

Abide

Jesus knows He will soon be arrested, and that this is the last night He will spend with His followers before He dies on the cross. In the next few chapters, Christ speaks His heartfelt last words to those He loves and desires to comfort. This seems an odd time for Christ to begin an analogy about vines, but it is one of my favorite passages in scripture. Both comforting and difficult: Christ wants His followers to live abundantly and to live for Him, but that also means giving things up to the Lord so that we can look and live more like Christ. Christ lovingly speaks, “Abide in my love.”

Prepare Your Heart

I encourage you to stop for a full six minutes and listen to this song “Though You Slay Me” by Shane & Shane, with a few words from John Piper.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyUPz6_TciY)

Then, pray through these lyrics:

*Though You slay me
Yet I will praise You
Though You take from me
I will bless Your name
Though You ruin me
Still I will worship
Sing a song to the one who's all I need*

Take a moment to write down whatever comes to mind in this moment. Pray over whatever God may be pruning away in your life, and for the strength to abide in Him.

John 15:1-11 ¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

- 1) Read Isaiah 5:1-7 and Isaiah 27:2-6. Those listening to Jesus speak would have known these references. What is the significance of Jesus saying He is “the vine”?
- 2) Jesus is creating a metaphor. If He is the vine, and we are the branches, what does that mean? Which one needs the other?
- 3) What is the job of the “vinedresser”? To help you, here is the definition of pruning:
prune /prūn/ - trim (a tree, shrub, or bush) by cutting away dead or overgrown branches or stems, especially to increase fruitfulness and growth.
- 4) Jesus doesn't want us to grow grapes, so what does it mean to “bear fruit”? To help you understand the metaphor, read about the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. If we are growing in character, what should our life produce?
- 5) Reread verse 2. What happens to those that are not “bearing fruit”? Were they ever attached to the Lord, or are they living by Him now?
- 6) Again in verse 2: Why does God need to cut things away from those that are already following Him and “bearing fruit”? Is it to punish or discipline them?
- 7) In C.S. Lewis' book *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, there is a selfish, mean-spirited boy called Eustice. On an adventure, he is turned into a dragon because of his self-centered choices. The only way to become a boy again is to let Aslan take his sharp claws and scrape away the tough dragon scales. “The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off.” How is Eustice like us? How is Aslan like the vinedresser?

- 8) Read verses 4-5 again. Who is the one actually “bearing” fruit in our lives?
- 9) What can we do apart from Christ?
- 10) This is the definition of abide: **a•bide**/ə' bīd/ - accept or act in accordance with (a rule, decision, or recommendation). Obey, observe, follow, keep to, remain in
So, if we know we need to abide in Christ to bear fruit, what does it mean to abide in Christ?
- 11) What is the result of not abiding in Christ? Why?
- 12) Reread verses 9-11. Why does Christ want us to abide in Him?
- 13) Go back and reread John 10:10. What similarity does it have to John 15:11? Jesus has been speaking about taking away things, but what does Jesus want for us? Why did He come? Just to take things away, or to give something?

If you have the time, I encourage you to watch this video called “God’s Chisel.”

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QCkBL2DfVg>)

This illustration displays a person who struggles to let God chisel away things in his life (like anger and lust) because it hurts. God responds, “When you look in the mirror, who do you see?”

“Well, I see me,” says the man.

“Well, then I need to keep chiseling away until you and others can see my Son,” says God.

Just like God’s chisel in this skit, in John 15, God the vinedresser has pruning shears. He is taking things out of our life so that we can bear the fruit of the Spirit, abide in Him, and look more like Him. It hurts as things come out of our life. Yet, this is the only thing that will keep the vine alive, bearing fruit, and living abundantly. Jesus came not just so you could survive, but so you could have joy and abundant life.

Reflect & Apply

14) What is God trying to prune away in your life now so that you can grow more? What dead weight or creeping weed is trying to keep you from God? What is distracting you most, or keeping you from abiding in what He says? Take time to write it out below.

15) What will it practically look like for you to let God prune or chisel away that thing this week? If you're ready to pray about it, I encourage you to read and pray through Psalm 139, particularly the end:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

16) What will it look like for you to practically abide in Christ this week?

As you finish your time, I hope you'll sing "Abide with Me"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5KsKsEu0v0>) and pray through Psalm 73:23-26.

²³*Nevertheless, I am continually with you;
you hold my right hand.*

²⁴*You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.*

²⁵*Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*

²⁶*My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*