

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS with Christ

“Seeing the Savior in Action”

Key Verse - 20:31—*“But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you might have life through His name.”*

Study Number Seven – The Vine and the Branches – John 15:1-14

We’re considering together these Snapshots of the Savior in the Gospel of John so that we can get better acquainted with the person of Jesus Christ.

1. We looked at John 2 and saw Christ at a wedding.
2. We looked at John 3 and heard the words from the lips of Jesus to Nicodemus, “You must be born again.”
3. We looked at John 4 with the woman at the well. And when we studied there, we were looking at that passage to see that the Lord Jesus was promising her an internal fountain of satisfaction, “the living water.”
4. We looked in John 6 that little is a lot because the Lord is in it with the feeding of the five thousand.
5. In John 8, we saw the power of Christ to forgive the

woman involved in adultery. He not only forgave her and freed her, but pointed her to a future that was before her.

6. Then we looked at John 11 when we looked at the passage on the resurrection of Lazarus. We saw Christ having the power over physical death. We saw that the Lord Jesus can meet the needs of each heart.

He had three very different personalities in Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and He met the needs of each one in a beautiful way.

In our last study Christ was six months before the cross, in this passage we're the night before the cross.

This is a very serious moment. It's a moment of sorrow. It's a moment in the sense that Christ has been dreading it for all eternity. It's a sorrowful time in another sense that He's going to be leaving His men who He's walked with for these three years. Very soon from His lips we will hear the words, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not my will but Yours be done." (ref. Matthew 26:39)

Because He's going to be leaving them soon, He asks the men to get a room where they can have the last supper together. After they have supper, He washes their feet. He then breaks the news to them, and says, "Fellas, I've got to tell you something. There's somebody that's going to betray Me."

And when they discover that it's Judas and he leaves, there's

just eleven men left. Just imagine the feelings of tenseness and anxiety and uncertainty because the Lord's talking about dying and about leaving them. The feelings that must be pervading that group of people, these men that have given up everything to follow Christ. And now He's going to be leaving them? They don't have any understanding or comprehension of what's about to happen.

The Lord Jesus begins His little discourse around the table. It's sort of an after-dinner message that He gives to them in John 14. He starts out by saying, "Men, I don't want you to be troubled. If you really believe in God, then believe in Me, because I'm not leaving you permanently. I'm just going to prepare a place for you. And when I get it prepared, I'm going to come and take you where I am so we can be together."

After He shares these words with them, He also says, "Now, I want you to know too that I'm not leaving you alone. I'm going to be sending you the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who is with you in a permanent relationship."

After He finishes this message He says, "Let's arise and go hence." In other words, let's leave here.

Now from here they're heading toward the Garden of Gethsemane. And we should all be familiar with the Easter story and how Christ begins with that night vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prays and sweats great drops of blood, and His prayer meeting and fellowship with the Father is interrupted by Judas and the henchmen who come

to arrest Him. And then the trial and then the cross and all of those gory things that happened the next day.

As they're moving from this Upper Room, after He gave His little talk, they move out along the landscape and they pass a whole lot of vineyards on the way.

It was at the time of the year when the guys who were working on the vineyard had tilled up the soil, trimmed back all the vines, and there were little slashing fires that were dotting the landscape that could be seen all around the vineyard. This is where they were burning the slashings from the cuttings that they had performed on the vineyard.

And the Lord Jesus stops at one of these vineyards and He realizes that He's got one more thing that He has to tell His men before He goes to the cross. And this is a very important thing.

It's one thing for Him to say He's going to leave and that He's going to send a substitute in the Holy Spirit, but that doesn't give very much comfort to these fellas about their relationship with Him after He's gone.

He describes, in the last words that He speaks in John 15 and 16, His relationship with them. How it is going to be between Jesus and His followers, after He's gone.

And so here He is, standing by a vineyard, with these eleven guys around Him, and He gives this little discourse that's

before us. We are going to take plenty of time to emphasize the key phrases, at least in the first seven verses, because an understanding of this passage could be a liberating Christian experience, if we can catch ahold of the truth of what He's trying to present.

v. 1 I am the genuine vine, and my Father is the vinedresser (tiller of the soil).

“I am the genuine vine, and my Father is the vinedresser (or the tiller of the soil).”

As they look out on the vineyard, the Lord Jesus speaks, and He identifies Himself as “the genuine (or the true) vine.”

He means by this that, “You might have a relationship with somebody else or some other thing, but if you want a relationship that's going to provide eternal life, it better be with Me because I am the genuine (or true) vine.”

Then He identifies His Father:

“my Father is the vinedresser (or the tiller of the soil).”

Now what does “the tiller of the soil” do?

How does the Father relate to the vine?

Thinking about that, as a “tiller of the soil,” what would we do? Our whole purpose in relation to the vine is God's

relationship to us, is that our purpose is to create a climate in which we can find maximum productivity.

So it's the Father's purpose to create circumstances around us to work in our lives in relationship to the vine and the branches, so that there will be a climate for maximum productivity.

Now what does that involve?

That involves:

BREAKING UP THE SOIL,

PRUNING,

FERTILIZING,

WATERING, and

PROTECTING from inclement weather.

And all of these, of course, can be seen as a function of the Father in relationship to the vine.

Now we've noted together in the Gospel of John that Christ has claimed to be SEVEN DIFFERENT THINGS:

1. John 6:35—"I'm the bread of life."

2. John 8:12—“I’m the light of the world.”
3. John 10:7—“I’m the door of the sheep.”
4. John 10:11—“I’m the good shepherd.”
5. John 11:25—“I’m the resurrection and the life.”
6. John 14:6—“I am the way, the truth and the life.”
7. John 15:1—“I am the genuine vine.”

Now we have:

1. Jesus Christ is the “vine,”
2. the Father is the “tiller of the soil.”

Now we need to identify the third entity in the parable before we go on to verse 2. Notice verse 2 starts with “Every branch.” Who are the branches?

Drop down to verse 5 and we have an identification of the branches. In verse 5, Jesus Christ says, “I am the vine, you are the branches.”

In other words, when we become a Christian and we receive Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we are placed in the vine as a branch. We have a living union with Jesus Christ. We’re fused to Christ in the vine.

And in the normal relationship with the Lord Jesus, His life begins to flow through us. And the purpose of His life flowing through us is that fruit might be borne. And that's the ultimate purpose of the Father in having a vine and branches in the first place. It is so that fruit might be borne.

So we're the branches. Now look at the branch in verse 2.

v. 2 Every branch in me not bearing fruit, He is taking away; and every branch bearing fruit, He is cleansing it, in order that it may keep on bearing more fruit.

“Every branch in me not bearing fruit, He is taking away; and every branch bearing fruit, He is cleansing it, in order that it may keep on bearing more fruit.”

Now let's look at the NEGATIVE side of that verse in that first phrase:

“Every branch in me not bearing fruit, He is taking away;”

What is the meaning of that? Let's suppose that someone has a relationship to Christ—they're a Christian. “Every branch in Me not bearing fruit.”

How could they be in that kind of a position? Here's the Father walking down the rows of the vineyard and He finds a branch that isn't productive. “Every branch in Me not bearing

fruit,”—He’s taking it up or He’s lifting it up.

How could it be that we could be a branch in the vine and “not bearing fruit”? It would be one of two reasons, if we’re a branch in the vine. We have a relationship to Christ and we’re “not bearing fruit” through our life.

1. It might very possibly be that there is some disobedience or sin in our life. The life of Jesus Christ does not flow through to the point of bearing fruit, a vessel that has sin or disobedience that’s not been dealt with.

2. It could be that we’re resisting the plan of God for our life. And we have quenched the Spirit or turned off the flow of the life of Christ within our life. As a result, fruit is not being borne like it should be.

“Every branch in Me not bearing fruit, He is taking away;”

Now that’s kind of scary, isn’t it? How is it that a “branch [is] not bearing fruit”?

Grieving or quenching the Spirit. What does He mean then when He comes along and He sees the “branch not bearing fruit?” He lifts it up or He takes it up, He bears it up.

What is described by this action of the Father, in relationship to a branch that’s “not bearing fruit”?

Most likely Jesus is describing an action of the Father that He

believes is absolutely necessary to take on behalf of the fruitless branch in order to restore it to a position of fruitfulness.

For instance in a garden we have tomatoes, potatoes, and beans.

Walking down the row with the tomato plants, there's some foreign objects working on one of the tomato plants. And in fact, if we don't take some steps, that tomato plant's never going to bear fruit.

So as a living tiller of the soil, we're going to take some action that we hope will provide a means whereby that plant will fulfill its purpose and it will eventually bear some tomatoes.

We can almost see the Father, the "tiller of the soil," walking down the vineyard of life, and He sees us in our relationship to Him and we're "not bearing fruit." He's going to take action that He deems necessary so that we'll be fruitful for His glory.

What is that action that He could be taking? What does it mean to take up or bear away?

Well, it could be one of **THREE PHASES**:

1. The action of the Father toward the fruitless branch is to stir up the soil to let us know that He wants our attention.

In other words, He wants a favorable response by just lovingly

ordering the circumstances in our life so He'll get a response from us.

2. If He doesn't get a favorable response by stirring up the water around us, He will take us on a whaling expedition and apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge. That's known as going to the woodshed.

Hebrews 12:5 says that the "Lord chastens His own for the purpose of yielding peaceable fruit of righteousness." So He will take us and discipline us as His loving child.

3. The scripture sustains the fact that the Father also has the prerogative of taking the fruitless branch to glory if it fails to cooperate with His first two dealings. That's the ultimate phase.

Now the Word of God talks about that. For instance, there was a guy in deep immorality in the Corinthian church. Here he was a Christian, he was associated with Christian people in the Corinthian church and in 1 Corinthians 5:5 Paul says, "I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus."

This is the ultimate, the Father taking him home.

God really means business in His providential dealings. When we fail to respond properly to the dealings that He brings into our lives, He does have the objective of fruitfulness that He

wants to accomplish, and He can terminate life when we get cocky and indifferent in our relationship toward Him. And we become a fruitless branch and we resist every deal that He brings into our lives and we become bitter, we become resentful, we push God off at a distance.

God still, because He loves us, wants to create the climate for fruit. When He doesn't get it, He can have that ultimate option of taking us to be with Himself. First Corinthians 11 also teaches that.

Now that's the NEGATIVE side of it. What's the POSITIVE side?

Here's a branch that's "bearing fruit," in the last half of it.

"every branch bearing fruit, He is cleansing it, in order that it may keep on bearing more fruit."

Someone might say, "I don't know whether I want to be a branch that's not bearing fruit and get lifted up, or be a branch that's bearing fruit and get cleansed." It looks like between a rock and a hard place here, in this passage of scripture.

What does it mean when it says the Father "is cleansing" us? Well when we read the Word of God about the cleansing process that goes on in the life of a Christian, we find that the Bible is the cleansing agent.

Ephesians 5 says, “the water of the word washes me and cleanses me.” (see Ephesians 5:26, 27)

In Psalm 119 the psalmist says, “Where with all shall a young man cleanse his way by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” (see Psalm 119:9)

In other words, why do we read the Word of God on a daily basis? Why do we pray? Why do we fellowship with God?

We do it because there is a cleansing process that’s going on in our life.

Some people might say they don’t read the Bible because they don’t get anything out of it. When we’re looking at the Bible only for what we’re getting out of it, we’re being selfish.

God isn’t primarily interested in what we get out of our Bible reading, it’s what He gets out of us as a result of our exposure to the Word of God. He wants us in the Word of God on a daily basis, because as a result of our discipline to be in the Word and reading and praying, there is a cleansing process that’s going on in our life.

And whether we get anything out of it or not, He’s getting a whole lot out of it. He’s cleansing our life and making it more fruitful so that He can bear more fruit through us as a result of that daily exposure in the Word of God.

So look on it the next time, when reading the Bible and it

doesn't seem like you're getting a lot out of it, just thank the Father that you're going through the process of being cleansed so that we can bear more fruit, even though we might not understand the process that's going on.

v. 3 You, already, are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

“You, already, are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”

Here he can say one hundred percent to these eleven men that are left, “You all are clean.” He couldn't say that in John 13.

He says, “You're not all clean.” There was one guy, Judas, that was resisting the work of the Spirit of God in his life. And once he left, now He can say, “you all are clean” with the unanimous verdict.

v. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. Even as the branch is unable to be bearing fruit of itself, except it is abiding in the vine, so neither can you, unless you are abiding in me.

“Abide in me, and I in you. Even as the branch is unable to be bearing fruit of itself, except it is abiding in the vine, so neither can you, unless you are abiding in me.”

The problem a lot of people have when they only have part of the truth is they begin to think, “Well, if Christ is living in me,

why doesn't He live out His life? Why didn't He do everything He promised to do?"

We might say, "Okay, Christ, do it. Live in me. Act through me. I thank You by faith You're adequate."

We read the Apostle Paul, in Philippians 3, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ." (ref. Philippians 3:14) And then we read that passage in 1 Corinthians 9 that says, "I treat my body roughly and I make it serve me, lest when I preach to others, I myself should be disqualified." (ref. 1 Corinthians 9:27).

We also read, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (ref. Philippians 2:12) We might wonder, "What is it that will bring balance into our Christian life?"

It's neat to know Christ lives in us and He's totally adequate. But how does our discipline, how does the determination, how the desire of our heart fit into this? How does our being in the Word of God and our daily prayer life and sharing of our faith with others relate to the in-living Christ?

It just falls open to us in the first two phrases:

"Abide in me, and I in you. Even as the branch is unable to be bearing fruit of itself, so neither can you, unless you are abiding in me."

What does it mean "abide in me?"

“abiding in me”—means that we are in the right relationship with the Lord Jesus so He can live out His life in and through us.

We can be a Christian, a branch in the vine, and not be abiding in Jesus Christ. We are not so properly related to the Lord Jesus that He’s totally adequate to meet every need that we have as a Christian.

In other words, we’re out of fellowship. We have a relationship, but we’re not walking in communion with Him.

This is the key to fruitfulness:

1. “Abide” in the Lord Jesus.
2. The Lord Jesus “abiding in me.”

The first is our **RESPONSIBILITY** to be “abiding” in Him.

The second is our **RESOURCE**, His power living within me.

The first, our **FELLOWSHIP**.

The second, our **FUEL**.

The first, our **LIVING**.

The second, our **LIFE**.

What about fellowship? Fellowship with the Lord doesn't just happen. That's something that we have to guard. That's something we have to work at.

That's just like communication with a spouse. That's something we have to work at. We can't just neglect it and hope it's going to happen.

If we're close to our spouse, it's because we've cared enough to communicate so that we have a relationship that makes us close. We're abiding in each other in the sense that we spend precious moments together.

And out of that relationship, there is union and communion that we're experiencing—but we've labored at it. We've disciplined ourselves to be open to one another. And that's the very same thing in our relationship to Jesus Christ.

The Lord always wants to meet with us. He always wants that closeness. But we're the ones that break the communication. We're the ones that move away at a comfortable distance from the Lord, not the Lord.

We find that way back in the Garden of Eden. As soon as sin came into the picture, where did Adam and Eve head? The Lord was right there, ready to meet them. "Adam, where are you?"

And we find it throughout the whole Bible. There's never a

picture of man actually being in a position where God has to be reconciled to him. It's always just the reverse. It is man being reconciled to God. It's man who's running away from God. It's man who's staying at a distance.

And if we're going to be a person who is productive for the glory of God, we have to follow this command in verse 4 of "abiding" in Jesus Christ.

That doesn't happen without discipline, desire, determination and dedication on our part. We have to take the initiative to be specific about being obedient to His Word and taking time to be in His presence on a daily basis or we're not "abiding" in Jesus Christ.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." (see Colossians 1:27)

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives within me.

It was the prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Ephesian saints that said "Christ might settle down in your hearts by faith." (see Ephesians 3:17) That He could just take over and have run of the house. That He could live His life in and through us.

Then He makes this statement, after He makes that command:

“Even as the branch is unable to be bearing fruit of itself ... so neither can you, unless you are abiding in me.”

How many people have we seen as Christians who are running around saying, “I sure wish I could bear some fruit.” And they’re so eager to make a disciple or they’re so eager to do something for God. They’re trying to bear fruit on their own.

The Lord Jesus gives us a pattern. He says, “Abide in me.” In other words, “Relate yourself to Me in rest. Relax, I love you! Be released from all this feverish, fruitless effort. Let My life flow through you as a result of abiding in Me, and fruit is automatic.”

What is this “fruit”?

“Fruit” is both INTERNAL and EXTERNAL. Out of the life of Jesus Christ is allowed to flow through the branch, our life begins to progressively change.

Just LIKE PHYSICAL GROWTH takes place, SPIRITUAL GROWTH takes place.

For instance, Galatians 5:22 would be that INTERNAL FRUIT—the “fruit of the Spirit.” It’s “love, joy, peace, long suffering.” These are things we look for as fruit in the lives of people who say they’re Christians.

If they really know the Lord Jesus, if they're really walking with Him, we expect that we're going to see some of these things beginning to show up as they're abiding in Christ.

And then there's an EXTERNAL FRUIT. And that external fruit is just as normal as the internal fruit. And that is, as a result of our relationship to Christ, our relationship to the people around us begins to change. Because they can see Christ living within us, and that changes.

Men see their marriage transformed, simply because they've come to the Lord Jesus and the fruit internally begins to work and the women can't believe it. We see a "new me"—a guy abiding in Christ. And as a result of that abiding in Christ, the wife falls in love with him all over again. There is a change in the environment around them and its fruit being borne.

There's often a lot of talk about sharing our faith and being a good witness for Christ. Going out enthusiastically and trying to make an impact, by witnessing and bearing fruit. Scripture makes a primary emphasis upon this internal fruit first, that leads to a normal external fruit.

And if as Christians, we could be as concerned about the internal fruit, the external fruit would begin to take care of itself. Because as we're being something, we're going to attract others to the same Savior that we love and serve.

And the more we're like Him, the more people are going to be

attracted to Him. And perhaps our inability to see fruit borne through our life in the lives of others could be a real good thing. To recognize that perhaps we've been concentrating in the wrong area. Concentrating on this internal flow as we're abiding in Jesus Christ, allowing His life to flow through us, and fruit is going to come.

Now verse 5 says almost the same thing as verse 4.

v. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who is abiding in me and I in him, this one is bearing much fruit, because apart from me you are not able to do anything.

“I am the vine,”—CHRIST—“you are the branches. The one who is abiding in me and I in him,”—that’s just what He said in verse 4—“this one is bearing much fruit, because apart from me you are not able to do anything.”

Bill Bright, who was responsible for the founding of Campus Crusade for Christ, has this illustration.

(Revolution Now by Bill Bright)

We do not produce fruit apart from Christ’s strength any more than the branch produces fruit apart from the vine. It is the life-giving sap, the life of Christ, that flows up from the roots through the vine. The overflow of the vine’s life that produces the fruit.

So it is in the life of the Christian. It is the Holy Spirit

working through the vine, which is Jesus Christ, overflowing into the branches—the Christians producing the fruit.

I have never led anyone to Christ in my life. I never shall. There is nothing of which I can boast. I have been an instrument through whom the Spirit of God has drawn thousands to Himself, but He's done it. It is the availability that He uses. It is the faith that He honors. It is the obedience that He blesses. It is the Spirit of the living God who does the work through us.

(source unknown)

John Hunter said:

(Living the Christ-filled Life by John Hunter)

Someone might say, "Isn't that a dangerous idea after all, if I don't get all of the job, nothing will get done?" Yet Jesus said, "If you do get on with the job, nothing will be done." You can do nothing of true value for God apart from the inward working of Christ.

(source unknown)

Jesus Christ is telling us that it's just like marriage. A man and woman were brought together in one flesh for the express purpose that out of that relationship, fruit might be borne.

Romans 7 says, "We have been married to Jesus Christ. We've been brought into living union and relationship with Him." And the reason the Father has allowed us to have that relationship with Jesus Christ is for one purpose and one

purpose alone. And that is, that fruit might be borne.

There are lots of interpretations for verse 6, but let's see it in its context now.

v. 6 If anyone is not abiding in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they are gathering them, and casting them into the fire, and they are burned.

“If anyone is not abiding in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they are gathering them, and casting them into the fire, and they are burned.”

What does the Lord Jesus mean when He's talking to His men? He told them in chapter 10 that there would be nothing that could bother them in their eternal relationship to Him. He told them in chapter 11 that He was the resurrection and the life. He told them in chapter 14 that they didn't need to be worried, that He was going to prepare a place and come and take them.

How could it be that He could say here in chapter 15, that a branch not bearing fruit's going to be cut off, as far as a relationship to Him is concerned?

What the Lord Jesus is saying here in this sixth verse is that a person out of fellowship, not bearing fruit, is going to have a day when his fruit will be exposed to the fire—or his branch.

Now there's only one place in the Bible that talks about "fire" in relation to the Christian, and it has nothing to do with our salvation which is eternal and secure in Jesus Christ. That's beautiful. The Word teaches that.

It has to do with our reward, and that relates to our fruitfulness. Listen to these verses in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

For no man can lay a foundation, other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver and precious stones, wood, hay and stubble, every man's work will become evident, for the day will show it because it will be revealed with fire. The fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work, which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. And if any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss. But he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

What Jesus is saying is that a fruitless branch will be at the Bema Seat of Christ—that's a Christian—because he's not abiding. "If anyone is not abiding," he's out of fellowship with the Lord.

"thrown away as a branch, he dries up; and they are gathering them, and casting them into the fire, and they are burned."

Now as a Christian, we stand before the Lord at the Bema Seat of Christ, after the race has been run. And as a

Christian, the fruit which has been born in our life has one of two qualities:

1. It's a fruit which we have tried to bear in the flesh—and that's wood, hay and stubble, or
2. It's fruit which has been produced by the Holy Spirit as a result of the life of Christ flowing through us—and that's gold, silver and precious stones.

That fruit is going to remain for reward. The wood, hay and stubble is going to be burned up. But it says the guy's going to be saved, so as by fire.

In other words, the guy will be ordered to stand aside when it comes time for reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Every day we walk out of fellowship with Him, every day we fail to be properly related to Him, fruit is failing to be borne in our life, which will remain for reward at the Judgment Seat.

And to be ordered to stand aside, because we have to look into the face of the One who made it possible for us to be there and say we didn't care enough to be eligible for reward is going to be a pretty stiff thing to have to face as a Christian.

v. 7 If you are abiding in me and my words are abiding in you, ask whatever you are desiring, and it will become yours.

“If you are abiding in me and my words are abiding in you, ask whatever you are desiring, and it will become yours.”

Here He says not only abiding in Him, but abiding in His word.

v. 8 In this my Father is glorified, that you are bearing much fruit; so shall you become my disciples.

“In this my Father is glorified, that you are bearing much fruit; so shall you become my disciples.”

The Father gets the glory when fruit flows from our life. The normal cycle for the Christian is this:

1. We come to FAITH—we receive Christ.
2. That faith moves into the realm of FREEDOM because we’ve been set free and our sins have been forgiven.
3. That freedom issues in the FLOW of the life of Christ through us.
4. FRUIT is the result.

We have:

FAITH,

FREEDOM,

FLOW, and

FRUIT.

Faith—Freedom—Flow—Fruit.

This is the relationship that the Lord Jesus wants with us.

v. 9 Just as the Father loved me, I also loved you. Abide in my love.

“Just as the Father loved me, I also loved you. Abide in my love.”

Flourish in my favor, if you please,
Glory in my grace,
Live in my love and
Bubble in my bounty.
(source unknown)

v. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept the commandments of my Father, and I am abiding in His love.

“If you keep my commandments, you will abiding in my love; just as I have kept the commandments of my Father, and I am abiding in His love.”

v. 11 These things I have spoken to you, in order that

my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

“These things I have spoken to you, in order that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

v. 12 This is my commandment, that you keep on loving one another, just as I have loved you.

“This is my commandment, that you keep on loving one another, just as I have loved you.”

v. 13 Greater love than this, no one is having, that one lay down his life on behalf of his friends.

“Greater love than this, no one is having, than one would lay down his life on behalf of his friends.”

v. 14 You are my friends, if you keep on doing that which I am commanding you.

“You are my friends, if you keep on doing that which I am commanding.”

JOY, LOVE and OBEDIENCE are evidence of the fact that we are “abiding” in Jesus Christ and fruit is being borne in our life.

The primary objective of the Father in having a vine is that

fruit might be borne.

He is glorified when fruit comes from our life—verse 8.

Now He can change our life. He can put us into a position of fruitfulness if we'll allow Him that privilege. And as we deal with Him, in a sense that we're abiding in Him and He in us, fruit is going to result.

Now this also relates to one other thing. And that is, that the Father has the privilege of using the pruning knife in our lives. In our lives as Christians, many times we don't understand what we go through and why we go through it. And this is where we have to trust the Father to know what's best.

Some of the suffering that we face, some of the heartache, some of the things that happen, we will not understand until we get to glory.

“I've finally come to understand something that I didn't understand. I've just got to trust.”

And the knife of the Father is not haphazard in our lives. In our lives it is used for the object of fruit, more fruit and much fruit.

The supreme end of the Father is that He might be glorified.

Isaiah 61:3: “That they might be called trees of righteousness,

the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.

Two questions:

1. Are you as anxious to bear fruit as He is to see it?
2. Are you careful to avoid anything in your life that would hinder the bearing of fruit?

Lesson #1: Jesus is the VINE, we are the BRANCHES, and the Father is the GARDENER.

Lesson #2: The branch has one purpose, to bear fruit.

Lesson #3: The object is fruit, more fruit, and much fruit.

Lesson #4: The pruning instrument is the Word of God: the SWORD lays bare, the HAMMER breaks in pieces, and the FIRE melts.

Lesson #5: The branch can never settle down in self-contentment.

Lesson #6: The Father is glorified by a good crop.

Lesson #7: The Father's hand is never closer to His child than when He is pruning him.

Our heavenly Father, You know the heart-cry of each one of us. We have this great promise in verse 7 that says if we abide

in You and Your word abides in us, we can ask what we desire and You'll grant it. Lord, may You so mold our desires that it's easy for You to grant the things which we request. Lord, we do love You and thank You that You love us. And that so many things in life we don't understand, but we sure can trust You. We can read the promise in the Word that things work together for good because You eventually want to bear fruit, more fruit and much fruit through us. So take our lives as instruments, as vehicles through which You can express Yourself and bear a witness to a lost and dying world through us. Lord, may fresh manifestations of Your work begin to show up and fruit which is borne internally, and then fruit which is borne externally. In the changing of lives around us, because they can see in our attitudes that Christ is actually living and dwelling within us. Lord, if there's someone without Jesus Christ, they're not even in the vine yet, we pray that You might bring them into living union with Christ, by faith to deal with the problem of their sin and allow Christ to come in. And those who are walking with You, give them anxiety and a concern about being fruitful branches. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS with Christ

“Seeing the Savior in Action”

Key Verse - 20:31—*“But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you might have life through His name.”*

Study Number Seven – **The Vine and the Branches** – **John 15:1-14**

Key Verse 15:5

v. 1 I am the genuine vine, and my Father is the vinedresser (tiller of the soil).

v. 2 Every branch in me not bearing fruit, He is taking away; and every branch bearing fruit, He is cleansing it, in order that it may keep on bearing more fruit.

v. 3 You, already, are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

v. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. Even as the branch is unable to be bearing fruit of itself, except it is abiding in the vine, so neither can you, unless you are abiding in me.

v. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who is abiding in me and I in him, this one is bearing much fruit, because apart from me you are not able to do anything.

v. 6 If anyone is not abiding in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they are gathering them, and casting them into the fire, and they are burned.

v. 7 If you are abiding in me and my words are abiding in you, ask whatever you are desiring, and it will become yours.

v. 8 In this my Father is glorified, that you are bearing much fruit; so shall you become my disciples.

v. 9 Just as the Father loved me, I also loved you. Abide in my love.

NOTES

NOTES

v. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept the commandments of my Father, and I am abiding in His love.

v. 11 These things I have spoken to you, in order that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

v. 12 This is my commandment, that you keep on loving one another, just as I have loved you.

v. 13 Greater love than this, no one is having, that one lay down his life on behalf of his friends.

v. 14 You are my friends, if you keep on doing that which I am commanding you.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read John 15:1-14 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does Jesus mean when He calls himself the vine and His Father the vinedresser?

3. How does a Christian bear fruit?

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4. What do you think it means to abide in Christ, spoken of in verse 4?

5. What do you think is the meaning of verse 6?

6. What are the prerequisites for an effective prayer life, according to verse 7?

7. How is the Father glorified, according to verse 8?

8. What are we commanded to do in verse 12?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches, and the Father is the gardener.

LESSON #2: The branch has one purpose, to bear fruit.

LESSON #3: The object is fruit, more fruit, and much fruit.

LESSON #4: The pruning instrument is the Word of God: the **SWORD** lays bare, the **HAMMER** breaks in pieces, and the **FIRE** melts.

LESSON #5: The branch can never settle down in self-contentment.

LESSON #6: The Father is glorified by a good crop.

LESSON #7: The Father's hand is never closer to His child than when He is pruning him.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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