of all, God is glorified, which is why God chose us and appointed us.

As we close this morning, I want to remind you of something that Peter wrote for us. He gave us some keys to becoming useful and fruitful, which is what Jesus was telling the disciples in John 15. He said that we must be diligent in our faith and supply seven things in our lives. He said that we must become morally excellent. The church today needs moral excellence. Second, we are to supply knowledge. Third, we are to supply self-control. Fourth, we are to supply perseverance. Fifth, we are to supply godliness. Sixth, we are to supply brotherly kindness. Seventh, we are to supply love. He said if these qualities are ours and are increasing, they render us neither useless nor unfruitful. The double-negative means that when we have these qualities and they are increasing, we will be fruitful and useful. That is what God wants in us. The key to this is to abide in the Vine. We must allow God to shape our lives and remove things that hinder us from being fruitful. We must apply diligence to what God shows us to do in our lives. When our lives reflect God, it brings Him glory, which is why He chose and appointed us.

(2 Pe 1:5–8) “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, {6} and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, {7} and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. {8} For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you have been around church or raised by parents who are believers, but you have never become a believer. Today is the day that you can start abiding in the Vine. We start abiding by believing in Jesus and receiving Him as our Lord. If you have never received Christ, let me encourage to make that decision today. Pray and ask the Lord to come into your life and to

forgive you of your sins. Tell Him that you believe that He is the Messiah, and that He died and was raised from the dead. Tell Him that you want to give control of your life to Him, and call Him Lord. Jesus promises to come in and forgive you, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. He promises to seal you with His Spirit. Being a fruitful branch begins with a relationship with Christ.

There may be some today that are not bearing much fruit in their lives. God wants you to bear fruit and be full of His joy. He chose you and appointed you to bear much fruit. The key to fruitfulness is to abide in the Vine. You must begin to spend time in God's word. You must spend time with the Father in prayer. You must be obedient to God's commands. Allow God to cleanse you of things that hinder your fruitfulness. When the Holy Spirit reveals areas in your life that need to be changed, be diligent to obey.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, help us to be diligent in our faith. Help us to abide in You and to bear much fruit. Help us to abide in the Vine. Help us to abide in Your word. Help us to spend time talking to you and listening to You. Help us to be obedient to the things that You show us. Help us to live transformed lives. Help us to bring honor and glory to You in every area of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions**

- What is something in your life that God pruned to make you more fruitful? How did God prune you? How did He communicate what He wanted to do with you?
- When you think about bearing fruit for God, what are the first things that come to mind?
- When God reveals things in our lives that do not honor Him, how do we normally respond?
- If your boss was going to give you some things to do, what are some things that you would do to make sure that you did them? Should our obedience to God be any different?
- What are some reasons that the church today is not bearing more fruit?
- For the church in 2026 to become fruitful, what are some key steps?
- For you personally, what are some steps that you need to take to become more fruitful?

## **Keys to Bearing Fruit**

### **Introduction** (Jn 14:31, Jn 15:1-7)

- 1. Purpose of bearing fruit** (Jn 15:1-2, Is 5:1-7, Jn 15:16-17, Ga 5:22-23, Jn 15:11, 14:27, 15:8, 1 Co 10:31)
- 2. Principles of bearing fruit** (Jn 12:6, Eph 2:8-9, Jn 6:53-66)
  - a. Removal of Fruitless branches** (Jn 15:2, 15:6, Mt 7:21-23)
  - b. Cleansing of Fruitful branches** (Jn 15:2, Ac 6:1-4, 2 Ti 2:20-23, Jn 15:3, 13:8-11, 1 Jn 1:8-9)
  - c. Abiding to bear fruit** (Jn 15:4-7, Jn 14:23-24, Col 3:16, Jn 15:7, 14:13-14, 15:9-10, Mk 1:35, Lk 5:16, Jn 5:19-20, 7:16, 12:49-50)
- 3. Proofs of bearing fruit** (Jn 15:8, 8:31, 15:12, 13:34-35, 15:13, Eph 5:1-2, 5:25, Jn 15:14-15, Pr 27:6, 17:17)

### **Conclusion and Applications** (Jn 15:16-17, Ga 5:22-23, 2 Co 3:18, 2 Pe 1:5-8)