

John 15 - The Upper Room Discourse: I AM the True Vine; Our Relationships: Him/Others/World; Opposition from the World

IV. Upper Room Discourse (John 13:1—17:26)

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John 15

- (5) The Vine and Branches (15:1-27)
 - (A) Fruit bearing (15:1-8)
 - (a) Identification of the central characters (15:1)

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

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

1 **"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vintner.**

1 **I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.**

- Jesus begins to relay an entirely new thought beginning in John 15
- Here, He begins to reveal the divine players in this metaphor that He is going to use to explain a believer's relationship with Him
- "I am" - *ego eimi*, the seventh and final "I am" statement by Jesus in John's Gospel
- "...true" - Jesus is contrasting Himself with the failure of 1st century Israel, which failed to produce the fruit that God wanted them to produce
- This is the generation who attributed Christ's miracles to Satan and turned Christ over to Rome to be crucified. This is the generation who rejected Christ's messianic claims. Yes, there were a handful who believed, but that is not the case for the majority.
- By calling Himself the "true" vine, Jesus is saying that He will succeed everywhere first century Israel failed
- "...vine" - Jesus Christ
- "...vinedresser" - God the Father
- The Father is the farmer who takes care of the branches. The branches cannot bear fruit unless Someone competent takes care of them. If you do not have a competent vinedresser, your branches will not bear fruit.
- Jesus doesn't identify the branches here, but in v5 He states that the disciples, and by analogy, all Church Age believers, are the branches
- Commentators are split as to whether Jesus and the disciples were still in the Upper Room in this chapter (as well as John 16-17), or whether John 15-17 were just Jesus final words and prayer before they left (Cf. 14:31)

- It is possible that if the text of this discourse was spoken as they walked from the Upper Room in Jerusalem down into the Kidron Valley and across to the Mount of Olives. They could have seen the great golden vine, the national emblem of Israel, on the front of the temple. [Tenney]
- The metaphor of vine and branches was not a foreign concept to the disciples, since they were familiar with the OT
- Jesus often used a grapevine to describe the nation of Israel (Cf. Matt 20:1-16; 21:23-41; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 13:6-9; 20:9-16). The OT writers frequently used this plant to describe Israel (Ps 89:9-16; Is 5:1-7; 27:2; Jer 2:21; 12:10; Ezek 15:1-8; 17:1-21; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1-2).
- So Jesus uses this same metaphor used in the OT to describe Israel to describe the Church. Reformed theologians pick up on this to argue that the Church is the "new Israel." However, just because Jesus used an OT metaphor for Israel to describe a Church Age believer's relationship with Him doesn't equate the Church being the "new Israel."
- "Israel" is used 73x in the NT and every time it is used, it refers to the direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is never used, not even one time, as a synonym for the Church.
- The Church is similar to Israel in some respects, but the Church is not the "new Israel." It is a logical fallacy to argue that similarity is the same as equality. The Church is not now a new party to the OT covenants, replacing Israel. The Church is a third-party beneficiary of these covenants, which remain between God and Israel exclusively.

(b) Possibility of the believer's fruit bearing (15:2)

- 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.
- 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.
- 2 He cuts off every branch that does not produce fruit in me, and he cuts back every branch that does produce fruit, so that it might produce more fruit.
- 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
- Much of the teaching on this chapter is incorrect in that it labels the branches as both believers and unbelievers. That is not true. The branches are believers...there are no unbelievers who are branches in this metaphor. ***The unfruitful branch cannot be both a believer and an unbeliever.***
- If you don't understand this simple point, that the branches represent *only* believers, you will miss the entire meaning of this passage. Even the non-fruit bearing branches in this metaphor are legitimate believers in Jesus Christ and will be in heaven.

- "...in Me" - 16x in John's Gospel (6:56; 10:38; 14:10 [2x],11,20,30; 15:2,4 [2x],5-7; 16:33; 17:21,23). In every case, it refers to fellowship with Christ. Thus, it is inconsistent to say Jesus' use here refers to a person who merely professes to be saved but is not. A person who is "in Christ" is *always* saved.
- The branches that are "in Me" are believers, but also the branches that are not "in Me" are also believers. The difference is not between believers and unbelievers, but between believers in fellowship with God and believers who are out of fellowship with God.
- Whether or not the branch is bearing fruit or not bearing fruit, Jesus' use of "in Me" in v2 covers both, demonstrating that Jesus is talking to saved people. Those who bear fruit are saved, and those who are not bearing fruit are saved.
- Jesus uses the same prepositional phrase "in Me" in 14:11 to describe His relationship with/to the Father. Do you think there is any insecurity in the relationship between Jesus and the Father? Based on Jesus' use of "in Me" to describe the relationship between Him and the Father in 14:11, as well as the sentence structure of 15:2 (both fruit bearing and non-fruit bearing branches are described as "in Me"), it's *impossible* to develop a theology where the non-fruit-bearing branches are not believers.
- Just because a branch is not bearing fruit doesn't mean their salvation is insecure, any more than the relationship between the Father and Son is insecure. Just like you can't drive a wedge in the Trinity, you can't drive a wedge between Christ and a non-fruit bearing branch.
- This identification also finds support in the illustration itself: the branches of the vine share the life of the vine.
- "...bear fruit" - what does it mean to bear fruit? What is fruit? Some examples of fruit include: evangelism, service, exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit to others, prayer, exercising your spiritual gifts, financial giving, Bible study.
- All believers receive a "grace package" from God at the point of faith...there are about 33 positional things that the Bible says a believer receives at the point of faith (see notes on Eph 1). These are things all believers receive, they are positional/spiritual benefits, but they are not "fruit."
- Fruit is borne on the *outside* of the branches...they are things that are visible, edible if you will, tangible, physical, that other people can benefit from. I'm the only one who benefits from my "grace package" but everyone should be able to benefit from my fruit.
- In addition, the "grace package" is automatic...I don't have to do anything other than trust in Christ and these 33 positional benefits are mine. Fruit, on the other hand, is not automatic. This is why Jesus is giving us this teaching here on the secrets of fruit bearing...because we have to do something in order to bear fruit, whereas we don't have to do anything other than believe to be saved and receive the "grace package."

- Jesus, by the way He phrased the first part of this verse, clearly says that a Christian (branch) can be "in Me" (obviously a Christian) and still not bear fruit. Not everyone who has believed in Jesus Christ and is going to heaven one day is an automatic fruit bearer. Jesus Himself taught this reality, not only here, but also in Luke 8:14. It's also evident in Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:15). Fruit-bearing is normal and expected, but is not an inevitable consequence of being a believer.

— So is Jesus teaching here that someone can be a believer in Jesus Christ, saved and going to heaven one day, but not demonstrate any evidence of their salvation in their daily life? Yes, that is exactly what Jesus is saying here. While it is rare for a believer to resist the promptings of the Holy Spirit and produce no fruit, it is nonetheless a distinct possibility (Cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3,15). If it was not a possibility, then the words of Christ here make no sense.

— Some people get very upset at this teaching because they believe that someone can go to heaven, but yet live however they want throughout their lives, doing absolutely no good works. And yes, that is true, although we'll see through Jesus' teaching in this passage that this is not a very good place to be.

— This thinking comes primarily from Calvinism, which under their doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, a Christian must demonstrate their salvation in daily life, otherwise they aren't truly saved. This is a theological construct that people buy into, then with that theological construct in their mind, they come to a passage like this and they interpret the passage based on their preconceived theological construct instead on what the Jesus is actually saying. They turn the branch who is not bearing fruit into an unbeliever, not because that is what Jesus is saying (because that's clearly not what He's saying), but because that's what their theological construct tells them is right.

— What this results in is a very harsh attitude to less mature believers, who may not be doing as well in their walk with Christ as you are (supposedly). It forms a sense of pride in some believers that they're somehow better than other believers, whom they deem as not walking with the Lord as closely as they are. It leads to some believers making sweeping judgments of others that they are not saved.

— Others get upset thinking that this teaching promotes carnal Christianity, that it promotes the fact that you can live however you want, but still get into heaven some day. Yes, that is true, because our salvation is not of works. We can't do anything to get us into heaven. But again, as Jesus will tell us later in this chapter, this is a negative and very bad state for a person to find themselves. The worst position possible in life for a Christian is when they are consistently out of fellowship with Christ.

- No tree or vine bears fruit immediately after planting. It is a process over time. Thus, a new believer does not start bearing fruit immediately upon becoming saved...it's a process, as the Holy Spirit works in their minds and the Word of God (assuming they ingest it regularly) begins to work in their hearts.

- There are many examples of this in the Bible, most notably Abraham: he was saved in Gen 15:6, but he does not immediately bear fruit. As you watch his spiritual development, he becomes scared many times because a pagan king wants to sleep with his wife. Abraham does not reach the height of his spiritual development until Gen 22, when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac, and even though this command made no logical sense, he went forward with it in faith. This was 20-30 years *after* Abraham was saved.
- "...takes away" - *airō*, one person comes to this verse and say, These believers who do not bear fruit are taken away into judgment...meaning they lost their salvation (Arminianism). No they didn't.
- Another person will come along and say, Well, that person was never really saved to begin with. They were a *professor* but not a *possessor* of salvation, because they did not persevere in good works (Calvinism). No again.
- In both of these interpretations, the interpreter is bringing to the text their own preconceived ideas and not allowing Jesus' words here to inform their interpretation
- "Takes away" is a very poor translation of *airō*; a much better translation/definition is to "raise up/elevate" or to "lift up." The primary definition of *airō* is "to raise up, elevate, lift up." It also means "to lift from the ground."
- The same construction of *airō* used in this verse is used elsewhere in John's Gospel as well as the other gospels. It is never used with the idea of "taking away" or removing something, but rather the idea of lifting or picking something up. This is the translation of *airō* 36x in the NT (Cf. Matt 4:6; 9:6; 14:20; 15:37; 16:24; Mark 2:9,11,12; 6:43; 8:8,19,20; Luke 4:11; 5:24,25; 9:17; John 5:11,12; 8:59). Here are some examples:

Matt 9:6: **But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**—then He *said to the paralyzed man, **"Get up, pick up your stretcher and go home."**

Matt 14:20: And they all ate and were satisfied, and they **picked up** [*airō*] what was left over of the broken pieces: twelve full baskets.

Matt 15:37: And they all ate and were satisfied, and they **picked up** [*airō*] what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full.

Matt 16:24: Then Jesus said to His disciples, **"If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up** [*airō*] **his cross, and follow Me.**

Mark 2:9: **Which is easier, to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up** [*airō*] **your pallet and walk?'**

John 5:11: But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, **'Pick up** [*airō*] **your pallet and walk.'**"

John 8:59: Therefore they **picked up** [*airō*] stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and left the temple *grounds*.

— We again have to remember the context here. In John 15, Jesus is not dealing with the issue of being a *believer*, He's dealing with the issue of being a *disciple*. Every person in the room who Jesus was talking to was saved. Jesus is addressing the second tense of their salvation (sanctification), giving them insight into how the vinedresser (the Father) prunes and corrects believers, so they will bear more fruit.

- One of the interesting things about Bible study, that makes it so enriching sometimes, is that you have to begin to understand related subjects that the Bible brushes on. So when the Bible starts talking about agriculture, all of a sudden I need to have a basic understanding of first century agriculture in order to understand the Bible properly and completely. Since most people do not live in an agrarian society today, we are unfamiliar with some of the metaphors that are used in the Bible, so to understand them, I have to rewind back 2000 years to understand the agricultural practices and cycles that occurred.

— In that first century agrarian society, there were things the vinedresser would do in the Spring and things he would do in the Fall. In the Spring, he would "lift up" the branches that were not bearing fruit, so they would get more nourishment from the sunlight; at the same time, as we'll see later in this verse, he would also prune some of the fruitful branches. In the Fall, he excised leafy branches and wood, and sometimes he would burn the pile of excised leafy branches.

— Verse 2 is a description of what the vinedresser would do in the Spring; v6 is a description of what the vinedresser would do in the Fall

— Both Spring activities encouraged the maturation of non-fruit bearing branches so they could bear fruit the following year: the "lifting up" of branches that were not bearing fruit and the "pruning" of productive branches, so they could bear even more fruit

— What Jesus is teaching here, with the "lifting up" of the branches in the Spring, is that the Father gives special support to believers who are not yet bearing fruit. In viticulture (the work of a vinedresser), this involves lifting the branch off the ground so that it will not send secondary roots down into the ground, which would prove counter-productive. Lifting the branch off the ground onto a pole or trellis would enable air to dry the branch and prevent it from getting moldy and becoming diseased and unfruitful. [Constable]

— So if you're a believer in Christ but not bearing any fruit, Jesus is saying that the Father is giving special attention to you, the non-fruit bearing branch, with a goal of making you more fruitful. You become the object of His special attention and nurturing. He lifts you up, puts you in the right place, so that you can begin to bear fruit.

— What if the branch (a believer), resists the vinedresser (God), and still doesn't bear any fruit? Jesus will cover what the vinedresser will do to that unproductive branch in v6.

Initially God works with the non-fruit bearing believer, but if that doesn't work, something more severe (something equated with burning) is around the corner.

- Once we understand what the vinedresser (God) does with the non-fruit bearing branches, what does He do with the good branches that are bearing fruit?
- "...He prunes it" - for the branches bearing fruit, the He prunes them (cuts them back) as only the vinedresser knows how to do, in such a way so that in the next cycle they will bear even more fruit
- If a Christian bore fruit automatically, what would be the purpose of the pruning? Because we as Christians have the ability to stagnate in our walk, to quench the Holy Spirit, the pruning becomes a necessity.
- How does the Lord do this in our lives? If you're a fruit bearing believer but have a sinful, unhelpful habit in your life, He will put you under divine discipline, similar to how we would treat our child or grandchild if they ran into the street. Any parent in their right mind would correct that situation immediately, and maybe even involve some pain on the part of the child so they remember to never do that again. The idea of God's discipline of His children is laid out very clearly in Heb 12:5-11.
- What about a situation where you're bearing fruit for the Lord and there is no overt habit of sin in your life that needs to be corrected, but God just wants to bring you to the next level of growth and maturity? Well, He may give you a trial (James 1:2-4). The Bible teaches that when a believer begins to bear fruit and walk with God, many times God takes that believer and puts them through a valley experience in their life. This trial is not designed to destroy the believer (although sometimes the process is painful), but it is designed to build character and faith in their life, so that they might bear even more fruit in the future.
- Ask yourself: Looking back, when are the times where your faith has grown the most? Is it in the good times, the mountaintop experiences, or in the valleys? When things are going well, we have a tendency to remove ourselves from our daily dependence upon God. We think in our minds that we have this all figured out, and life isn't as difficult as others make it out to be. We lose our need for God in our minds.
- When we go through trials, we ask God sometimes, What did I do wrong? The answer is maybe you didn't do anything wrong...maybe you did something right, and rather than discipline, God is just pruning you through a trial to prepare you to bear more fruit. Sometimes a problem in life is an indication that you are exactly where God wants you.
- In the Christian life, there are storms of correction (discipline, Heb 12:5-11) and storms of perfection (trials, James 1:2-4)

(c) Reaffirmation of the disciples' salvation (15:3)

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

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

3 You are already clean because of what I've spoken to you.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

- "You" [2x] - understanding the referent to "you" in this verse is critical. What many teachers will say is, "What Jesus told the disciples is that all Christians are clean because of Christ's word they heard and believed." While this is true, it is an application of Jesus is saying, not what Jesus was actually saying. The "you" in this verse refers specifically to the 11 disciples, who were "clean" (saved) by the "word" Jesus spoke to them.
- By implication, the 11 remaining disciples were clearly not the only ones cleansed by Christ's words, but interpretively speaking, Jesus is only declaring His immediate hearers to be clean, not a wider group.
- "...clean" - Jesus is using a metaphor that He developed earlier after He washed the disciples' feet (Cf. 13:10) to reassure His disciples that what He just said in v2 didn't remove their salvation.
- In effect, it's His reassurance and confirmation of what v2 means: the branches that do not bear fruit are not removed from the vine, but instead they are "lifted up" so that they will bear fruit. These are saved people who are out of fellowship with Christ.
- During the process of spiritual growth and maturity, Jesus did not want the disciples to think that just because they may be going through a time of discipline or a time of trial that they weren't Christians any more. Jesus didn't want them to confuse the Father's process of working in our lives so that we will bear more fruit down the road with the fact that they are no longer saved. He did not want His disciples to wrongly conclude that the absence of fruit or the presence of difficulties meant that they did not have the gift of salvation.
- Many times problems might occur in your life and you start to doubt that you're saved. If I'm really saved, isn't everything supposed to run smoothly in my life? But that's not the process the vinedresser puts the branches through. The pruning process for the branches that are not bearing fruit and the branches that are bearing fruit can be quite painful, and because of that, it's very tempting to think that God doesn't love me anymore. Jesus heads off this entire thought process at the pass and stresses that we are not to confuse the pruning process with any type of loss of salvation. Jesus reassures them of their security in Him: "You are already clean."
- "...the word which I have spoken to you" - part of the pruning process involves sitting under the Word of God. One of the things the Word of God will do, if you sit under it week after week for some time, is to expose and correct things in our lives that are not right. This is the function of God's Word (2 Tim 3:16).
- The Word of God is like going to the gym...it's like training an athlete...sometimes it's painful. Sometime it hurts. This is in essence what God's Word is designed to do. But there's a philosophy in the church today that the purpose of God's Word is to make everyone feel good. So consequently the Word of God is not taught, and if it is taught, it's taught in a highly selective, highly edited form.

— If you're under this type of teaching week after week after week, how can the branches be cut back so you can bear more fruit? They can't, which means you remain at the same level of maturity year after year. The work of the Word is to teach and to reprove, not leave us bleeding on the highway, but to pick us back up again.

(d) The secret of fruit bearing (15:4-5)

4 **Remain in Me**, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must **remain in the vine**, so neither *can* you unless you **remain in Me**.

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.

4 "Abide in me, and I will abide in you. Just as the branch cannot produce fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more *can* ye, except ye abide in me.

- Jesus made the point very clearly in v2 that fruit bearing is not a guarantee for every believer. So if fruit bearing is not automatic in the life of every believer, then how does fruit bearing take place? What must happen in my life so that I can bear fruit?

- "Remain in Me/the vine" [3x] - the secret! Abiding or remaining in Christ is the secret to fruit bearing.

— You can think of "abiding" with Christ in a marriage context (Cf. Eph 5:22-33). If you are having difficulties in your marriage, it can be traced to at least one (maybe more) of the following reasons:

1. Lack of quality time spent together
2. Communication
3. Keeping short accounts with each other

— Once we understand these marriage principles, we can apply them to our relationship with the Lord, then we will understand how to "abide" with Christ

1. Are you spending quality time with the Lord? For every believer it works differently, but are you spending quality time with the Lord, completely focused on Him and dedicating yourself to Him? Or are you allowing the busyness of life to crowd out your relationship with the Lord?
2. Are you communicating with the Lord? We communicate with the Lord through prayer, and He communicates with us primarily through His Word. If you are a person of prayer and a person dedicated to the Word, and these are regular habits in your life, the lines of communication between you and God are open, and consequently you're abiding in Him.

3. Are you keeping short accounts with the Lord? As a Christian, you will inevitably sin. It might be a sin of commission (we do something we're not supposed to do), or it may be a sin of omission (the Holy Spirit prompts you to do something and you don't follow through). When (not if) this happens, are you keeping a short account with the Lord by exercising 1 John 1:9? If 1 John 1:9 is not exercised regularly in your life, you're not fully abiding in Christ.
 - If all three of these are happening repetitiously in your life, and you are growing not only in your orthodoxy (knowledge) but in your orthopraxy (deeds), then you are abiding with Christ
 - But if one or more of these are not a regularly repeating occurrence in your life, you don't lose your salvation, but what happens is the branch becomes dislocated from the vine, which jeopardizes not our eternity in heaven, but our fruitfulness and our usefulness to God.
 - So the key to bearing fruit is to abide in Christ, which means that we are regularly and repetitiously spending quality time with Him, communicating with Him in prayer and personal Bible study, and regularly exercising 1 John 1:9
 - The focus of the fruit-bearing Christian is not what we go out and do for Jesus. So many Christians are confused about this and believe that they need to get out there and do something for Jesus. Yet according to this passage, from Jesus' own words, the focus of our life should not be what we can do for Jesus Christ, it should be Jesus Christ. Stop worrying and striving for the fruit because the fruit will take care of itself.
 - We are not commanded to *produce* fruit, we're commanded to *bear* fruit. There's a huge difference between the two. Producing fruit is me going out and doing everything I can for Jesus, working hard to be a good person, serving where I'm needed, working from my own power to do good things. Bearing fruit is an automatic, coincidental, spontaneous, almost an accidental process. It is an inevitable agricultural process if the branch concentrates not simply on bearing fruit, but on the vine (Jesus).
 - Producing fruit and bearing fruit are two completely different agricultural concepts. A branch cannot produce fruit, it's impossible. No matter how much that piece of wood tries and tries to produce some fruit, it is unable to unless it is connected to the vine.
 - The problem many Christians have is that they go out and seek to do the work of God and the will of God under human power. Then we become very frustrated and tired because we're doing something that God never called us to do. What God tells us to do is abide in Him, and the fruit that you want to bear will automatically and coincidentally come to pass.
 - "Remain" [3x] - *menō*, is used in John's Gospel in two different ways (see chart below). The word *menō* is not a technical word, thus it does not mean the same thing every time it is used. You determine the meaning based on the context in which it is used.

- In v4,9 it is in the imperative mood, meaning it is a command, not a suggestion (all other uses of *menō* in v1-9 [v6,7] are in the subjunctive mood; see note on v9). If you're not abiding with Christ, walking with Him intimately on a moment-by-moment basis, it does not negate or disprove your salvation. You do, however, begin to forfeit fruitfulness in your life and ministry, forfeit rewards, and forfeit the purpose for which God saved you in the first place.
- The first time *menō* is used in John's Gospel is 6:56, and when it is correlated with 6:35, *menō* is referring to initial faith in Christ. It involves the transition from being an unbeliever to being a believer. When *menō* is used in this sense, it is true of all Christians.
- As you move on in John's Gospel, the context (and thus the definition) of *menō* shifts. In John 15, it does not refer to initial faith in Christ, but instead to growth and intimacy. It is not referring to an unbeliever coming to Jesus Christ for the first time, but rather it's talking about a believer deepening their walk and maturity in Christ.

Much confusion has resulted from failing to recognize that Jesus spoke of "abiding" in two senses. He used it as a synonym for saving faith (6:56), and some interpreters have incorrectly imported that meaning into this verse. However, He also used it to describe the intimate relationship that those who have saving faith need to cultivate with God (8:31). All believers abide in Jesus in the first sense, but all do not abide in Him in the second sense (15:10; 1 John 3:24). It is the second sense that Jesus spoke of in this passage.

	Abide	Abide
Definition	Initial faith	Growing in intimacy with Christ
Scripture	John 6:56	John 8:31
Transition	Unbeliever to believer	Believer to disciple
Experienced by	All Christians	Some Christians
Results	Life	Fruitfulness

5 I am the vine, **you are the branches**; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for **apart from Me you can do nothing**.

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.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who abides in me while I abide in him produces much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

- "...you are the branches" - referring to the 11 disciples, and by relation, every Church Age believer

- Abiding in Christ is the condition for fruit bearing. It is not a condition for life, it is not a condition for eternal salvation...it is only a condition for bearing fruit.

— If we are focused on Him rather than what we can or should be doing for Him, the fruit bearing comes automatically

— God wants us to "bear much fruit" but we cannot do this under our own power or initiative...we can only do it by abiding/remaining in Him

— "...apart from Me you can do nothing" - if you decide that you do not want to abide in Christ for whatever reason, not to cultivate your relationship with Christ, then the logical ramification is that you are disconnected from the vine and you are powerless to bring forth the fruit that God wants

— This is the situation in many churches and many Christians today...they never bear the fruit that God wants to bring forth in their life because they have neglected the basic agricultural principle of remaining attached to the vine that Jesus is teaching in this passage

— Every activity that we are doing apart from Him is invisible to God, it is unrecognizable to Him. These are the works that do not "remain" (15:16).

- Abraham is a great example of this, one that Paul also uses to express a similar point in Galatians...

— Abraham was given a promise from God for a son, and from that son, Abraham was to have innumerable descendants. But Abraham, looking at his old age and his wife who was also old, thought that God couldn't pull off His promise of a son if He waited much longer, so Abraham conspired with his wife Sarah to impregnate his maidservant Hagar.

— From that unholy union, Ishmael, a child of works, was born. Abraham produced something out of his own flesh, and consequently it was a work that was unrecognized by God (Cf. Gen 22:2).

— Many Christians are in this same place...doing things for God, but not how He wants them done, which is as a by-product of our intimacy with Him, but instead doing things for Him in the energy of our flesh. But no matter how much work or effort we put into these works, to God it is nothing but wood, hay and stubble and it will be burned up with no reward at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:10-15).

— But as Abraham grew in his faith and in his intimacy with the Lord, miraculously Sarah's womb was renewed and she brought forth Isaac, the child of promise. This is the child that

God recognized because it was the child that was conceived in faith, not in works.

— How much of what you're doing for Jesus in your life and in the church is Ishmael? Creating things through human effort and ingenuity, human manipulation, relying upon talent and the energy of the flesh to get things done. Versus, how much of your work is Isaac, done in faith because you are simply abiding in Jesus Christ and the fruit is coming forth automatically?

— What does a lack of fruit in a believer's life mean? It does not necessarily mean that they are not saved; rather, it means that they are a believer who is not abiding in Jesus Christ, and consequently they are now or may soon be undergoing a "lifting up" process.

— How strange that in our day and time we have been told so often that fruitlessness is a sure sign that a person is unsaved. Certainly we did not get this idea from the Bible. Rather, the Bible teaches that unfruitfulness in a believer is a sure sign that that one is no longer moving forward, no longer growing in Christ. It is a sign that a Christian is spiritually sick, and until well again, cannot enjoy spiritual success. [Zane Hodges]

- Application: am I cultivating intimacy with Jesus Christ in my daily life? I may be fatigued, frustrated, lack productivity, and that may have far more to do with my neglect of the basic principle of abiding.

The only barrier to receiving truth is the assumption that you already have it.

The only principle that keeps us in eternal ignorance is condemnation before investigation.

(e) Negative consequences of not fruit bearing (15:6)

6 If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

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.

6 Unless a person abides in me, he is thrown away like a pruned branch and dries up. People gather such branches, throw them into a fire, and they are burned up.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

- How important is fruit bearing in a believer's life? One may think, I'm saved, I'm going to heaven, I have the 33 positional realities that the Bible says are mine at the point I'm saved, so who cares how much fruit I bear in my life.

— Jesus here begins to articulate and teach what happens to the believer who is not bearing fruit. He is articulating a negative consequence for not abiding in Christ and bearing fruit, which we cannot fully understand unless we understand a little more about first century agriculture.

- "...anyone" - only refers to the realm of believers; Jesus is outlining a negative consequence for any believer who does not remain/abide in Him. This verse does not pertain to or include non-believers.
- "...remain" - *meno*, abide; used in the second form (see right column in chart above), not in the sense of initial faith in Christ, but because He is speaking with believers, in the sense of walking moment-by-moment with the Lord in fellowship and bearing fruit
- It's usage in v6 is in the subjunctive mood, the mood of possibility; see notes on v9
- The best reason to study the Bible verse by verse is that by doing so, it keeps you from wandering away from the context. You can't just choose a single verse and use it to promote a theological system or belief; rather, you have to interpret the entire passage in its context to understand it properly.
- Both Calvinism and Arminianism love this verse because, when it's taken out of its context and used on its own, it can be used to promote both systems of belief:
- Arminianism comes to this verse and says, Look, if a believer is not walking with the Lord, not bearing fruit, they are thrown away and burned, which means they lose their salvation. They completely disregard or misinterpret all of the passages, both in John's Gospel and elsewhere, that clearly teach the iron-clad nature of our salvation (Cf. 10:27-29; Rom 8:35-39).
- Calvinism comes to this verse and says, These "believers" didn't bear any fruit, thus they must not have been true believers. They were professors, not possessors, because all believers will demonstrate the fact that they are believers by performing good works. If you don't perform good works, you're obviously not a believer. So they use this verse to argue that these people were never saved to begin with.
- But neither of these belief systems takes into account the context:
 1. Jesus is talking to 11 saved individuals, His disciples. The only unbeliever among the disciples, Judas Iscariot, has left the building.
 2. Jesus uses the prepositional phrase "in Me" (15:2), and makes it clear that there may be branches "in Me" that do not bear fruit.
 3. The phrase "in Me" is the same phrase that Jesus uses to describe His relationship to the Father and the Father's relationship to Him. Is there insecurity among the tri-unity of God? Of course not. Thus, when Jesus uses this same expression "in Me" of the branches that are not bearing fruit, they have the same level of security in Christ that Christ has in the Father and the Father has in Christ.
- You have to ignore the clear teaching of Christ here, in His own words, and bring into the passage your own pre-conceived theological system, to get to either the Arminian or Calvinist interpretation. This is the difference between eisegesis and exegesis.
- Eisegesis (*eis* means "into") so eisegesis means you read "into" the passage based on some preconceived belief system. Both Calvinism and Arminianism do this, and it distorts

what the Lord is teaching here.

- Exegesis (*ek* means "out of") meaning you get "out of" the passage what is being said or taught, without any preconceived belief system clouding your view
- What happens too often for many Christians is that theological assumptions are controlling the exegetical process rather than allowing the exegetical process to inform our theological conclusions. We cannot allow ourselves to become married to a system of thought because what happens in our mind is that we begin to develop an *a priori* lens and begin to read the Bible through that lens. When that happens, our pride gets involved and we want to protect our theological system, and while doing this we distort the Word of God.
- We need to allow our lens to become readjusted by God's Word often, even though sometimes it's humiliating, which is very hard to do, particularly if we have believed something our entire life. Maybe there is even a pastor or teacher that we particularly respect who holds this view.
- What is happening today is "proof-texting" which is the idea that you have your preconceived belief system set up, then you are rummaging through the Bible to find verses that back up your belief system. Consequently, Scriptures are wrenched completely out of their context and the Word of God is distorted.
- *A text without a context is a proof text.* I can go through the Bible, liberated from context, and assemble whatever doctrine I want, to defend anybody's theology. That is using the Bible as a proof-texting device, not as the powerful Word of God. *A text without a context is a proof text...which is nothing more than a pretext for some abhorrent doctrinal belief.*
- A proof-text for suicide: Judas went out and hanged himself (Matt 27:5); What you do, do quickly (John 13:27); If you know this, you are blessed if you do it (John 13:17).
- For some reason, proof-texting the Bible is acceptable to many Christians, but you could never get away with this in any other profession. If you practiced proof-texting in law, you'd be disbarred, but somehow it's ok to do it with the Word of God.
- So what is the proper interpretation of this verse, in context?
- Keep in mind the work of the vinedresser in both the Spring and the Fall. Verse 2 describes the "lifting up" and "pruning" which took place in the Spring. Verse 6 describes the work of the vinedresser in the Fall, which is substantially more severe:
- In the Fall, the vinedresser would prune (Gr. *kathairo*) the vines for the winter by cutting off the dead wood. He would not cut off the unfruitful branches that could produce grapes the next season but only the branches that did not have a healthy connection to the vine. The point of the verse is that branches with other serious problems, not just non-fruit-bearing branches (15:2), also experience pruning. [Constable]
- "...thrown away" - the first consequence for non-abiding believers is that they are "thrown away"

- "...they" - does not refer to God! God is not the one throwing the branches into the fire, man is! This verse says nothing about God throwing anyone in to the fire, but yet that is the common interpretation of this verse.
- Calvinism inserts God into this passage as throwing these "spurious" wanna-be believers into the fire, which they interpret as hell. But that's not what this verse says.
- "...into the fire" - *pyr*, when an Arminian or a Calvinist sees burning or fire in the Bible, they believe (without exception) that it refers to hell
- Of course fire and hell do correlate, and hell is often described as a place of burning and fire and torment (Cf. Matt 25:41). But fire or burning does not *always* mean hell. In fact, sometimes fire or burning is analogized to God dealing with a believer in a very severe way.
- Sometimes God's dealing with us is so severe that it may feel like hell, but God will never renounce His promise to the believer of eternal life. Sometimes fire or burning is used to describe the temporal consequences that come into our lives, which have nothing to do with hell (other than it may feel like hell to us sometimes).
- Below are some verses that correlate fire, not to hell, but to divine discipline:

1 Cor 3:15: If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet *only* so as through **fire**.

- 1 Cor 3:15 talks about the believer's works being burned up by fire (*pyr*). It's not talking about hell or someone going to hell; it's talking about purging wood, hay and stubble (fleshly works) from the gold, silver, precious stones (fruit borne in us by Christ). The fire and burning does not purge the believer here, it purges the believer's fleshly works.

1 Peter 1:6-7:

- 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,
- 7 so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which perishes though **tested by fire**, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- 1 Peter 1:6-7 talks about a believer being tested by fire (*pyr*), referring not to hell, but to trials that come into the life of a believer for the purpose of purifying our character. When a precious metal is exposed to fire, the impurities begin to burn off, leaving a purified metal (gold, silver or precious stones).

Heb 6:8: but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it **ends up being burned**.

- Heb 6:8 speaks of a field that was lit on fire to burn up the thorns and thistles. In the first century, and even today, why would a field be set on fire? Not to destroy the field, but to make it more productive.
 - The Bible Knowledge Commentary says of Heb 6:8: *Naturally, the reference to burned has caused many to think of hell, but there is nothing in the text to suggest this. In fact, to think of hell is to betray an inattention to the imagery employed by the author. The burning of a field to destroy the rank growth that it had produced was a practice known in ancient times. This practice, or its aim, was not to destroy the field itself, which of course the fire could not affect. But the destruction of the unwanted produce of the field, thereafter the field may be serviceable for cultivation.*
- So what is Jesus teaching His disciples (and us) here? In the Spring (v2), the vinedresser tried to work with the branch. He identified it as a branch that was not bearing fruit, so He "lifted it up" so that it could bear fruit. He brought some situations into the life of that branch that would give it the opportunity to bear fruit.
- Now the Fall season is coming around, and there is still no fruit coming forth from the branch because of stubbornness or recalcitrance. Then the vinedresser goes to work on the branch with greater intensity and greater severity. The greater intensity and greater severity of God's dealings with us feels like fire, and sometimes even like hell itself, but it is masterfully designed by God Himself to make us more productive.
- The chart below outlines 19 biblical consequences experienced by a believer when they yield to the sin nature, none of which even remotely affect our eternal salvation. One or more of these things in a believer's life is what it means to be "throw into the fire":

Consequences of Yielding to the Old (Sin) Nature

1. Lack of power (Gal 5:16; 1 Thess 5:19)
2. Grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30-32)
3. Loss of joy (Ps 51:4,12; Gal 5:16,22-23)
4. Loss of spiritual sight & eternal perspective (2 Peter 1:2-9; Luke 15:18-19)
5. Lack of growth (1 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Peter 2:17-18)
6. Unfruitfulness (John 15:5,8; 2 Peter 1:8)
7. Lack of purpose/direction/meaning in life (Eccl 1:2-3,8; Mark 8:34-38)
8. Lack of stability (Gal 3:3; 2 Tim 2:18; 2 Peter 3:17)
9. Loss of victory over the world (2 Peter 2:18-22)
10. Conviction (2 Peter 2:7-8; Ps 32:1-5)
11. Divine discipline (Heb 12:5-11; Rev 3:19)
12. Premature death (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16; Rev 2:22-23)
13. Loss of reward (1 Cor 3:10-15; 9:27; 2 Tim 4:6-8; 2 John 8; Rev 3:11)

14. Loss of fellowship (Luke 15:11-24; 1 John 1:3-10)
15. Excommunication (1 Cor 5:4-5; Matt 18:15-17)
16. Temporal consequences (Gal 6:7-8)
17. Unanswered prayer (Ps 66:18; 1 Peter 3:7)
18. Loss of testimony (Gen 19:14; Matt 5:10-16; Phil 2:13-16)
19. Loss of faith (2 Tim 2:13)
20. Loss of biblical beliefs (2 Tim 3:12—4:4)
21. Loss of leadership privileges (1 Tim 3:1-13; 2 Sam 12)
22. Loss of ministry to others (Matt 20:28; Heb 6:10)
23. Loss of assurance of salvation (2 Peter 1:9-11)
24. Loss of faith (2 Tim 2:11-13; 4:1-5)

For a detailed explanation for each temporal consequence for yielding to our sin nature, see:

[Soteriology 24 Eternal Security: Separating Christ's Body; Which Sins?; Consequences for Carnal Believers - Part 1 \(1 Cor 12:13\)](#)

[Soteriology 25 Consequences for Carnal Believers - Part 2 \(1 Cor 3:1-3\)](#)

[Soteriology 26 Consequences for Carnal Believers - Part 3 \(John 15:1-6\)](#)

[Soteriology 27 Consequences for Carnal Believers - Part 4 \(1 Cor 9:24-27\)](#)

(f) Positive consequences of fruit bearing (15:7-8)

After giving to us the negative consequences, sometimes severe, for not abiding in Him, Jesus now gives us the positive consequences for abiding in Him. Both the negative consequences (to avoid) and the positive consequences (to desire) are proper motivations for us to abide in Christ. These verses answer the why question...if I'm saved and going to heaven, why then do I need to concentrate so much on abiding with Christ? Why can't I just live my life the way I want to, since my eternal destiny can't change?

The answer is that not only will we experience the negative, often severe consequences of v6, but we will miss out on five positive blessings in our lives (15:7-8). Jesus outlines five good things that will come to pass in the life of a fruit bearing believer, which will not come into the life of a non-fruit bearing believer. The non-fruit bearing believer forfeits these blessings because they are not abiding in Christ.

- (i) Intake of God's Word (15:7a-b)
- (ii) Effective prayer life (15:7c)

7 If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

7 "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask for anything you want, and you'll receive it.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

– "If" - first class condition; this condition assumes the truth of the premise. It's used when the speaker is either assuming the condition is true or presenting a fact.

– "...remain" [2x] - both uses in this verse are in the subjunctive mood, the mood of possibility

– "...My words remain in you" - benefit #1 is that we will begin to take in the Word of God

— If we abide in Him, an incidental, automatic consequence/benefit is that His words will abide in us

— One of the benefits of abiding in Christ is that we develop an appetite for the Word of God; we desire to take in the Word of God, through personal Bible study, through preachers and teachers of God's Word, through books, etc.

— One of the things we find when we begin to change the focus of our life from busyness for Jesus Christ to intimacy with Jesus Christ is that we develop a healthy appetite for the Word of God. 1 Peter 2:2 tells us to seek out the "pure milk of the Word" so that we might grow.

— One of the issues today in churches is that the milk that is taught is not "pure"...it's the Word of God mixed with some human philosophy or guru. It's like giving your newborn baby milk mixed with Coca-Cola. If a child is not receiving pure milk, they cannot biologically develop the way they need to. It does more harm than good.

— In the same way, if the Word of God is not the singular focus in our lives, if we are not craving its purity, if we are not intaking hearty portions of it regularly, we become deformed and malnourished Christians (Cf. Ps 119:97-104; Job 23:12; Deut 8:3c).

— We deceive ourselves when we go out into the world, to work, to other activities, etc. and think that we can get by with little to no spiritual nourishment. You might think, Well, I went to church on Sunday and the sermon was really good. Well that's great, but what you get at church on Sunday is a small thimble of what you need on a weekly basis. It's important to attend a church that is accurately preaching the Word of God, but you also need to be regularly intaking the Word of God on your own. If this isn't a regular practice in your life, then you become frustrated and defeated because you are malnourished in your Christian life.

— So what begins to happen automatically as you abide in Christ is that you will have an appetite for the Word of God on a daily basis. You will desire to know Bible doctrine, you will desire to understand Bible prophecy, you will desire to understand and live out the

teachings of Christ and the epistles. When you get to this point, you'll want to be in places that teach the Word of God, you'll want to read books that proclaim the Word of God, you'll want to start studying the Word of God on your own.

— These are all desires that you don't have when you haven't developed an intimacy with God. You are no longer satisfied with surface-level Christianity, surface-level teaching that give you three points and a poem. You will not be satisfied with teaching that doesn't come directly from the Bible, but mixes in human philosophy or information and facts from a self-help guru. You will start recognizing that as shallow and worthless and you'll begin to seek out places where the pure Word of God is taught.

— "...ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" - the second consequence of abiding in Christ is that we discover that we have a new effectiveness in prayer

— As we grow in knowledge of His Word, we begin to develop a knowledge of His will. There is only one place where you can understand God's will: in His Word. Many people today are curious about the will of God, but they don't look at the book which outlines the will of God.

— God only answers prayers that are in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14). Any prayer we utter that isn't part of the will of God simply bounces off the ceiling (James 4:2-3). One of the things we learn about God is that He wants to answer prayer, but He does not answer prayers that are outside of His will. When you think about it, the best thing God can do for us is not give us some of the things that we pray for. We want things out of our finite minds, without omniscience, and often times severely tainted by our sin nature. But God is omniscient...He doesn't just know what is going to happen tomorrow, but 5-10-15-20 years down the road.

— Who do we want running our lives...an omniscient God or a finite, sin-tainted man?

— As we intake God's Word, we learn God's will, and as we learn God's will, we learn more how to pray. Our prayer life develops because we begin to align our prayers to His will, and when we do that, we know He hears us and we know that His answer is not *if*, but *when*. We begin to see our prayers answered with greater regularity and greater consistency because we are no longer "asking amiss" (James 4:2-3).

- (iii) Glorify God (15:8a)
- (iv) Bear much fruit (15:8b)
- (v) Prove to be Jesus' disciples (15:8c)

8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

8 This is how my Father is glorified, when you produce a lot of fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

8 **Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.**

- "My Father is glorified by this" - the third consequence/benefit of abiding in Christ is that our lives begin to glorify God
- When we as Christians begin to abide in Christ and bear fruit, we are fulfilling the purpose for which we were created, which is to glorify God. See Tag: **Doxological Purpose of God**
- If God's overarching purpose in history is to glorify Himself, then what purpose does God have for you or me? His purpose for you and me is to use us to glorify Himself. He does this in many different ways in our lives. The fruit bearing Christian fits into the doxological purpose of God perfectly. The carnal, non-abiding believer is outside of the doxological purpose of God.
- If a Christian says, I'm saved, I'm going to heaven, my fire insurance is paid up, but I'm going to live my life according to my own rules. You do you, I'll do me. That person is not fulfilling the purpose for which God created them and saved them. They are missing out on the purpose of their very existence. The purpose for which you were saved was to fit into the overarching purpose of God, which is to bring glory to Himself.
- The fruit bearing Christian glorifies God; the non-fruit bearing Christian does not glorify God, and consequently misses out on the purpose for which they were created
- One of the most disturbing things about life is that you don't get a "do-over." Life is like having a wad of cash in your pocket. You can spend it however you want to spend it, but you can only spend it one time. However you spend it, it's gone. Yesterday is gone (spent); last week is gone. Last year is gone. You can't change what was or wasn't done during those times now. Now, 54 years of my physical life are gone, and I either spent them the right way or I spent them the wrong way, but either way, I can't change how I spent them now.
- Many older Christians look back and wish they would have done things differently, they would've began abiding in Christ sooner, at a younger age
- Paul warns the Corinthian church of this in 1 Corinthians, a church of believers who were not short of spiritual gifts they received from God, but yet walked in their flesh and in carnality, not abiding with Christ. How different they were from Paul, who says, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7). May God help us to be able to quote these words honestly along with the Apostle Paul, and not look back in regret on wasted years, wasted life, wasted experiences, wasted treasure, wasted talents, all amounting to nothing because we spent our life in Christ catering to the sin nature.
- "...bear much fruit" - fruit is completely different than positional truths that we receive, for free, at the point of faith (see notes on Eph 1). Positional truths are spiritual blessings that we own at the point of faith, and cannot be taken away. Our job is to understand these

positional truths, which come from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and then live up to them (make our practice match our position).

— Fruit is different: positional truths are spiritual blessings we receive that are not visible to the naked eye, but fruit is visible on the outside, it is visible in our lives. Positional truths benefit us, whereas fruit benefits others. Positional truths are automatic, fruit is not. The condition of abiding in Christ must be met in order for the fruit in our lives to come forth.

— The disciples to whom Jesus is speaking had already received their positional truths, their spiritual blessings, so what Jesus is urging them to do is to move on to bearing fruit

— "much" - we often look at our lives and think, Geez, I'm really busy for Jesus, I'm busy doing this and busy doing that. All of that is very little compared to what God can and wants to do through us. You serve in 2-3 ministries at church, you attend a small group, you volunteer doing this or that on the side, you host this event, you volunteer at that event. But it is small potatoes compared to what God can and wants to do in each of our lives.

— If you want a barometer on what you're currently doing for the Lord, consider this: Martin Luther, when he was healthy (1528), he preached 190 sermons, gave 190 lectures, wrote 150 letters, wrote 20 tracts, and worked on translating the OT into German. He also made several trips.

— Two years later (1530), while he was sick most of the year: he preached 60 sermons, gave 60 lectures, wrote 170 letters, wrote 30 tracts, and continued his work on translating the OT into German. In 1531, he was sick for 6 months and his mother died, yet he: preached 180 sermons, gave 180 lectures, wrote 100 letters, wrote 15 tracts, he continued his work of translating the OT into German, and also made a few trips.

— And today we look at our lives and think we're doing so much for the Lord...really, are we? Not really, compared to the religious giants of the past, who did their work not out of a religious spirit or human energy, but through this very simple principle of abiding.

— Lord, forgive us of our 21st century mindset that if I do a few things, serve in a ministry and teach a Bible study once a week, that I think I'm really doing something big for You. We need to be humbled and humiliated by our measly service to Him. But Martin Luther or the Wesley brothers (founders of Methodist church) didn't have a monopoly on God. God can do what He did through Martin Luther or the Wesley brothers through us too if we follow this very simple agricultural principle of abiding.

- Bearing much fruit authenticates believers as His disciples...

— The teaching of this verse contradicts much of the teaching in evangelicalism today that believes that if you are not bearing fruit, you are not a believer. But this is not what Jesus is saying here. He is not dealing with the issue of a believer vs. an unbeliever.

— Here, Jesus is drawing a distinction between an abiding believer and a non-abiding believer. What happens when we begin to bear fruit is that we prove or authenticate

ourselves as disciples of Jesus Christ.

- "...disciples" - *mathētēs*, a learner or pupil
- Jesus, throughout His earthly ministry, drew a clear distinction between believers and disciples. All disciples are believers, but not all believers are disciples.
- The fruit that comes forth in a believer's life does not vindicate that they are a believer, rather it vindicates that they are a disciple
- Jesus here is teaching 11 believers, and their salvation is not in question. He is telling them, and by extension us, that believers who abide in Christ and begin to bear fruit authenticate themselves as His disciples. Jesus is not trying to get the disciples saved here, He's already confirmed that they are saved ("clean," v3).

JUSTIFICATION – SALVATION	DISCIPLESHIP
FREE GIFT	COSTLY
RECEIVED THROUGH FAITH	ENTERED INTO THROUGH COMMITMENT AND OBEDIENCE THROUGH THE SPIRIT'S ENABLEMENT
NOT BY WORKS	INVOLVES OUR COOPERATION
INSTANT	LIFE-LONG PROCESS
JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION
JESUS PAID THE PRICE	BELIEVER PAYS THE PRICE
TRUSTING JESUS AS SAVIOR	FOLLOWING JESUS AS LORD
BELIEVE THE GOSPEL	OBEY THE COMMANDS
ONE CONDITION	MULTIPLE CONDITIONS
EXPERIENCED BY ALL CHRISTIANS	EXPERIENCED BY SOME CHRISTIANS
RESULTS IN ETERNAL LIFE	RESULTS IN REWARDS & AUTHORITY



But what about Matt 7:20-23, winner of one of the "Top 10 Most Misused and Misinterpreted Passages" in the Bible. It's not even surprising anymore when someone uses this verse wrongly. What is surprising and shocking is when someone interprets this passage correctly.

Matt 7:20-23:

- 20 **So then, you will know them by their fruits.**
- 21 **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one 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; LEAVE ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'**

What everyone thinks Matt 7:20-23, especially v20, says is that the evidence for being a believer is fruit, and if a "believer" does not have any fruit in their life, they aren't saved.

Then on the day of judgment, they will cry out 'Lord, Lord' but God will tell them that He never knew them.

The three rules of real estate are: location, location, location. The three rules of Bible interpretation are: context, context, context. The context for the Matt 7 passage is given in v15: **"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.** Jesus is not talking about believers (or disciples) in Matt 7:15-23, He's talking about false teachers. And He says that you (believers) will be able to identify false teachers (unbelievers) by their fruits. Matt 7:20-23 has absolutely nothing to do with believers or how to tell if someone is a believer.

In John 15:8, Jesus clearly says that the evidence for being a *disciple* is their fruit. Note that He didn't say the evidence for being a believer is their fruit, because one can be a believer and not bear fruit (Cf. v2; Luke 8:14; Rom 6:4; 1 Cor 3:1-3).

Jesus is giving His disciples, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7, esp Matt 7), tools for identifying false teachers. To read into Matt 7 the same context as John 15 is to abuse every basic principle of Bible study and interpretation that there is. Matt 7 has absolutely nothing, zero, to do with professing believers in Jesus Christ other than to give them a tool for recognizing false teachers.

(B) Loving (15:9-17)

What is the love of God? How do we experience the love of God? What are the benefits of abiding in the love of God? These are all questions that come front and center in the teaching that Jesus gives in v9-17.

This teaching flows nicely out of the fruit bearing that He has taught us about in v1-8, how we need to, as branches, always abide in the vine so that fruit can come forth in our life naturally and coincidentally. Now, He changes the metaphor slightly and begins talking about the love of God.

(a) Reality (15:9a)

(b) Invitation (15:9b)

9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; **remain in My love.**

9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

9 Just as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. So abide in my love.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

- The love of God is a reality because it has been expressed from eternity past right up to the present time and into eternity future through the Trinity. The Trinity is all about displaying the love of God.

— We believe in One God, who expresses Himself in three personages: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three have a distinct personage, but share in the same essence of deity.

Within this Trinity of God, there has always been an expression of love.

— This expression of love is what Jesus is talking about here when He talks about the love that the Father has for Him. Jesus has always basked in the love of God the Father, and consequently He goes on to talk about how He has chosen to dispense the love that He has received from God the Father, to us.

— So the love that has always, from eternity past, been dispensed from the Father to the Son, Jesus now dispenses this love to us, specifically in the context, to those who have believed in Him. Certainly God loves the entire world (Cf. 3:16), but here He is speaking specifically about His love for His own.

- "...remain in My love" - the reality of Jesus' love for us now gives way to an invitation...Jesus now invites the recipients of this love to abide in that love

— The love that the Father has for the Son is somewhat automatic, it's part of the character and person of the Godhead. But notice that for believers, it's not so automatic...we need to abide/remain in Christ's love. It's not automatic.

— "remain" - *menō*, imperative mood, meaning it's a command to the hearer by the order and authority of the one commanding

— Jesus also uses *menō* in the imperative mood in v4 (first word of the verse); every other use of *menō* in v1-9 is in the subjunctive mood, which is the mood of possibility and potentiality (the action may or may not occur). It is not automatic (as is the love between Father and Son), but there is something we must do. To comply with the command requires action on our part.

- So the question becomes, if all Christians do not abide in God's love, then what is the recipe that we must follow in order to abide in God's love and thus fulfill the command of v9? The recipe is in v10.

(c) Recipe (15:10)

10 If you keep My **commandments**, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His 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.

10 If you keep my commandments, you'll abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

- How is it that we as Christians can abide in the love of God? The recipe for this is simple: obey His commandments. Obedience to Jesus Christ results in that person abiding in the love of God.

- And Jesus says that I'm not giving you something to do that I have not already done...the reason why I (Jesus) abide in My Father's love is because I have kept His commandments
- One of the great themes of John's Gospel is that Jesus obeyed the Father to perfection (Cf. 4:34). Jesus' life and ministry was all about perfect obedience to the Father. Because He did this, He is the textbook example of someone who abided in the love of God.
- So it's a simple formula/recipe: If we find ourselves obeying God's commands, then we are abiding in God's love. If we find that we're not obeying God's commands, we're not abiding in God's love. Simple to understand, hard to do.
- One of the things we have to understand, and Jesus doesn't touch on it here but it is covered in multiple other passages, is that we don't have to try out of our own power to obey the commands of God. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit who empowers us to carry out and obey the commands of God. If we yield ourselves to these divine resources, namely the Holy Spirit, through faith, and we make a freewill, volitional choice to follow the commands of God, then we find ourselves abiding in God's love.
- "...commandments" - plural; the minute we notice commandments (plural instead of singular) is the moment we know that Jesus is referring to the second tense of our salvation: sanctification
- For the unbeliever, there is only one command that God gives to them: believe. None of the other commands of God apply to an unbeliever until they have fulfilled that first command, which is to believe/trust in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their soul.
- What if a Christian says, I'm saved, I'm going to heaven, and I don't care too much about keeping all of these commandments or abiding in God's love. Is that ok? Well, that decision doesn't affect their eternal destiny, they are still going to heaven, but they are forfeiting blessings and also bringing onto themselves temporal consequences that could drastically affect their life.
- As a side note, the fact that Jesus is issuing commands for His disciples to follow is an indirect claim to deity. Only God can give commandments, so if Jesus is giving commandments (which He does), He is claiming equality with God.
- Jesus goes on in v11-17 to lay out seven blessings that believers receive when they abide in God's love. Those who choose not to follow His commands and abide in His love are choosing to forfeit these blessings.

(d) Benefits (15:11-17)

(i) Joy (15:11)

11 These things I have spoken to you so that **My joy** may be in you, and **that your joy may be made full.**

11 These things I have spoken to you so that **My joy** may be in you, and **that your joy may be made full.**

11 I've told you this, so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

- "...My joy" - Jesus had joy because He kept the Father's commandments perfectly; Jesus will give us this same joy if we abide in His love by keeping His commands

- "...joy may be made full" - Jesus is talking about a complete joy, a full joy, as opposed to a partial or incomplete joy; a full manifestation of joy in your life

- Many people are confused about what joy is...joy is different from happiness. Happiness comes from "happenstance" or luck. Happiness is based on our circumstances. We're happy when things are going our way, when the dominoes fall in our direction. We're not happy when they don't.

— Joy cannot be based on our circumstances because Jesus is preparing the disciples, teaching them, prior to sending them out into a hostile world. In just a few verses (15:18-25), Jesus will tell them that world is going to hate them for no reason. Jesus is talking about a joy that we can have in the midst of an environment that is hostile to believers.

— Joy is a sense of tranquility or peace that an abiding Christian can experience, that is independent of their present circumstance. It is something that you can experience when things are going well in your life, but it's also something you can experience when all hell is breaking loose in your life. It is a tranquility from God that is outside of our present circumstances (Cf. 14:27; Phil 4:7).

- John takes the kernel of truth that Jesus is teaching here and later writes an entire epistle about it (1 John), the purpose of which is so "that our joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). He wrote that epistle so that believers would know if they were an abiding believer or a non-abiding believer, in fellowship with Christ or not in fellowship with Christ.

— John understood that the stakes are high on whether or not believers are in fellowship or out of fellowship with Christ

- Why abide in the love of God by obeying His commands? Because your whole mental and emotional composition rides on whether or not you follow through on the commands of Christ.

— God wants to produce joy in our lives...He wants us to be full of joy. In Acts 16:22-25, Paul and Silas were in Philippi and were beaten to within an inch of their lives, then thrown into and double (inner) prison and fastened their feet to stocks. What did Paul and Silas do? They were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

— This is not a normal joy, it's not a normal human reaction to be beaten and thrown into prison on false charges. This is an example of joy...it is completely unrelated to our circumstances. It is supernaturally given to those who obey Christ's commands.

— Side note: an earthquake released Paul and Silas from shackles and the prison, and the joy they had caused the Philippian jailer to ask what he had to do to be saved (Acts 16:30-31)

(ii) Loving others (15:12)

12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

12 "This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

- What gives us the ability to love one another and fulfill this commandment?

— Jesus gives us the answer in the last phrase of this verse: because He first loved us

— Something supernatural takes place in the life of a person who is the recipient of the love of God. As we receive the love of God by following the recipe He gives us in v10, as we walk out that love on a moment-by-moment basis, we have the ability to dispense that love out to other people.

— Only a person who has experienced the love of God has any real ability to dispense the love of God to others

— The ability to love here is focused more on the unlovable...the irritating people, the people who are a nuisance from the human point of view, the people who are a source of frustration and irritation in your life. Loving them is only a propensity that a believer who is abiding in the love of God can do. It's not a normal human reaction.

— If anyone understood this, it was the Apostle John. He was called the "love apostle" but before he came to Christ and began to walk with him, he was anything but loving. In Luke 9:51-55, Jesus and His disciples were traveling to Jerusalem through Samaria and they requested a place to stay for the night. The Samaritans, hating the Jews, did not receive them, so James and John asked Jesus if they could call down fire from heaven to consume them. Jesus rebuked them.

— So how did John go from being a racial hate-monger to the love apostle? The reason is clear: John describes himself in this Gospel as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Cf. 13:23; 20:2; 21:20). As John experienced the love of God, the love of God had the ability to change one of the "sons of thunder" to being the "love apostle."

— One of the things that happens to us as we abide in the love of God and experience the love of God on a moment-by-moment basis, we become a lot less sharp or harsh with people. We become a lot less critical. We develop a mindset where we give people a little more slack. We react with a little more patience. Why? Because that's how the Lord has treated us. Who am I to treat others differently than the grace that God has given me (Cf. Eph 4:32).

- This is the reason why we teach teenagers and young adults that they should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. Oftentimes, a young woman will be interested in and want to marry a young man who is either not a believer, or is a carnal believer. We often point out 2 Cor 6:14 about not being unequally yoked to an unbeliever, but we often don't tell them why.
- The "why" is because if you are yoked/attached to a non-Christian, or even a carnal Christian, you are yoked to someone who does not abide in the love of God. And if that person, whether it be the young woman or the young man, is not abiding in the love of God, they have no blueprint by which to love you. You are yoked to someone who does not have the capacity or the ability to love you the way God loves them.

(iii) Friendship with God (15:13-15)

- 13 **Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends.**
- 13 **Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.**
- 13 **No one shows greater love than when he lays down his life for his friends.**
- 13 **Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**
- What does it mean to be a friend? The whole idea of friendship is sacrifice, commitment to someone, giving them the benefit of the doubt. It involves a lifestyle that is somewhat sacrificial to that person and their needs.
- When this sacrifice and commitment is experienced by both parties, friendship is developed. If only one party experiences these traits, there is no friendship. If there is no sacrifice, there is no friendship.
- This verse is a description of Christ's sacrifice for us. He desires to be our friend, and we know this because of His sacrifice to lay down His life in place of ours.
- How do we determine the level of God's love for us? To put it solely in economic terms, just look at the price that was paid (Cf. Rom 5:8). Many people think, I know God loves me because I got the job or the house I wanted; I know God loves me because I got a positive report from the doctor.
- But these things are a very poor barometer of ascertaining God's love for us. Inevitably, as we live in a fallen world, we will eventually come to the conclusion that God doesn't love you. There are things that won't work out well in your life, the way that we from the human point of view want them to work out. So if your definition of God's love, or how you understand God's love, is faulty, you'll reach a faulty conclusion that God doesn't love you.
- We know God loves us based upon the price He paid to procure my salvation. And because He loves me and paid the ultimate price for me, He wants to be my friend as well.
- But friendship is a two-way street...God paid the ultimate price in sacrifice for me...now how can I sacrifice for Him?

14 You are My friends if you do what I command you.

14 You are My friends if you do what I command you.

14 You are my friends, if you do what I command you.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

- Our sacrifice to Him is to abide in His love. How to we abide in His love? We obey His commandments, through His resources and the power of the Holy Spirit.

— These are not terms by which we are saved! We are saved only through trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not the topic being discussed/taught here...friendship is. Jesus is talking to saved people, teaching how they can move from simple justification, into discipleship and friendship and closer intimacy with Him.

— What qualifies us to be a friend of God? Abiding in His love by obeying His commandments.

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, because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to 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.

15 I don't call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. But I've called you friends, because I've made known to you everything that I've heard from my Father.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

- Jesus sacrifice for us (15:13); our sacrifice for Him (15:14). Now Jesus talks about the benefits if we enter into this friendship with Him through obedience to His commands...

— The benefit of being God's friend is the disclosure of secrets, having insight to things that prior to your friendship with God were unknowable to you.

— What qualifies you to experience and understand these "secrets"? Friendship with God. What qualifies you to be a friend of God? Obedience.

- If you run a business and you hire a new person, you're not going to give access to all the company secrets in their first week. They aren't getting certain passwords, they won't get access to the company credit card or the business account. You only give those "secrets" to people/employees who have a strong track record of honesty, integrity and loyalty to you and your company.

— Same goes in our friendship with God...we know and understand a few things just after we're saved, but as we begin to walk and abide in His love, proving to be loyal and reliable

by obeying His commandments under the power of the Holy Spirit, suddenly you begin to see things that you never saw before. The Lord begins showing you and disclosing to you more and more because you are moving out of simply being a believer to being a friend.

- Jesus contrasts a slave with a friend...a slave doesn't know his master's plans, hopes or dreams. A slave simply carries out a list of tasks he is given by his master. But a friend knows the master more intimately, they communicate often about hopes and dreams, goals and purposes. When we become a friend of God, we begin to receive insight from God.

— God revealed His *deeds* to the Israelites, but He revealed His *ways* to Moses (Ps 103:7). To know God's ways, His manner of doing things, His purpose, how He thinks, His reasoning, is much more personal and intimate than simply knowing His deeds. This is what friendship with God means.

- James 2:23 says that Abraham was called a "friend of God." Abraham was not simply a believer in Jesus Christ who was to come, but he was someone who walked with God. He graduated from the status of a believer/slave to being a friend of God.

— As a friend of God, God wanted to show Abraham more and more and more. In Gen 18:17-19, God has a conversation within the Trinity about whether or not to hide from Abraham what He was about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah. Because Abraham was considered a friend of God because of his obedience, God asked Himself how He could not disclose to Abraham what He was about to do.

- This is what Jesus wants to do with these 11 disciples...He wants to disclose things to them. He wants to teach them more than they want to be taught. In 16:13, Jesus tells His disciples that the coming Holy Spirit will disclose to them what is to come.

— Let's apply this: if you are stuck in your Bible understanding, if you are at the same level of Bible understanding that you were in five years ago, that is not an intellectual problem it is a spiritual problem because the Scripture plainly teaches that as we obey God, our knowledge and insight and wisdom into the Scriptures grows more and more.

— If someone says that they want to read and understand the Bible, and asks what book they should read, the correct answer is not an academic one but a spiritual one: obey every single commandment that He has given you. You may not understand every single command, but there are commands that you do understand. There are things in your life that you can say, I wish I was doing better. Start by obeying that command!

— As you begin to make volitional choices to abide in the love of God and obey His commands, just watch what happens to your understanding and level of insight into the things of God. You will begin to understand things that you did not understand a month ago, a year ago.

- There is a very interesting passage in John's Gospel, which is often misinterpreted and misunderstood (Cf. 2:23-25). It says that while Jesus was at the Passover, many believed

(*pisteuōeis*) in His name after seeing His signs, but it says that Jesus did not entrust Himself to them because He omnisciently knew all people (their hearts).

— These people were still "slaves" and not yet friends. They were brand new Christians and had not yet demonstrated a track record of obedience or a track record of abiding in the love of God by obeying God's commands. This isn't a derogatory statement by Jesus...they were brand new believers for crying out loud...there hasn't been enough time pass for them to have a track record of obedience yet.

— They were truly saved, they were going to heaven, but they had not yet attained "friendship" status with God. But as time went on and assuming they remained in God's love and obeyed His commands, they eventually would attain a level of friendship with God. [2 Chr 20:7; Is 41:8]

- (iv) Election (15:16a)
- (v) Fruit bearing (15:16b)
- (vi) Effective prayer (15:16c)

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.

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.

16 "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. I have appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

- The fourth benefit we begin to receive for abiding in God's love and obeying His commands is that we begin to fulfill the purpose for which we exist

— Every single human being is born with a purpose, and it's so sad that so many people go through life not understanding that they have a purpose and not understanding what that purpose is

— In the first century, the students would choose their rabbi, the rabbi wouldn't choose their students. This is similar to how it works on college campuses today...students tend to gravitate to certain professors or teachers who they get the most out of. It's not the professor who chooses their students.

— But Jesus says here that in this relationship that we have (Jesus and the disciples/us), it's the opposite: He tells them that they did not choose Him (which was the norm), but He

chose them. Jesus hand-picked these 11 disciples.

— "...I chose you" – a cornerstone of Calvinism's doctrine of Unconditional Election, however they complicate something that is rather simple: Christ is saying nothing more than any employer could say to their employee—the employer's choosing was decisive.

— The employee could not force the employer to hire him, and the employer could not force the employee to accept the position. Though the employer was completely in charge, the employee had to consent to being hired.

— Where Calvinism's doctrine of Unconditional Election goes wrong is that they quote from verses that state the election (or choosing) is not to salvation, but to service (Cf. Acts 9:15). The "choosing" by Jesus was for service or fruit-bearing, not for salvation.

— Just like Paul mentioned numerous times that he was "chosen" to be an apostle, Jesus is telling His disciples that they were "chosen" to bear fruit

— Jesus can't be referring to salvation here because His audience is 11 saved disciples. They were already saved...Jesus is encouraging them in fruit bearing.

— The initiative in the relationship between Him and His disciples lay with Himself, not them (Cf. 1:39,42-43; 6:70; 10:27)

— But Matt 4:19-20 seems to show the action was on the part of the disciples. Jesus spoke and the action was that the disciples "immediately" followed Him. Then three years later (15:16), in the Upper Room before Jesus' death, He tells them that they did not choose Him, but instead He chose them.

— So the disciples thought they chose the Lord, and they did, but we learn here that the Lord first made some type of move toward them by choosing them ahead of time.

See [Soteriology 02 - Election \(2 Peter 3:9\)](#).

— Harry Ironside said this about election: "When you enter heaven, there is a sign on the gate that says, 'All who will and seek to enter, come through this gate.' And after you walk through the gate and the gate closes, you look back at the gate and on the other side there's a sign that says, 'Welcome you who were chosen from the foundation of the world.'"

— "...appointed you" – we are chosen to salvation, but that is not all...we are "appointed" to go and bear fruit. We are chosen, and the fruit that we would bear for Him was also chosen (Eph 2:10). We are not saved *by* our good works, but we are saved *for* good works.

— So when we begin to bear fruit as believers by following the recipe and invitation given in v9-10 by staying/abiding in fellowship with Him so the fruit comes, we begin living/fulfilling the purpose for which we exist. There is nothing more meaningful or fulfilling in life than to fulfill our purpose and design.

— How sad it is that so many Christians go through life not bearing any fruit, or very little fruit, never fulfilling their purpose and design, and they get to the end of their life full of regret. They make a statement, "If I had to do it all over again, I would...."

- The problem with life is that there are no "do-overs"...you only get once chance at living life. Time is our most inelastic resource, once it's gone you can never get it back. James 4:14 says that our lives are like a mist, that appear for a little while then are gone. Yet we have this brief period of time to make eternal investments for God.
- A businessman once said: "I have spent my entire life climbing the ladder of success, only to find out the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall." How tragic it is to get to the end of your life and have great regrets.
- But if we follow this invitation and this recipe (15:9-10) and begin to manifest fruit for God, we'll find that we are fulfilling the purpose for God saving us and our very existence
- "...go" - *hypagō*, Jesus is telling the disciples that the fruit that they would bear is not to remain there in the Upper Room, but it was to go beyond the four walls of the church, into the hostile world (Cf. 20:21). Jesus would begin to talk about this in more detail in v18.
- When we track the travel of these disciples after Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension, it is astonishing where these disciples went (see chart: **Where the Eleven Went** below). They did not accomplish all that they did by their own human power, but by following Jesus' teaching here and cultivating a daily, moment-by-moment relationship with Him.
- Most of these disciples were martyred for their witness and faith in Christ
- "...bear" - note the difference between "bearing" fruit and "producing" fruit, a key distinction. When we "bear" fruit, the production of the fruit does not rest with us. Our sole responsibility is to abide in the vine (Christ), and it's His responsibility to bear fruit through us.
- Many Christians spend their lives in the power of their flesh trying to do things for God in order to please Him. In our works righteousness mindset and our pride, we begin to falsely assume that the work of God rests on our shoulders. If you try to live your life after this false assumption, you will not be a happy Christian because you are bearing a burden that God never gave you to bear. He simply tells us to stay connected to Him by way of fellowship, and the fruit that God wants to bring forth will come automatically.
- "...fruit" [2x] - not the 33 positional truths a believer receives at the point of faith (Cf. Eph 1). The disciples He's talking to are already in possession of these positional truths.
- The fruit Jesus is talking about is something tangible, on the outside, that other can see and benefit from. Bearing fruit is not automatic in the life of a believer (Cf. v2; Rom 6:4). If it were, there would be no command to abide in Christ. If fruit came forth from every believer automatically, Jesus entire teaching in this chapter would be irrelevant.
- Examples of fruit include Bible study, prayer, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, service, use of spiritual gifts, financial stewardship, generosity...the list goes on and on. Fruit would encompass anything that is beneficial to the life of another.

- In other words, God has saved you not just to bless you, but so that you could be a blessing to others. When God called Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), He told Abraham that "through you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed." God blessed Abraham so that Abraham could be a blessing. The great design of our lives is to be used by God in such a way that we can be a blessing to other people.
- "...remain" - the Lord seeks to produce in us a fruit that abides, a fruit that lasts, a fruit that remains
- The only things that we are going to take from this life into the next life are: the souls of people (Eccl 3:11; Dan 12:2; Matt 25:46) and the Word of God (Is 40:8; Matt 24:35). If this is true, this should be a guide for where we put our time, our treasure, and our talent. Our primary investments in this life should be in the Word of God and into the souls of people.
- We, especially in America, become so distracted by side things that will never stand the test of fire. We are literally rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic while the ship is going down, rather than focusing on efforts and time on the things that will remain.
- The sixth benefit to abiding in the love of God is a prayer life that has power, is effective, it takes on new fervency (Cf. 15:7)
- The process goes something like this: the moment we decide to abide in the love of God and obey His commands, we begin to get a hunger and thirst for His Word. As we learn His Word, and are faithful in it, He begins to reveal additional revelation/knowledge to us. And as we intake this additional knowledge, remaining in His Word, we begin more and more to understand His will (James 4:2-3). And as we understand His will, we understand better how to pray, and we begin to pray according to His revealed will in Scripture. And as we begin to do that, He begins to answer our prayers (1 John 5:14) .
- As we abide in Christ and His Word, His will begins to be revealed to us, we begin to see it, first dimly, then more clearly, and it becomes a priority if not an obsession for us and we begin to pray according to His will, and we begin to see answers to our prayers.
- "...in My name" - asking in Jesus' name isn't some type of verbal formula we tack on at the end of our prayers...it means to pray for His priorities, for His desires, for the things that please His heart (Cf. notes on 14:13). It means praying for the things that Jesus wants to see accomplished.
- Notice how fruit bearing is connected to prayer. Fruit bearing in the first part of the verse, prayer is the second part of the verse. How have we deceived ourselves into thinking that fruit bearing that God wants to bring forth in our lives can be disconnected from prayer?
- We cannot and we will not produce fruit that lasts without prayer

Where the Eleven Went

Disciple	Place
James the Son of Alpheus	Jerusalem
Simon the Zealot	Jerusalem
James the Son of Zebedee	Judea (Acts 12:2)
Philip	E. Turkey
Thaddeus	Mesopotamia
Peter	Babylon, Rome
Matthew	Parthia (Tehran)
John	Asia Minor, Patmos, Ephesus
Thomas	India
Bartholomew	India
Andrew	Ukraine, Russia, Greece

<http://www.ichthus.info/Disciples/intro.html>

(vii) Loving others (15:17)

17 This I **command** you, that you love one another.

17 This I command you, that you love one another.

17 I am giving you these commandments so that you may love one another."

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

- The seventh and final benefit for abiding in God's love is that we begin to have a capacity to love one another
- "...command" - this is not a suggestion, it's not something that Jesus throws out there and says, Things aren't going well, try this...".
- The command is to love people, no matter how they treat you. And the reason we can do this is because Jesus first loved us (Cf. v12). It's only after I realize how much Jesus loves me and how much grace and mercy and forgiveness He has bestowed upon me, that I can then turn around and give just a portion of the grace and mercy and forgiveness that He has given me, to others (Cf. Eph 4:32).

- In Matt 18:21-35 Jesus told the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. A servant owed his master a huge sum of money, that could never be repaid. The servant begged his master to forgive the debt, and he did. Later, the servant went out to another servant who owed him a small amount of money and demanded repayment. That servant begged the other servant for more time to repay, but the forgiven servant denied his request and threw him in debtor's prison. When the master found out what the forgiven servant had done to the servant who owed him little, he reinstated his debt and threw him into debtor's prison until his huge debt was repaid.
- Jesus gave them this commandment already (Cf. 13:34-35), a new commandment, that we are to love others not as we love ourselves, which was the old commandment, but to love others as He has loved us. A much higher standard of love than simply loving like we love ourselves. And, Jesus says, it is by this love that you have for others, that mimics how I love you, is how people will know that we are His disciples.
- It's not our big fancy church buildings, our attendance numbers, the number of people and variety of instruments in our worship band, the laser light show, or anything else that catches the eye of people...but how we love them.

(C) Suffering (15:18-25)

In this section of the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus essentially teaches the disciples about their relationship to the world. There are many great things that happen to a Christian when they begin to abide in Christ: fruit bearing and loving are two on that list, that Jesus covered earlier in this chapter. But there's also a negative consequence to those who begin walking with the Lord as disciples: they begin to find themselves out of step with the unsaved world. In some cases, they begin to experience hostility between the world system and themselves. Here, Jesus normalizes that treatment of the world to the believer for the disciples.

- (a) The facts (15:18-24)
 - (i) Disciples will be hated as Christ was hated (15:18-19)

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

18 "If the world hates you, you should realize that it hated me before you.

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

- Fact #1: the disciples will be hated, just like Jesus Christ was hated
- "...world" - *cosmos*, the world system whose philosophy, system of thinking, and manner of life are diametrically opposed to Jesus Christ and hostile to the things of God
- The world system is opposed and hostile toward God, and to Christians by association, because ever since the fall of man in Gen 3, the world system has been owned and

operated by Satan himself (but God still remains sovereign) (Cf. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19)

- "...hates you" - a description of the attitude of the worldly thinker toward a growing and abiding disciple of Jesus Christ
- If I become an abiding disciple of Christ, I will be an enemy of the world, just as the unbelieving world is the enemy of God
- Everyone will be judged by someone...the world is currently hurling toward God's judgment, and believers are judged now by the world
- Being a carnal Christian, as described in 1 Cor 3:1-3, is attractive to many believers because it allows them to be a friend of the world but still be a believer in Jesus Christ. But when we find ourselves in that position as believers, the Bible says that we are adulteresses (James 4:4). When a believer is not walking with the Lord, but has fallen back into friendship with the world, God looks at that as a husband would look at his bride, whom he is going to marry, if she cheated on him.
- "...it has hated Me before *it hated you*" - long before the world ever hated you or I, or any other professing Christian who is walking with the Lord, it hated Him. Hatred from the world is nothing new...Jesus experienced it, He lived it.

The immature Christian supposes that the hatred of the world against him is a reproach. He thinks that he is to blame for it, and that if he were kinder, more gentle, more humble, more Christ-like, the hatred of unbelievers would be overcome. This is a great miscalculation. The truth is, the more Christ-like we are, the more we will be antagonized and shunned. The conclusive proof of this is found in the treatment that Jesus received while He was in the world.

19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I **chose you out of the world**, because of this the world hates you.

19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

19 If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as one of its own. But because you do not belong to the world and I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

- If we were part of the world system, we would be loved by the world, accepted by the world, even venerated by the world

— More and more we see today, even in evangelical scholarship, that maintaining a traditional, conservative theological position such as a worldwide global flood is laughed at

and ridiculed by so-called Bible scholars. Evangelical academia is moving away from traditional Bible interpretation and closer to a worldly interpretation of the Bible.

— Jesus touches on it here and again in 17:15 that believers are *in* the world but we are not *of* the world

- "...I chose you out of the world" - Jesus touches again on God's choice of believers (Cf. v16)

— We are different from the world, in the world but not of the world, because Jesus chose us (election) to bear His name while living in a world system that is hostile to Him

— Jesus chose us to fulfill His purpose and His plan while we're living on Satan's terrain.

We were not redeemed, bought, purchased by Jesus Christ to simply reflect the value system of Satan. We have a higher calling, a different calling, and consequently our value system, our method of thinking and our philosophy are to be different than that of the world. This is why the world hates believers...because we are not like them.

- If you walk into a Christian bookstore, usually at the front on some type of display case, they will have a small book that lists all the promises that God gives us in the Bible. Great, wonderful promises, along the lines of all things work together for good (Rom 8:28), etc. But you can read that book until your eyes bleed, and you probably won't find the promise given in 2 Tim 3:12: Indeed, all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

— This promise is just as ironclad as every other promise in the Bible...you can take that to the bank. And you have to decide very early on in your Christian walk whether or not it is worth it to have people mad at you, to despise you, because the more you find yourself walking with Jesus Christ, the more out of sorts you'll be with the world system.

— You might even find yourself out of sorts and in confrontation with your own family members, your own parents or children, or God-forbid your own spouse. You might even find yourself out of sorts with your own church.

(ii) No servant is greater than his master (15:20-21)

20 **Remember** the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well; **if they followed My word, they will follow yours also.**

20 **Remember** the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

20 **Remember** what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

- "Remember" - the fact that a slave is not greater than his master is not new...Jesus taught it to the disciples in the Upper Room already (Cf. 13:14-16) in the context of the example from His foot washing

— Now Jesus teaches them the same principle, but now with a different application: persecution. I am/will be persecuted, thus you will too, because as My servants, you are not greater than I am.

— People have a tendency to treat a master's servants in the same way they treat the master

— "...if they followed My word, they will follow yours also" - the last phrase of this verse is often ignored...

— The pattern of Jesus' ministry was that the vast majority rejected Him and His teaching; they liked His miracles and healings, but they expected a reigning Messiah who would come and throw off the Roman occupation and bring in kingdom conditions.

— When Jesus didn't do this, because of the rejection of the religious leaders, people left, they forgot about Jesus, Jesus went "underground" in His ministry and began preaching and teaching only to His disciples.

— So the result was that the vast majority never accepted Him as their Messiah, the Son of God, but a small minority (the remnant) did. So the lesson here is that it will be the same way in our ministry...the vast majority will not listen, they will ignore you, possibly hate you and persecute you, but a small majority will believe and come to Christ because a servant is not greater than his master.

21 But all these things they will do to you on account of My name, because **they do not know the One who sent Me.**

21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

21 They will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

- "...on account of My name" - the world's response to Christ's disciples is based on who He is, not who we are. It is not so much you and me that they hate, it is Him that they hate.

— Jesus is giving us an out here...oftentimes when we're evangelizing someone or speaking with them about spiritual things, and we think we're making progress, and all of a

sudden they just completely reject the gospel and walk away. It's easy to blame ourselves in some way for this, but Jesus says that it's not you, it's Me (1 Sam 8:5-7).

— When people you speak with or evangelize reject your message, it's not you they are rejecting...they are rejecting Jesus Christ

— Today there is a lot of "God talk" and talk of spirituality, and it's a comfortable topic for most people to talk about God, because "God" in their vocabulary can mean what they want it to mean. But as soon as you bring up the name of Jesus Christ, all hell breaks loose. That is when the rubber meets the road in the human heart, and you'll often get vitriol and hatred simply from mentioning the name of Jesus.

— Jesus says in this verse that the reason for this hatred and vitriol for Jesus Christ is because these people don't know the Father. They can say the word "God" all they want, but if someone rejects Jesus, they are rejecting the Father.

— They persecuted Jesus because they did not know the One who sent Him, the Father; and Jesus here says that the world is going to persecute you (the disciples, and by extension all believers) because they do not know the One who sent us (Jesus).

(iii) Why the world hated Jesus (15:22-24)

22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.

22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have any sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

- Now Jesus gives us the reason why the world hates Jesus so much...because He exposes their sin

— Jesus is the Light and the Light exposes sin (Cf. 7:7). Jesus' very existence brings a standard of truth and light into the world that the world hates. The world wants to hide and cover up their evil deeds, but Jesus testifies that the world's deeds are evil. The more the Light of Jesus shines in the world, the more it exposes this reality.

— Men and women who love sin hate the Light. This isn't news, Jesus told this same thing to Nicodemus (Cf. 3:19-20). Jesus told him that everyone who loves their sin hates the Light and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

— What is going on in the heart of a sinful person is that they love the darkness, they love their sin, and Jesus comes into the world and ruins what they love by exposing their sin with His Light. And the world, rather than responding to the Light, instead says that we

have to get rid of the Light because once we get rid of the Light, there will be nothing left to expose our sin.

— This is why all the OT prophets had very short careers. Jesus exposes this in Matt 23:34. God sent the nation of Israel His best (Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Micah, Amos, on and on), but the response of unbelieving Israel was that they scourged them, persecuted them from city to city, and some they killed.

— During the Tribulation, Rev 11 describes the ministry of Two Witnesses who will evangelize in Jerusalem for 1260 days (Rev 11:3). What was the world's reaction to them? Rev 11:7-10 says that when the Two Witnesses finished their testimony, the Antichrist "makes war" with them, overcomes them, and kills them. In Revelation, these Two Witnesses represent light, they are analogized to lampstands, but the world will hate the light that they give and will kill them. Once they are killed, their bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three days while the earth dwellers will give gifts to each other in celebration (a satanic Christmas celebration). Verse 10 says that these two prophets "tormented" those who dwelt on the earth. The "torment" was because they shined the light of truth in a world of darkness, and light by its nature is tormenting to those who dwell in darkness and love their sin.

— We see something very similar today...those who speak the truth are called hate-mongers. Those who call the truth hate hate the truth. There is something in the unbelieving darkened heart that hates the truth and hates the light, so it calls good evil and evil good. They twist everything around in the dark and perverted crevices of their unbelieving human minds.

— Jesus is warning His disciples, and us by extension, that the exact same thing is going to happen to them/us, because if they/we walk with Him, they/we will be sons of light (1 Thess 5:5). Our function as disciples of Christ is to radiate the Light of God in a dark world (Cf. Eph 5:11).

23 **The one who hates Me hates My Father also.**

23 **He who hates Me hates My Father also.**

23 **The person who hates me also hates my Father.**

23 **He that hateth me hateth my Father also.**

- Because Jesus takes His orders and His words directly from God the Father (Cf. 5:19), if you hate the words and deeds of Jesus, you hate the words and deeds of the Father

— In the same way, those in the world who hate the words and deeds of a disciple of Christ, hate Jesus because a disciple simply relays the words and deeds of Christ to a darkened world

(iii) Why the world hated Jesus (15:22-24)

24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

24 If I hadn't done among them the actions that no one else did, they wouldn't have any sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

- Jesus brought with Himself into the world a divine standard. The moment that divine standard is erected is the moment a line is drawn between righteousness and unrighteousness. If this standard did not exist, the world would not consider their deeds as unrighteous.

— But the standard is present and by definition it reveals wickedness. The world, by and large, does not like this standard.

— This is not a new idea...it goes back to the beginning of John's Gospel (Cf. 1:4-5). The problem with the Light is not the Light itself, but with the men and women who would prefer to live in the darkness rather than the Light. It is because Jesus is the Light of the world (Cf. 8:12) that the world despises Jesus Christ (Cf. 7:7).

— Jesus came into the world as a Light, and by definition the Light points out and exposes unrighteousness, it holds up a standard that identifies unrighteousness. The problem is not the Light, it is what the Light is exposing.

- The reaction of people to the Light is that it will expose their wickedness and they will repent and come to Christ and get the darkness out of their lives, or for the majority, they will remain in the darkness and continue to cling to their sin, which is human nature.

— For the person who does not come to the Light, the only other option they have is to extinguish the standard, so their unrighteousness is no longer unrighteousness in their eyes, and they can continue in their sin

(b) The foretelling (15:25)

25 But *this has happened* so that the word that is written in their Law will be fulfilled: 'THEY HATED ME FOR NO REASON!'

25 But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

25 But this happened so that what has been written in their Law might be fulfilled: 'They hated me for no reason.'

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

- Quoted from either Ps 35:19 or Ps 69:4, or conflating the two psalms together

- These psalms were written by David, who was hated by Saul without a cause from 1 Sam 16 (when the Holy Spirit left Saul and entered David) and 1 Sam 31 (when Saul committed suicide)
- David had two opportunities to kill Saul as Saul was pursuing him throughout the wilderness, but he didn't take them. He didn't want to touch the Lord's anointed. He was waiting on the Lord's timing, not his own.
- Why did Saul hate David so much? Because the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and fell on David (1 Sam 16:13-14). David had the favor and anointing of God on his life...Saul did not (anymore). There is no other logical reason for Saul's hatred of David than sheer jealousy. This is what David is describing in the psalms that Jesus quoted here.
- So what is the application? The more you have the favor of God on your life, the more you have the anointing of God on your life, the more you have the empowerment of God in your life, the more you will experience animosity from the world system. Sometimes this animosity comes from unbelievers, but unfortunately sometimes it also animosity comes from believers/professing Christians who are worldly and carnal in their thought processes and lifestyle.
- "New level, new devil" - greater anointing, greater authority, greater ministry opportunities, greater gifting, greater understanding of the Scriptures, however God is blessing you, logically leads to greater hostility from the world system.
- Jesus is saying that these things are the same things that He experienced: the world hated Him without a cause.
- The persecution and hatred of the world system does not jeopardize God's plan one iota...it was predicted to be part of the package that would fall upon Christ Himself first, then upon abiding believers/disciples who would come after Him (Cf. 1 Peter 4:12).
- How comforting would these words be for these 11 disciples, who almost all would experience horrific martyr deaths. How encouraging would it be for them when the Holy Spirit brought back to their remembrance what Jesus is teaching them here, as they were out in the world under persecution, but to understand that this hatred from the world was predicted by Jesus Himself, and would in no way jeopardize the plan of God.
- This talk of persecution makes Christians today uncomfortable, but there is a silver lining in this whole idea of persecution, which Jesus gives us in v26-27...

Not All Hostility is Persecution

Only undeserved hostility may be classified as persecution for Christ's sake. Jesus never intended to comfort a Christian whom the world hates because of a conceited or critical spirit, or because the person is mean, unsympathetic, lazy, dull, boring, joyless, suspicious, or quick-tempered (1 Peter 2:20). God may use the unbeliever to reprove His own child

who has refused correction. To label deserved rebukes as persecution harms believers who suffer true persecution.

There is great comfort when persecution is the result of loyalty to Jesus and not because of a tactless, unloving, critical attitude or sense of superiority. When you are truly persecuted for Jesus' sake, there should be a deep, personal satisfaction in suffering for His sake in return for all He suffered for you. To receive the same treatment from the world as Jesus received is a cause for joy, not self-pity.

Wrong Responses to Hostility

1. Retreating from the World: He did not command Christians to remove themselves from association with the world. Instead, just as God sent Christ into the world, Jesus Christ sends His followers into the world (John 17:18). God calls Christians to deliberately spend time and effort with non-believers.
2. Imitating the World: Some Christians err in trying to win the unbelieving world to Christ by imitating them by following their sinful practices. The center of our lives is Jesus, not empty amusements, corrupt activities, sexualized literature, and vulgar music that damage godly thoughts and emotions (Col 3:1-2; James 4:4).

(D) Witnessing (15:26-27)

- (a) The Holy Spirit will witness to the disciples about Jesus Christ (15:26)

26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *namely, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, He will testify about Me,*

26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,*

26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of Truth, who comes from the Father—he will testify on my behalf.

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

- In spite of suffering and persecution from the world, God grants us His resources, namely the Holy Spirit

— The power of the Holy Spirit is something we can draw from, moment-by-moment, by faith, in the midst of suffering and persecution

— Yes, we will endure hostility from the world system, but there is something else at work in the child of God, allowing us to live above the temptations and hostility of a satanically energized world

— In Acts 7, as Stephen is being stoned as the first martyr of the Church Age, and the rocks are falling on him left and right, it says that he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:55).

God never put Stephen in a circumstance that He had not first empowered him to handle.

- "When" - notice Jesus doesn't say "if" the Helper comes, but "when"
- Jesus has been very clear to this point in John's Gospel that after His "glorification" (death, burial, resurrection, and in particular His ascension), He will send the Holy Spirit to indwell all believers (Cf. 7:39; 14:16-17; 16:7).
- "...Helper" - *paraklētos*, also translated as "Comforter" or "Advocate"; it means to "come alongside to assist"
- In the root of this word *paraklētos* are the ideas of advising, exhorting, comforting, strengthening, interceding, and encouraging [Ryrie]. This is how the Holy Spirit "helps" believers.
- In the Garden of Eden, during creation, God looked at man and said, Geez, this guy needs some help, and then he created the woman (Gen 2:18). If I think of all the things I can do simply based on the fact that my wife helps me, and that I wouldn't be able to do even half of these things without her help, think about an omniscient, omnipotent Holy Spirit as an additional Helper in your life, and what you could accomplish through His power and His help.
- And lest you think that a "Helper" is something less than, God Himself is called a Helper (same Hebrew word as Gen 2:18) in Ps 54:4
- "...I will send to you from the Father...who comes from the Father" - Jesus in a sense triggered the sending of the Holy Spirit by His ascension back to the right hand of the Father, but it was the Father who sent the Holy Spirit into the world. Jesus will ask the Father to send the Spirit, but ultimately it's the Father who sends the Spirit (Cf. 14:16).
- When we read verses like this, it's important to understand that this isn't the first advent of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was active throughout the OT, as early as Gen 1:2. So this sending of the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension was not a new sending of the Spirit as in the first time, but a new sending of the Spirit as far as His role and ministry within the believer and within the church.
- "...the Spirit of truth" - describes what the Holy Spirit does and what He is interested in: truth
- In one sense, He is going to disclose truth to these disciples because they are going to write gospels and epistles, which would make up much of the NT. These are the ministries of revelation and inspiration, both of which have passed. There is no new revelation today, since John finished writing the Book of Revelation in ~95 AD, that rises to the level of Scripture.
- In another sense, for us today, He does not reveal or inspire new truth to us because the canon of Scripture is closed (2 Tim 3:17; Jude 3; Rev 22:18-19), but He illuminates the Scripture to us, both the single meaning of it and the multiple applications from it. He takes the truths from the Bible, already recorded, and helps us understand these truths.

- This illumination happens when you're reading something in the Bible and it's almost if that passage or verse was written directly to you. In fact sometimes this is so startling that you think you just had a revelation...but you didn't have a revelation, you had an illumination (1 John 2:27). Sometimes an illumination is so powerful that it feels like a revelation.
- "...He will testify about Me" - Jesus gives us two ways we can know whether the Holy Spirit is in control of me, in control of you, in control of a church or other ministry? Jesus gives us two things:

1. Since He is the "Spirit of truth," what is the priority given to truth? The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, He is all about truth. If you're among a group of people, a church, or a ministry that loves the truth, seeks to truth, lives the truth, and through the ministry of illumination are understanding the truth, you're among a group of people who are empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit.
 - But if you run into a group or a circumstance where truth is being rejected, discarded, deprioritized, or de-emphasized, you can easily conclude that group/organization/ministry/person is not empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit.
2. The Spirit will testify to the truth about who Jesus is. These poor disciples were afraid, terrified, and had so many lingering questions in their minds, but Jesus tells them their questions are about to be answered because after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, He would send the Holy Spirit to testify to them about Him in a very convincing way.
 - One of the great ministries of the Holy Spirit is to put the spotlight on Jesus Christ. If the spotlight of a group, a Bible study, a church, or a ministry is not focused on Jesus Christ exclusively, then that group/study/church/ministry is not empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit.
 - Is attention being drawn to Jesus Christ, or is it being drawn to a person, a talent, a building, an accomplishment, or some other thing that is outside of God the Son? If so, then the Holy Spirit is not involved because the Holy Spirit loves to place the spotlight squarely on God the Son.
 - There are so many churches, groups or ministries that focus so much on the Holy Spirit...they focus on speaking in tongues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they sing songs to the Holy Spirit, they pray to the Holy Spirit. When they talk, it's always the Holy Spirit this and the Holy Spirit that, and it's fine to give the Holy Spirit His rightful place, but the Holy Spirit would be embarrassed and upset about this type of specific attention. The Holy Spirit does not seek the spotlight, He seeks to reflect the spotlight onto Jesus Christ. The third member of the Trinity loves to put the spotlight on the second member of the Trinity.
 - Anything the Spirit of God touches will immediately glorify Jesus Christ

27 and you are **testifying as well, because you have been with Me from the beginning.**

27 and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

27 You will testify also, because you have been with me from the beginning."

27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

— "...testifying" - *martyreō*, where we get the term "martyr" because a martyr testifies about Jesus Christ and loses their life because of it

— The Holy Spirit is going to testify to these disciples (and by extension, all believers) about God the Son, then the disciples (and we) are to go out and testify about Jesus Christ to the world

— In other words, the Holy Spirit wants to use us and involve us in His ministry of testimony about Jesus Christ. As we share our faith, ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who is using me to testify to others about Jesus.

— "...because you have been with Me from the beginning" - this is what qualifies these disciples to testify about God the Son

— The basis of their testimony would be their long association with, and intimate knowledge of, Jesus [Constable]

— What made these disciples so special? First, that the Holy Spirit will testify to them about God the Son, and second that they had walked with Jesus Christ from the beginning.

— "beginning" - *archē*, the same root word for "beginning" in Acts 1:22, which was one of the qualifications to be an apostle

— Since there are no longer apostles today (in the same sense as the 11 here), what is the application for us? The application is that intimacy *with* Him precedes ministry *for* Him. We become qualified for ministry after we have spent time in intimacy with Him.

— In order for God to use us in ministry, we have to have spent time with Him, we have to be in a situation and spend time when the Holy Spirit is impressing upon our heart truth after truth after truth. The process may be different for different people, but the principle remains the same: intimacy *with* Jesus Christ will always precede ministry *for* Jesus Christ.

— There are so many people who want to get out there and get busy for the Lord, but they have not taken the time to sit under biblical teaching long enough or taken the time required to search the Scriptures. They have a weak, inconsistent prayer life.

— But those who have spent the requisite time with the Lord in diligent study and listening, who have asked the Lord to correct false beliefs or impressions they may have, or to change things in their lives that aren't right, rearrange their priorities, how much different is it to sit under those people in a ministry, who shed the light of the Word, have wisdom and knowledge that comes from the Holy Spirit, because they have laid and continue to lay the ground work of personal study, learning and prayer.