

Only by Abiding

Text: John 15:1-17

Pastor Jody Bowser

Discussion Questions:

Read John 15:1-8

The metaphor that Jesus uses throughout this passage is that of a cluster of grapes that cling to a branch which is connected to the grapevine. All of us can immediately pull this image up in our minds. We can also immediately recognize the fact that the ONLY way that grapes are going to be produced is for the vine to be healthy—and for the branch to remain firmly attached to the vine. The LIFE that is in the vine flows organically into the branch and naturally produces fruit. Jesus goes on to use this picture to describe the only way that we can lead a healthy, fruit filled and PRODUCTIVE life. Our lives have to remain connected to the vine—which is in fact Jesus Himself.

Jesus is using an analogy to describe a “fruitful” relationship with him. It can be tempting to skim over this passage, assuming we know what it means, without paying careful attention to all of its implications. Take a couple of minutes to think through and discuss each aspect of His analogy, and how it relates to actual life. What does it mean:

- To be a branch of the vine?
- To be cut off?
- To be pruned?
- To be purified (made clean) by the words that Jesus has spoken?
- To remain “in Him”?
- For Him to remain in us?
- To not remain in Him?
- To wither and be burned? To produce fruit/much fruit? To bring glory to the Father?

Read John 15:9-17

- What does a relationship of mutual LOVE and friendship look like, according to Jesus?
- In verse 11, Jesus brings up the idea of overflowing (or perfectly complete) joy. Just a few verses earlier (14:27), He promised to give us an “out-of-this-world” kind of peace. Why do you think Jesus is emphasizing these emotions? Do you think this applies to us today?
- What is the distinction between a slave/servant and a friend (vv. 14-15), and how does that make a difference for the disciples? How does it make a difference for us?
- In verse 16 Jesus says, “You didn’t choose me. I chose you.” Yet John’s earlier description (for example John 1:37-39) seems to indicate that, at least on a visible level, it was the disciples who initiated the relationship (they chose to follow Him). Why is it important for Jesus to give them a different perspective? What do you think Jesus wanted them to think/feel about themselves and their relationship with him?
- In your own life, do you have a sense of being “chosen” by Jesus? How would it make a difference if you were to live into that idea more fully?
- How do you feel you are doing staying connected to Jesus in love and friendship? Do you see a corresponding level of “fruitfulness” in your life? Are there things that you can do more of to “remain in Him (or does it just happen without trying...or putting in any effort ourselves)?