

Abiding In The Vine

E-LIFE WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL



Eternal Life Worship Center
865 Woodstock Road, Virginia Beach, VA.23464

Abiding In The Vine

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing”. John 15:15

Jesus said that in order for us to bear fruit in this earth we must abide in Him. If we try to live separate from Him we will not be able to accomplish anything concerning spiritual growth. As we read this passage of scripture, we understand that Jesus is talking about our relationship with Him and responsibilities as believers. Jesus said that He is the true vine and we are the branches. Every branch that does not bear fruit is cut away and the branches that bear fruit are pruned so they can bear even more fruit. Here Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning.

1. Cutting off and 2. Cutting back branches.

Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, to strengthen our character and faith, God must sometimes discipline us by allowing us to go through things that will make us stronger and increase our faith in him. Those branches that don't bear fruit or are unproductive are cut away not only because they are unproductive but so they won't infect the rest of the tree. Those who don't bear fruit or try to stop the efforts of those who are, will be removed. As the vine Jesus is represented here as our source for spiritual growth. He is the sustenance that we need to become fruit bearers. To abide in Jesus or the "Vine" we must establish and continue to cultivate a relationship with Him as Lord, Savior and Master.

To establish relationship with Christ we have to fellowship with Him on a daily basis. We have to live or take up residence in Christ and stay attached to Him through the reading of the word, much prayer and right living.

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Notice that we are referred to as branches. A branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the Vine, We as believers cannot bear fruit unless we have an abiding relationship with the true Vine, Jesus Christ. As a branch we have the privilege of sharing in the life of Jesus and the responsibility to abide in Him. Again, being a branch means that we depend on Jesus and the word of God for our sustenance and satisfaction. The symbolism of the Vine and branches is similar to that of the Head and the body. We have a living relationship with Christ and we belong to Him. As we continue to abide in Jesus we become stronger and mature in faith and character.

The more we mature in Christ the more difficult it will be for the enemy to try and break us away. It would be impossible to break off a strong mature living branch without injuring the vine itself. So as long as we abide we are secure. We have a living union with Christ so that we may bear fruit, we enjoy Him because we have a loving union and we never have to be afraid because we have a lasting union with Him. Branches must stay attached to the vine or tree in order to live and produce fruit. The branch by itself is weak and useless it cannot bear fruit or produce it's own life. The life force must be drawn from the vine.

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

Scripture declares that it is our communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit that makes it possible to bear fruit. Jesus emphasizes the importance of union and communion. Not only here but several other images are given in scripture.

1 Corinthians 12:12 explains how the body and it's members are one. A member cut off from the body will die. Just as they both are one so are we in Christ.

The sooner we as believers discover we are only branches, the better we will relate to the Lord; for we will know our own weakness and express our need for His strength. The key word is abide; It means to keep in fellowship with Christ so his life can work in and through us to produce fruit. This involves the word of God and the confession of sin so nothing can hinder our communion with him. We have to be clean and purified by the message of the word. In order to continue in that purity we must remain in Him. We have to obey the Father because we love Him. If we love Him we will remain in Him.

How can we tell if we are abiding in Christ?

There is no particular feeling to determine this. However, there are evidences that appear and are unmistakably clear. Here is the acid test; when you abide in Christ you produce fruit. You also experience the Father's pruning so you can bear even more fruit. We have our prayers answered when we abide in Christ. This means that our prayers are effective. When our prayers are answered we glorify the Father because he is being seen and demonstrated in our lives. When people see proof of our abiding in Christ then our joy becomes full through experiencing the joy of Christ within us. When we abide in Christ it is a natural relationship for the branch and the vine. Even though this is a natural relationship it must be cultivated in the believer's life. It is not automatic, it demands worship, meditation on the word, prayer, sacrifice and service.

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Once we start to cultivate our union within Christ what a joyful one it is when we establish a deeper communion with Him. When we are deeply and joyfully abiding in Christ, we have no desire to return to the mundane shallow life of the fruitless or carnal believer.

What kind of fruit should we be producing as a branch in Christ?

If we look at Galatians 5:22,23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness faithfulness and self control.

This is the character of the Holy Spirit that is reproduced in us by the Spirit when we allow Him to control our lives by abiding in Christ. Here is where the Father's pruning is beneficial to us. For this fruit to manifest fully in our lives we must experience certain trials and tests that can produce God like character in us. To experience self control we must be allowed the opportunity to get out of control. Being out of control is a work of the flesh. The flesh cannot produce Godly character or fruit. It can only be produced in us through the Holy Spirit as a result of us abiding in Christ. What about kindness? Kindness is goodness in action, a gentle disposition, gentleness in dealing with others.

The Word describes the ability to respond peacefully for the welfare of those who would stress your patience. The Holy Spirit removes the harsh qualities of our character when we are under His control. The Holy Spirit's fruit is to be grown in our lives. When we examine the power of abiding in Christ more closely, we see and understand that this is not something we can produce on our own, through our own efforts apart from a deep relationship with Christ. By abiding in the Vine, we learn how to govern our attitude toward God. The first three graces exemplify this. The next three address our relationships

with others and the final three express principles that help guide the believer's conduct as a child of God. Jesus said that He is the true vine but that vine also has a vinedresser who is the Father. He is the one who does the cutting away and the pruning. He is in charge of taking care of the vine. He prunes the branches so they will produce more fruit. He prunes the branches so they will produce more fruit, become deeper in their union with Him. Display Godly disciplines at all times. Notice the progression here: no fruit John 15:2, fruit, more fruit and much fruit John 15:5,8.

“Many believers pray to become more fruitful”

Many believers pray to become more fruitful but don't enjoy the pruning process necessary to make this possible. If we resist the pruning of God then we will be hindered in bearing more and much fruit. This explains why we as believers go through tough times. Pruning involves the cutting away of dead wood that can breed disease. Sometimes He cuts away living tissue so that the branch can grow stronger. This is better translated this way, God will never leave us alone to grow on our own. So He sends the Word to us to show us how to become stronger in our faith and love for Him and others. When the Word comes it convicts us of the things in our life that are hindering us from walking in the fullness of blessing.

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He reveals to us the sin that we need to confess and repent of. He will even allow what we may perceive as something bad to happen to us in order to move us from one place to the next. Pruning is very necessary in maturing in God. We lose a job, a house, a friend or even a loved one, but in these losses God is still tending to the vine.

And once we heal from the pruning and realize the growth and steadfastness we will learn to appreciate the entire process. A weak non bearing believer will



be counter productive when it comes to encouraging and strengthening a fellow believer or winning a soul or having the tenacity to intercede for others. That is why James in the first chapter tells us to count it joy when we fall into various types of trials. He said that we know that the testing of our faith produces patience which is a grace of the fruit of the Spirit. He also stated that patience should have the opportunity to work in us so we can become mature complete in fruit bearing.

Patience works in us

He also stated that patience should have the opportunity to work in us so we can become mature complete in fruit bearing. He said that when we seek wisdom about the pruning process because of lack of understanding we can ask Him. But we must ask in faith which is another grace of the character of the Holy Spirit. Then we see in Romans 5 that we are at peace with God and in God because of our justification by faith. Verse 3 says that we

glory in tribulation because we know they produce perseverance, character and hope. So through the process of pruning we mature in Christ and are transformed into His image. The reason we must abide is so we can be a part of a living organism that will produce fruit. Many believers base their abiding in Christ on results. This may not necessarily be the case since machines and robots can produce results. be the case since machines and robots can produce results. It takestime to cultivate and produce fruit; a good crop does not come over night.

Be mindful of the fact that branches don't eat their own fruit, others do. This lets us know that we are not producing fruit to please ourselves but to serve others.

We should be the kind of believers who feed people with the fruit we produce. Our words, and works of righteousness.

Proverbs 10:21 says that the lips of the righteous feed many. Several different kinds of spiritual fruit are named in the Bible. When we win others to Christ we bear fruit. John 4:35-38 states that we are a part of the harvest. We also bear fruit as we grow in holiness and obedience.

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life. Romans 6:22

Paul considered Christian giving to be fruit from a dedicated life . As explained already The fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:22,23 this is the kind of Christian character that glorifies God and makes Christ real to others. Beloved, know that our service works grow out of our abiding life, our union with Christ. In closing, a true branch, united with the vine will always produce fruit. Fruit only grows where there is life and life is in the Vine; Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Eternal Life Worship Center

Pastors James & Priscilla Hodges
865 Woodstock Road Virginia Beach, VA

www.eternallifeworshipcenter.org

Service times Sunday-10 am
Wednesday Bible Study 7-8pm

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