

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 03.16.2023

STAY CONNECTED – JOHN 15:1-8

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week’s message? Discuss with your group.

Pastor Daniel tells us in John 15 “The disciples have left the upper room and are on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, which sits at the foot of the Mt. of Olives. As they walk, they pass through several vineyards that surround the ancient city. Never one to miss a teaching opportunity, Jesus pauses at some point and begins to teach them using the surrounding vines as a metaphor for how He intends His relationship with them to work. Perhaps He even holds a tendril in His hands with a cluster of grapes as He speaks. These are among the final words that Jesus ever spoke to His disciples. His betrayal and subsequent arrest are imminent. So, what is uppermost on His mind in these final moments? Gardening! From the beginning, God’s goal for humanity is that we would bear fruit. After God finished creating everything, He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and told them to ‘be fruitful and multiply.’ {Genesis 1:28} With that statement, God set forth His plan for all of humanity. God’s desire for you is that you would be fruitful. Let’s get into our lesson...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most from this week’s sermon?

Digging Deeper in God’s Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:1-3

Only hours before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus made His seventh “I am” statement. By calling Himself the True Vine, Jesus established Himself as the Source of all that flows from Him to His followers. Since He is the Source of life for every branch (His followers), it is critical that the branches are vitally and solidly connected to Him.

1. What does this “I am” statement teach us about Jesus’ nature and character?
2. What did Jesus mean by trimming or pruning the branches, and how does that relate to God’s actions to believers? In what specific ways do you think God prunes His disciples?

Verse 2 describes the process of pruning, when dead branches are removed, and the decaying parts are trimmed away. Jesus announced the Vineyard Keeper (God) would remove every branch that doesn’t produce fruit—meaning, visible evidence of a living connection to the vine. As Christians, we’re represented in the branch that produces fruit but still requires pruning. This process of removing the dead parts occurs as God challenges us and disciplines us so we can continue to grow in Him. Pruning is a good process, and it promotes spiritual health and strong faith.

3. Describe a time in your life when God pruned you so you would grow closer to Him. Was it a good process? Why or why not? What was the result of the pruning?
4. Is the process of pruning ever painful? Explain.
5. What role does the Holy Spirit play in our pruning and fruit-bearing process?

“PROMISES” in 2023

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:4-7.

Jesus used one word repeatedly in this passage: “remain.” In fact, He used it 10 times throughout John 15:4-10. Jesus wanted to emphasize the mutual interweaving of His life with the lives of His followers.

- 1. What does it mean for Jesus to abide in us?**
- 2. Why are both remaining in Jesus and Jesus abiding in us necessary to produce fruit?**
- 3. What does “remaining in Christ” look like in your daily life?**

To “remain” in this context carries the idea of personal, intimate residence. Jesus emphasized that His followers must abide in Him, and He in them. The intricacy and the interconnectedness of the relationship between Jesus and His followers is difficult to express—and impossible to overstate!

Jesus also included a warning: “If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers” (v. 6). If half-hearted “believers” fail to live in Jesus and produce fruit, not only will they be removed (see v. 2), they will face destruction. (Half Hearted “believers” = “Believers” in Name only, not real Christians)

In stark contrast to the calamity awaiting false believers, true believers have fantastic privileges—including unlimited access to God in prayer. Jesus promised, “If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you” (v. 7).

- 4. Do you really believe you can do nothing without Christ? How do your thoughts and actions affirm this mentality? How fruitful have you been without Him?**

When you remain in Christ, your thoughts are saturated with the mind of Jesus, your heart beats with the compassion of Jesus, and your will bows to the Lordship of Jesus—all of which changes your prayers. Rather than praying a laundry list of self-serving demands, the believer who remains in Jesus will pray like Jesus prays.

- 5. How would you summarize the commands and promises in these verses?**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:8.

Bringing glory to God is the goal for every believer. To glorify God means to make His name famous, give Him the accolades, and put Him on prominent display. We can glorify God in two ways: 1. You glorify God when you “produce much fruit” and 2. “You glorify God when you “prove to be My disciples.” When you lead people to faith, accomplish difficult ministry and service, or overcome ingrained personal weaknesses, people will notice. And when you humbly acknowledge your inability to generate any of these accomplishments on your own and point to God, He gets the glory. No one can generate genuine life change on their own. Therefore, changes in you will point to Someone beyond you—to God.

- 1. How can we work together to produce fruit?**

Purpose is found when you step off the ugly treadmill of duty-bound religious busyness and get on the slow-but-sure track toward bearing fruit for Christ. A life in Christ is a productive life. It’s a life with purpose.

“PROMISES” in 2023

Applying God’s Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

God’s desire for you is a life overflowing with love and joy and peace. It’s what you were made for. But the only way you’ll ever see that life is by staying vitally connected to Jesus. That’s all that matters. It’s not about what you can produce for God. It’s about His life flowing to you and through you to the point where those around you are drawn to Him.

1. Consider one way God has changed you or used you in recent months. Write a “thank you” letter to God giving Him the glory for the fruit in your life. Consider sharing your letter with those close to you.
2. What steps will you take to remain, or abide, in Christ this week?
3. What are some specific things we can ask God to accomplish through us? What step might He want us to take to accomplish this?

PRAYER – Invite the Holy Spirit to cut off any branches that do not produce fruit that honors God and reflects His goodness. Commit yourself to Jesus for strength to tackle day-to-day living. Allow His grace to flow through you, and revel in His love.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” {John 15:7}



Pastor Daniel gave us the acronym ABIDE.

- **A = always**
- **B = be**
- **I = in**
- **D = dependence**
- **E = every day**

If the fruit of striving is stress and exhaustion and burnout, then the fruit of abiding is rest. It takes all the pressure off. Instead of focusing on what you can produce, you are focused on the Lord. I love this simple acronym for remembering what abiding means. One of the best prayers you can pray every morning is, ‘God, I’m wholly dependent upon you today. I’m done striving. I’m done stressing. I’m done straining and fighting and wrestling and trying to make things happen in my own strength. I’m choose to let go and trust you completely.’