

The Only Way to Thrive

"Learning Jesus" (The Gospel of John)

John 15:1-17

August 11, 2019

BIG IDEA

There's a big difference between surviving and thriving. No one wants to live life in survival mode. God doesn't want you to either. God has created you to thrive, and abiding with Jesus is the only way.

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Context:

This section of John is called the Upper Room Discourse. This passage is set at the Passover Meal. Jesus had washed the feet of His disciples, commanded the disciples to love each other, identified Judas as the betrayer, confronted Peter about His upcoming denials, explained that He and the Father are one, told them that He would be leaving them, and explained that He was the way to eternal life.

All of this uncertainty frightened the Lord's men. So, Jesus comforted them with news about a Helper that would be sent by the Father. Concerned about their future, He now instructs them to abide in Him.

John 15:1-17:

I Am the True Vine

"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 does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone

does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

DISCUSSION & APPLICATION

1. The Father is the Vinedresser and Jesus is the Vine

John 15:1 - *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser."*

The vinedresser cared for the garden. In this context, the vine on which the Father lavished care and attention was Israel. But Israel wasn't faithful and bore rotten fruit. Jesus then became the "True Vine." He fulfills what God intended for Israel.

- a. **Jesus is the True Vine. Can you describe what it feels like to be on a spiritual high, when you are depending totally on Christ? What fuels those moments? What can you do to continue to invest in your connection to Jesus?**

- b. **Conversely, can you think of times when you've felt totally disconnected from the Vine? Why did that happen? What can you do to avoid going through a similar situation?**



2. Abiding is Vital to Spiritual Survival

John 15:2 - *Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

Don't be a branch that fails to bear fruit. There is an eternal penalty for that. Instead, be a fruit bearing branch. This can only be accomplished by abiding in Jesus. In this metaphor Jesus is commanding believers to abide (which means to "remain in Him" or "stay with Him.") It is the only way to thrive.

- a. **When you think of remaining in Jesus, what types of thoughts come to mind?**
- b. **Do you find yourself trying to earn God's love rather than just abiding?**
- c. **Pray that you can receive the grace that God has for you so that you can enjoy Jesus.**

3. The Fruit of Abiding is Obedience

John 15:8-11 - *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

As is always the case with the Christian life, the glory of the Father is the goal. Within our self-centered culture we seem to easily forget that the Father's glory is the reason we exist.

- a. **We hear often: We are to live our lives for the glory of God. What does that mean to you?**
- b. **Why does God seek to glorify himself?**



- c. In what ways can you steer people to God that don't currently know him?

4. The Penalty for Avoidance is Eternal Disaster

John 15:6 - *If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*

In this metaphor, Judas is the fruitless branch. He looked like all of the others, but he never believed. This section is not talking about struggling Christians, for that would contradict scripture. But it is important to take stock of your relationship with God. Eternity is at stake.

- a. **How are you doing with God? Are you near or far away?**
- b. **Do you remember a time when you asked Him to be your personal savior? Now might be a good time to recommit your life to Him.**

5. An Obedient Believer is a Friend of Jesus

John 15:12-17 - *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

Jesus demonstrated His love by dying for his friends, who are defined by those who obey him. Obedience is defined by love for other believers. He'd already shown them what this looks like. He washed their feet. And he was about to do the most loving thing that has ever been done: Die on a cross for sins that he didn't commit in order to pay the penalty for their sin.



- a. **You are a friend of God. Do you believe this? Do you believe that He loves you?**
- b. **What are some concrete things that Jesus did that shows He loves you?**
- c. **What are some things you can do for other that shows you love them?**
- d. **Are you trying to create your own vines? What are some things in your life that you depend on for your spiritual nutrition, and that take the place of Jesus?**

PRAY

Lord God, teach me to depend on You. I am sorry when I wander. I am sorry that I try to create my own vines that distract me from true and living water. You are my life! Amen.

DIG DEEPER

For further study this week:

- [*A Hunger for God: Desiring God Through Fasting & Prayer*](#) - a book from John Piper
- [*The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*](#) - a book from Timothy Keller

NEXT WEEK'S BIG IDEA

Promise of Hostility with the World and Jesus' Promised Return to Bring Triumphant Peace
(John 15:18-16:4a; 16:16-33)

