

**John 15:1-17**  
**November 9, 2025**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” When you hear the expectation that we will “bear much fruit,” what does that look like for you? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** Today’s passage is a well-known passage in most Christian circles. The metaphor of Jesus being the true vine, the Father being the vinedresser/gardener, and us as the branches of the vine. If we take the long view of this passage, we will be reminded that bearing much fruit is expected from us over our lifetime as Christians. But if we don’t remain in Him, that is not going to happen! So let’s read the text and ask ourselves how well we are doing in “bearing much fruit?” How do we make sure we’re connected to the vine?

**BOOK:**

***The Vine and the Branches***

**15** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes (also “cleans”) so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

<sup>9</sup> “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

**LOOK:**

There really are no options as to the demands of discipleship. No one can follow Jesus on his own terms. Jesus himself defined the terms. The word “disciple” means learner. When we bear that name, we do not declare ourselves to be saints. What we have said is that we go to school to him. We learn from him. We start as babes, we mature, we grow toward manhood, we err, we stumble. But we are always instructed, always disciplined—if we “abide in him.”

**Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today’s Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 354-359). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

### **Branches—We Must Abide (John 15:1–11)**

The cultivation of vineyards was important to the life and economy of Israel. A golden vine adorned Herod's temple. When our Lord used this image, He was not introducing something new; it was familiar to every Jew. There are four elements in this allegory that we must understand to benefit from His teaching.

**The vine.** There are actually three different vines found in Scripture. The *past vine* was the **nation of Israel** (see Ps. 80:8–19; Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 19:10–14; and Hosea 10:1). In an act of wonderful grace, God “transplanted” Israel into Canaan and gave the nation every possible benefit. “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?” God asked (Isa. 5:4). If ever a nation had everything it needed to succeed, it was Israel.

But the vine produced wild grapes! Instead of practicing justice, it practiced oppression; instead of producing righteousness, it produced unrighteousness and cries of distress from the victims. God had to deal with the nation Israel and chasten it, but even that did not produce lasting results. When God's own Son came to the vineyard, they cast Him out and killed Him (Matt. 21:33–46).

There is also a **future vine**, “the vine of the earth” described in Revelation 14:14–20. This is the Gentile world system ripening for God's judgment. Believers are branches in “the vine of heaven,” but the unsaved are branches in “the vine of the earth.” The unsaved depend on this world for their sustenance and satisfaction, while believers depend on Jesus Christ. The “vine of the earth” will be cut down and destroyed when Jesus Christ returns.

The **present Vine** is our Lord Jesus Christ, and, of course, the vine includes the branches. He is the “true Vine,” that is, “the original of which all other vines are a copy.” As Christians, we do not live on substitutes! The symbolism of the Vine and branches is similar to that of the Head and the body: we have a living relationship to Christ and belong to Him.

When we lived in Chicago, we had a small grape arbor in our backyard; but what we cultivated was nothing like what is even today cultivated in the Holy Land. Ours was a very fragile plant and it was easy to break off a branch. The vines I saw in the Holy Land were large and strong, and it was next to impossible for anyone to break off a mature branch *without injuring the vine itself*. Our union with Christ is a *living* union, so we may bear fruit; a *loving* union, so that we may enjoy Him; and a *lasting* union, so that we need not be afraid.

**The branches.** Of itself, a branch is weak and useless. It is good for either bearing or burning, but not for building (read Ezek. 15). The branch cannot produce its own life; it must draw that life from the vine. It is our communion with Christ through the Spirit that makes possible the bearing of the fruit.

Many of the images of Christ and the believer given in Scripture emphasize this important concept of *union and communion*: the body and its members (1 Cor. 12), the bride and the

Bridegroom (Eph. 5:25–33), the sheep and the Shepherd (John 10). A member of the body cut off from the body would die. The marriage creates the union, but it takes daily love and devotion to maintain the communion. The shepherd brings the sheep into the flock, but the sheep must follow the shepherd in order to have protection and provision.

The sooner we as believers discover that we are but branches, the better we will relate to the Lord; for we will know our own weakness and confess our need for His strength.

The key word is *abide*; it is used eleven times in John 15:1–11 (“continue” in John 15:9 and “remain” in John 15:11). What does it mean to “abide”? It means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us to produce fruit. This certainly involves the Word of God and the confession of sin so that nothing hinders our communion with Him (John 15:3). It also involves obeying Him because we love Him (John 15:9–10).

How can we tell when we are “abiding in Christ”? Is there a special feeling? No, but there are special evidences that appear and they are unmistakably clear. For one thing, when you are abiding in Christ, you produce fruit (John 15:2). What that “fruit” is, we will discuss later. Also, you experience the Father’s “pruning” so that you will bear more fruit (John 15:2). The believer who is abiding in Christ has his prayers answered (John 15:7) and experiences a deepening love for Christ and for other believers (John 15:9, 12–13). He also experiences joy (John 15:11). This abiding relationship is natural to the branch and the vine, but it must be cultivated in the Christian life. It is not automatic. Abiding in Christ demands worship, meditation on God’s Word, prayer, sacrifice, and service—but what a joyful experience it is! Once you have begun to cultivate this deeper communion with Christ, you have no desire to return to the shallow life of the careless Christian.

***The vinedresser.*** The vinedresser is in charge of caring for the vines, and Jesus said that this is the work of His Father. It is He who “purges” or prunes the branches so they will produce more fruit. Note the progression here: no fruit (John 15:2), fruit, more fruit, much fruit (John 15:5, 8). Many Christians pray that God will make them more fruitful, but they do not enjoy the pruning process that follows!

The vinedresser prunes the branches in two ways: he cuts away dead wood that can breed disease and insects, and he cuts away living tissue so that the life of the vine will not be so dissipated that the quality of the crop will be jeopardized. In fact, the vinedresser will even cut away whole bunches of grapes so that the rest of the crop will be of higher quality. God wants both quantity and quality.

This pruning process is the most important part of the whole enterprise, and the people who do it must be carefully trained or they can destroy an entire crop. Some vineyards invest two or three years in training the “pruners” so they know where to cut, how much to cut, and even at what angle to make the cut.

The greatest judgment God could bring to a believer would be to let him alone, let him have his own way. Because God loves us, He “prunes” us and encourages us to bear more fruit for His glory. If the branches could speak, they would confess that the pruning process hurts; but they would also rejoice that they will be able to produce more and better fruit.

Your Heavenly Father is never nearer to you than when He is pruning you. Sometimes He cuts away the dead wood that might cause trouble; but often He cuts off the living tissue that is robbing you of spiritual vigor. Pruning does not simply mean spiritual surgery that removes what is bad. It can also mean cutting away the good and the better so that we might enjoy the best. Yes, pruning hurts, but it also helps. We may not enjoy it, but we need it.

How does the Father prune us? Sometimes He simply uses the Word to convict and cleanse us. (The word translated “purge” in John 15:2 is the same as “clean” in John 13:10. See Eph. 5:26–27.) Sometimes He must chasten us (Heb. 12:1–11). At the time, it hurts when He removes something precious from us; but as the “spiritual crop” is produced, we see that the Father knew what He was doing.

The more we abide in Christ, the more fruit we bear; and the more fruit we bear, the more the Father has to prune us so that the quality keeps up with the quantity. Left to itself, the branch might produce many clusters, but they will be inferior in quality. God is glorified by a bigger crop that is also a *better* crop.

**The fruit.** The word *results* is often heard in conversations among Christian workers, but this is not actually a Bible concept. A machine can produce results, and so can a robot, but it takes a *living organism* to produce fruit. It takes time and cultivation to produce fruit; a good crop does not come overnight.

We must remember that the branches do not eat the fruit: others do. We are not producing fruit to please ourselves but to serve others. We should be the kind of people who “feed” others by our words and our works. “The lips of the righteous feed many” (Prov. 10:21).

Several different kinds of spiritual fruit are named in the Bible. We bear fruit when we win others to Christ (Rom. 1:13). We are a part of the harvest (John 4:35–38). As we grow in holiness and obedience, we are bearing fruit (Rom. 6:22). Paul considered Christian giving to be fruit from a dedicated life (Rom. 15:28). “The fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22–23) is the kind of Christian character that glorifies God and makes Christ real to others. Even our good works, our service, grow out of our abiding life (Col. 1:10). The praise that comes from our hearts and lips is actually fruit to the glory of God (Heb. 13:15).

Many of these things could be counterfeited by the flesh, but the deception would eventually be detected, for real spiritual fruit has in it *the seeds for more fruit*. Man-made results are dead and cannot reproduce themselves, but Spirit-produced fruit will go on reproducing from one life to another. There will be fruit—more fruit—much fruit.

A true branch, united with the vine, will always bear fruit. Not every branch bears a bumper crop, just as not every field has a bumper harvest (Matt. 13:8, 23), but there is always fruit where there is life. **If there is no fruit, the branch is worthless and it is cast away and burned. I do not believe our Lord is teaching here that true believers can lose their salvation, for this would contradict what He taught in John 6:37 and 10:27–30. It is unwise to build a theological doctrine on a parable or allegory. Jesus was teaching one main truth—the fruitful life of the believer—and**

we must not press the details too much. Just as an unfruitful branch is useless, so an unfruitful believer is useless; and both must be dealt with. It is a tragic thing for a once-fruitful believer to backslide and lose his privilege of fellowship and service. If anything, John 15:6 describes divine discipline rather than eternal destiny. “There is [for believers] a sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). Our Lord had spoken about peace (John 14:27); now He mentions love and joy (John 15:9–11). Love, joy, and peace are the first three “fruit of the Spirit” named in Galatians 5:22–23. Our abiding in Christ certainly ought to produce His love, joy, and peace in our hearts. Because we love Him, we keep His commandments; and, as we keep His commandments, we abide in His love and experience it in a deeper way.

Several times in John’s Gospel you will find Jesus speaking about the Father’s love for Him. We so emphasize God’s love for the world and the church that we forget that the Father loves the Son. Because the Father does love the Son, He has put all things into the Son’s hand (John 3:35) and has revealed all things to the Son (John 5:20). The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world (John 17:24); He loved the Son when the Son died on the cross (John 10:17). The amazing thing is believers today can experience personally that same love! Jesus prayed “that the love with which Thou hast loved Me may be in them [the disciples and believers today]” (John 17:26).

As branches in the Vine, we have the privilege of abiding and the responsibility of bearing fruit. Now we turn to the second picture, that of *friends*.

### **Friends—We Must Obey (John 15:12–17)**

Most of us have many acquaintances but very few friends, and even some of our friends may prove unfriendly or even unfaithful. What about Judas? “Yes, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Ps. 41:9). Even a devoted friend may fail us when we need him most. Peter, James, and John went to sleep in the Garden when they should have been praying; and Peter even denied the Lord three times. Our friendship to each other and to the Lord is not perfect, but His friendship to us is perfect.

However, we must not interpret this word *friend* in a limited way, because the Greek word means “a friend at court.” It describes that “inner circle” around a king or emperor. (In John 3:29, it refers to the “best man” at a wedding.) The “friends of the king” would be close to him and know his secrets, but they would also be subject to him and have to obey his commands. There is thus no conflict between being a friend and being a servant.

The perfect illustration of this in Scripture is Abraham, “the friend of God” (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23), who was also the servant of God (Gen. 26:24). In Genesis 18, our Lord and two angels came to visit Abraham as they were on their way to investigate the sin of Sodom. Even though Abraham was nearly 100 years old, he interrupted his noontime rest, greeted the visitors, saw to their comfort, and fed them a lovely meal. In the first fifteen verses of this chapter, Abraham is on the move; and twice he refers to himself as a servant (Gen. 18:3, 5). Note that this old man “hastened” and “ran” and encouraged others to perform their work quickly, a perfect example of a servant. Nor did Abraham sit and eat with them. Like a true servant, he stood nearby, ready to do their bidding.

In the last half of the chapter, the atmosphere changes, and Abraham is quietly standing still, communing with the Lord. He is still a servant, but now he is being a friend. “Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?” the Lord asked. As a friend of God, Abraham shared God’s secrets. It is this kind of a relationship that Jesus described when He called His disciples “friends.” It was certainly a relationship of *love*, both for Him and for each other. The “friends of the King” could not compete with each other for attention or promotion. They were a part of the “inner circle,” not to promote themselves, but to serve their King. What a rebuke this must have been to the selfish disciples who often argued over who was the greatest!

How is it possible for Jesus to *command* us to love one another? Can true love be commanded? You must keep in mind that Christian love is not basically a “feeling”; it is an act of the will. The proof of our love is not in our feelings but in our actions, even to the extent of laying down our lives for Christ and for one another (1 John 3:16). Jesus laid down His life for both His friends and His enemies! (Rom. 5:10) While the emotions are certainly involved, real Christian love is an act of the will. It means treating others the way God treats us.

So, our friendship with Christ involves love and obedience. But it also involves knowledge: He “lets us in on” His plans. Indeed, He is our Master (John 13:13, 16), but He does not treat us as servants. He treats us as friends, *if* we do what He commands. Abraham was God’s friend because he obeyed God (Gen. 18:19). If we have friendship with the world, we then experience enmity with God (James 4:1–4). Lot in Sodom was not called God’s friend, even though Lot was a saved man (2 Peter 2:7). God told Abraham what He planned to do to the cities of the plain, and Abraham was able to intercede for Lot and his family.

It is interesting to note that, in John’s Gospel, it was the servants who knew what was going on! The servants at the wedding feast in Cana knew where the wine came from (John 2:9), and the nobleman’s servants knew when the son was healed (John 4:51–53).

One of the greatest privileges we have as His friends is that of learning to know God better and “getting in on” God’s secrets. I can never forget the impact on my own heart when I heard Dr. Oswald Sanders say to the Back to the Bible staff, “Each of us is as close to God as we choose to be.” We are His friends, and we ought to be near the throne, listening to His Word, enjoying His intimacy, and obeying His commandments.

One day while he was a fugitive, David was near Bethlehem, his home city, and he longed for a drink of water from the well by the gate. Three of his mighty men were close enough to David to hear his sigh, and they risked their lives to bring their king the water that he wanted (2 Sam. 23:15–17). That is what it means to be a friend of the king.

In John 14:16, Jesus reminded the men that they had this privileged position only because of His grace. They did not choose Him; He chose them! He chose them out of the world (John 14:19) and ordained them to do His will. Again, we find this important word *fruit*. As branches, we share His life and bear fruit; and as friends, we share His love and bear fruit. As branches, we are pruned by the Father; as friends, we are instructed by the Son, and His Word controls our lives. The word *ordained* simply means “appointed.” It refers to the act of setting someone apart for special service. We have graciously been chosen and set apart by the Lord in order to go into the

world and bear fruit. He has sent us into the world (John 17:18) as His personal ambassadors to tell others about the King and His great salvation. When we witness to others and win them to Christ, this is bringing forth fruit to the glory of God.

As I mentioned before, the evidence of true sonship, discipleship (John 15:8), and friendship (John 15:15) is *fruit*. “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20). Where there is true fruit, it remains; man-made “results” eventually disappear. Fruit has in it the seed for more fruit, so the process goes on and on. Whatever is born of the Spirit of God has the mark of eternity on it, and it will last.

Once again, Jesus brought up the privilege of prayer. The friends of the king certainly speak to their sovereign and share their burdens and needs with him. In the days of monarchies, it was considered a very special honor to be invited to speak to the king or queen; yet the friends of Jesus Christ can speak to Him at any time. The throne of grace is always available to them. John 15:15–16 summarize for us what it means to be a friend of the King of kings. It is a humbling experience, for He chose us and we did not choose Him. We must keep this in mind lest we become proud and presumptuous. It means that we keep our ears open and listen to what He says to us. “Hast thou heard the secret of God?” (Job 15:8) “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant” (Ps. 25:14). We must be attentive and alert.

But the purpose for all of this is that we might obey Him and get His work done. The King has tasks that must be performed; and if we love Him, we will obey His commands. We will seek to bear fruit that will please Him and glorify the Father. Our joy should be to please Him. Jesus closed this part of His message by reminding them (and us) of the most important commandment of all: love one another. There are dozens of “one another” statements in the New Testament, but all of them are summarized in “love one another.” Jesus had already given this commandment to the Eleven (John 13:34–35), and now He has repeated it twice (John 15:12, 17). It will be stated in one way or another many more times in the New Testament letters, especially by John in his first epistle. The friends of the King must not only love Him, but also one another. What joy it brings to His heart when He sees His friends loving one another and working together to obey His commands.

This study began in the vineyard and ended in the throne room! The next study will take us to the battlefield where we experience the hatred of the lost world. If we are not abiding as branches and obeying as friends, we will never be able to face the opposition of the world. If we do not love one another, how can we ever hope to love lost men and women in the world? If we are not marching together as the friends of the King, we will never present a united front to the enemy. “Without Me, ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

We are not simply handicapped or hindered. We are hopelessly paralyzed! We can do *nothing!* But if we abide in Him, if we stay close to the throne, we can do *anything* that He commands us to do!

What a privilege—and what a responsibility!

**Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 325-326) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

**E. The Vine and the branches (15:1–10)**

Jesus now instructed His disciples on three vital relationships. Disciples are to be rightly related to Jesus (vv. 1–10), to each other (vv. 11–17), and to the world (vv. 18–16:4). Disciples have three respective duties: to remain (abide), to love each other, and to testify.

15:1. **I am the true Vine** (cf. v. 5). This is the last of the seven great “I am” statements in John (cf. comments on 6:35). Israel was God’s choice vine on which he lavished care and attention (Ps. 80:8; Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:2; 6:9; Ezek. 15; 17:5–10; 19:10–14; Hosea 10:1; 14:8). He longed for fruit, but the vine (Israel) became degenerate and produced rotten fruit. Therefore Jesus, as “the true Vine,” fulfills what God had intended for Israel. The **Father is the Gardener** who cultivates and protects the Vine.

15:2. **He** (i.e., the Gardener, the Father) desires **fruit**, which is mentioned eight times in this chapter (vv. 2 [thrice], 4 [twice], 5, 8, 16). A progression is seen: **fruit** (v. 2), **more fruitful** (v. 2), and “much fruit” (vv. 5, 8). The fruit which God desired from Israel was loving obedience, righteousness, and justice (Isa. 5:1–7). **Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He cuts off**. The phrase “in Me” does not mean the same thing as Paul’s words “in Christ.” Here it is part of the metaphor of the Vine and seems to mean, “every person who professes to be My disciple (a ‘branch’) is not necessarily a true follower.” A branch **that bears no** fruit is obviously dead. Therefore, like Judas, it is cut off. (See comments on John 15:6.) Every year in Palestine gardeners prune their vines. They cut off the dead wood which has no life in it and trim the living branches so that their yield will be greater.

15:3. The disciples had been cleansed by Jesus and His message, but one, Judas, was not cleansed (cf. 13:10–11).

15:4. Fruitfulness is the result of the Son’s life being reproduced in a disciple. The disciple’s part is to **remain**. The word **remain**, a key word in John’s theology, is *menō* which occurs 11 times in this chapter, 40 times in the entire Gospel, and 27 times in John’s epistles. What does it mean to **remain**? It can mean, first, to accept Jesus as Savior (cf. 6:54, 56). Second, it can mean to continue or persevere in believing (8:31 [“hold” is remain]; 1 John 2:19, 24). Third, it can also mean believing, loving obedience (John 15:9–10). Without faith, no life of God will come to anyone. Without the life of God, **no real fruit** can be produced: **Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me**.

15:5–6. A disciple’s continual abiding with Jesus (**If a man remains in Me**)—and the indwelling of Jesus in a believer (**and I in him**)—result in abundant **fruit** (cf. v. 8). But those who do not believe face disaster. **A branch** without life is dead and cut off (v. 2). It is worthless and therefore is **thrown into the fire and burned**. What did Jesus mean by these symbolic words about vine branches being burned? These words have been interpreted in at least three ways: (1) The “burned” branches are Christians who have lost their salvation. (But this contradicts many passages, e.g., 3:16, 36; 5:24; 10:28–29; Rom. 8:1.) (2) The “burned” branches

represent Christians who will lose rewards but not salvation at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:15). (But Jesus spoke here of *dead* branches; such a branch **is thrown away and withers**.) (3) The “burned” branches refer to professing Christians who, like Judas, are not genuinely saved and therefore are judged. Like a dead branch, a person without Christ is spiritually dead and therefore will be punished in eternal fire (cf. Matt. 25:46). Judas was with Jesus; he seemed like a “branch.” But he did not have God’s life in him; therefore he departed; his destiny was like that of a dead branch.

15:7–8. In contrast with verse 6, the emphasis in these verses is positive: **remain** with Jesus and **bear much fruit**. Effective prayer is based on faith in Christ and on His **words** remaining in believers. Christ’s words condition and control such a believer’s mind so that his prayers conform to the Father’s will. Since his prayer is in accord with God’s will, the results are certain—**it will be given you** (cf. 1 John 5:14–15). Fulfilled prayers bring **glory** to the Father because, like Jesus, His **disciples** are doing the heavenly Father’s will (cf. “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth” [Matt. 6:10]).

15:9–10. A believer is motivated by the wonder of Jesus’ **love**, which is patterned after the Father’s **love** in its quality and extent. **Remain in My love** might seem to be mystical but Jesus makes it very concrete. Obedience to the **Father’s commands** is the same for a disciple as it was for the Son (cf. 14:15, 21, 23; 1 John 2:3; 3:22, 24; 5:3). Active dependence and loving obedience are the proper paths for all of God’s children.

#### **F. Jesus’ friends (15:11–17).**

15:11. Jesus had great **joy** in pleasing His Father by living a fruitful life (cf. Heb. 12:2). The purpose of His teaching is to give man an abundant life, not a joyless existence (John 10:10). The commands for His disciples to obey are for their **joy** (cf. 17:13).

15:12. One primary **command** was given by Jesus to believers: they must have mutual love (**Love each other**; this is repeated in v. 17). Christians grow by caring for and nurturing each other. The standard for that love is Christ’s example of humble sacrificial service: **as I have loved you**.

15:13–14. The most a person can do for his friend is to die for him; such a death is a clear demonstration of **love**. Jesus demonstrated His love (v. 12b) by dying **for His friends**, those who obey Him. Abraham was called God’s “friend” (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8) because he obeyed God. Like close friends, Abraham and God communicated well with each other (cf. Gen. 18:17).

15:15–17. A **servant** (lit., “slave”) **does not** have a close relationship with his master, as friends do. Normally, a slave does what he is told without understanding **his master’s** mind or **business**. Since Jesus had opened Himself to His disciples, the title “slave” did not fit their relationship. (When Paul spoke of himself as “a servant [lit., slave] of God” [Rom. 1:1], he had a different idea in mind. He meant he willingly and humbly served and obeyed God.) Jesus **called** His disciples **friends** because He had disclosed His Father’s revelation to them.

Jesus then reminded them that contrary to the common practice of disciples picking a teacher, Jesus had chosen them (cf. John 15:19). The purpose of His choosing was so that they would

produce lasting **fruit**. He **chose** them for a mission, and His **Father** would answer their requests in order to accomplish that mission (**whatever you ask in My name**; cf. v. 7; cf. “in My name” in 14:13–14; 16:23–24, 26). Friendship with Jesus involves the obligation of brotherly love: **Love each other** (cf. 15:12).

**White, J. E. (1998). *John*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 484). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

### **The True Vine (15:1–17)**

Here Jesus put forth another declarative “I am” statement, this time asserting that He is the “true vine” and that God is the gardener (15:1). In the Old Testament the “vine” is frequently used as a symbol of Israel (Ps. 80:8–16; Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:21). This symbol was often used when Israel was lacking in some way. Jesus, however, is the true Vine.

Two scenarios are presented that should be seen as representative for the Christian life: first, the one who is on the vine and producing fruit (Matt. 3:8; 7:16–20) and second, the one who is on the vine who is not producing fruit. The productive vine is pruned for greater production, while the nonproductive vine is cut off for destruction. The key to producing fruit is one’s relationship to the vine, to “remain in the vine” (15:4–5, 7). Apart from Christ nothing can be accomplished (15:5). The verse “Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you,” as with 14:13, needs to be seen in the context of one who is firmly part of the vine (15:16). When one is in such a close and dynamic relationship with Christ, requests coincide with His will. In other words, asking whatever you wish and having it granted is dependent upon the first clause of the verse: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you” (15:7).

**Allen, J. P. (1972). *John*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (pp. 680–681). Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

### **Living with Him (John 15:1–27)**

**The passage**—Unless one is careful, he will suppose all the final discourses of Jesus took place in the upper room. He had already left there (14:31) but had not yet gone out of the city toward the garden (18:1). Obviously, the little band had to be somewhere in Jerusalem during this interval.

Here is a possible explanation of what happened. Leaving the scene of chapter 14 late at night they walked toward the brook Kidron. Because it was the Passover the moon was in full cycle. They might well have passed the Temple in the bright light. As they lingered at this sacred place Jesus spoke to them of what they must do while they were separated for a while. Then he prayed (chap. 17).

This suggestion has been made because of Jesus’ next words. The beautiful sculptured vine across the face of the Temple might have inspired the line, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (v. 1).

*Special points*—There is another explanation for the use of the vine analogy here. The Memorial Supper, using the fruit of the vine, was still on their minds. The vineyard was common in Palestine, and the force of Jesus' picture of himself and his work would not be lost. The powerful application is that of vital union. The branch bears no fruit of itself. It is the connection with the vine that makes its life possible (v. 4). Indeed, the fruitless branch is intolerable. The vinedresser will cut it away, as Judas has well illustrated (vv. 2, 6). There is no place in Christ's vineyard for "inactive branches."

The fruit which issues from abiding in him will appear quickly. Immediately there is joy (v. 11). Love is another evidence (v. 12). A special product of obedience is reported by John, and it is unique to him in this sense. "Friend" is a warm and meaningful word. No one would dare to presume so much if Jesus had not stated it clearly, "You are my friends" (v. 14, RSV). This places his followers in a permanent state of new dignity which men never had before.

That high calling is not of man's doing. His disciples are appointees, men under commission, to go (v. 16), and to identify with him (v. 18), and to be his witnesses (v. 27). So, the fruit-bearing goes on.

*Truth for today*—There really are no options as to the demands of discipleship. No one can follow Jesus on his own terms. Jesus himself defined the terms. The word "disciple" means learner. When we bear that name, we do not declare ourselves to be saints. What we have said is that we go to school to him. We learn from him. We start as babes, we mature, we grow toward manhood, we err, we stumble. But we are always instructed, always disciplined—if we "abide in him."

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 15:1-17. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**