

John 15:1-8

The Vine

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English Standard Version

I Am the True Vine

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every 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. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide 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. ⁵ I 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. ⁶ If 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. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Today’s passage Jesus is speaking to the new Jewish believers and the interested non-believers, helping them to see how without God they can do nothing.

It's all to do with how we live out our identity in Christ and how we can bear fruit. There really is only one way and that is by staying connected to the Vine who is Jesus.

Let's take a closer look at the passage and we are going to start near the end of the passage as if we get this right the fruit will be a natural product.

V7 ^{If} you *abide in me*, and *my words abide in you*, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

There is a beautiful hymn which I suspect everyone will have heard which is sung at many funerals.

Abide with me was written by Henry Francis Lyte, was an Anglican minister. ... It was related that Lyte was staying with the Hore family in County Wexford and had visited an old friend, William Augustus Le Hunte, who was dying. As Lyte sat with the dying man, William kept repeating the phrase "**abide with me...**".

I suspect that is why some of the lyrics are related to a person who is seeing life slip away from them.

*Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.*

*Where is death's sting?
Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me...*

So yes, abiding when we are in our final hours on earth I suspect is pretty easy – we don't have anyone else who can possibly be with us as we leave this earth and go into the arms of our heavenly father. How-ever there is so much more to abiding than this hymn can ever express.

The word Abide appears in the new testament 118 times, which shows me that it is pretty important to Jesus that we learn to abide.

So, what does the word really mean?

- not to depart, not to leave, to continue to be present:
- to maintain unbroken fellowship with one.
- to be constantly present with the Holy Spirit, [John 14:16](#)
- to dwell as it were within him, (Christ) to be continually operative in him by his divine influence and energy of the Holy Spirit.
- to be held, or kept, continually: even in the state of death,

In other words, to abide means we should have Christ established permanently within our soul, and always have the Holy Spirit exerting his power within our lives.

How do we make sure this abiding happens? It's not something that just happens as Jesus tells his listeners to choose whether they will abide- ***If*** you abide in me. If – such a small word but the weight on it in this passage of scripture is enormous.

Will our ***if*** become something we choose to do. And ***if*** we do choose to abide what might that look like in the Christians life.

1. ***Be still*** Abide may conjure up the words of being still, contemplative, in a monastery or hidden away from everyone for months on end. Sitting in prayer and listening to God.

It could definitely mean all of these things but for the average Christian who may not have lots of time to spend abiding in that way, it must mean we can do it in some other way -if abiding means we are to stay and not depart from God and to be present with him continually.

Before we think about ways that we may abide in our everyday life I want to say firstly that to learn to abide in Jesus it will more than likely ***start with being still***. It's often in the stillness that we begin to sense God's presence. To hear his small still voice speaking to us whether in prayer or through the silence.

I use the [Abide App](#) – Christian meditation – 5- 15 minutes every morning which sets me up for the day. Every day it gives a scripture to ponder with a commentary on what that may mean for us in our everyday lives.

Our spiritual disciplines including our quiet time which most of us I suspect will do in the morning, should help us to learn how to abide well. As we read God's word and abide in it and chew over it, we will learn to abide and rest in his presence and his ways.

Joshua 1: 8 tells us to not depart from God's word. To meditate on it day and night.

As we think of a scripture each day and ponder it during the day it will affect our lives, slowly at first but then as we do it more and more the fruit of us doing this will become apparent.

So, we begin by being still and quiet - but we can't do that all day and every day so what may the next step look like.

2. **Recognise** our need for Jesus all day and every day. We need to stay humble to understand that without Jesus we can do nothing. We may look like we are doing ok- having all our ducks in a row but if we are not humbly confessing our need for Jesus in our daily lives and wanting his will then we will not produce godly fruit.
3. **Pray** - When we find ourselves during the day having to make decisions, feeling offended, getting angry etc etc, pray that Gods Holy Spirit will help you to produce fruit as you abide in that split second in prayer - arrow prayers- asking him for help.
4. **Activity** - Some people will abide while walking or running or doing some sort of craft like painting or sewing, or some other activity that makes them feel God's presence and give them space to pray. Eric Liddell which the movies Chariots of fire is based on says that famous line "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. and when I run, I feel his pleasure."
5. **Retreat** - Finally, if you are able to go on a retreat or spend time each week or month in quiet the fruit that comes from that time will be invaluable. Quiet day - Read/ pray / sleep/ meditate/ listen/ journal.

There are a few thoughts on how you can abide.

Now that we are abiding what can we expect?

We should expect Fruit.

² Every 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.***

What is the fruit- Fruits of the spirit (Gal 5)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.

Are we producing fruit that looks like that? There will always be room for improvement.

The word for prune that John uses is better translated as pure/clean. There will always be more things that need to change in us to produce a better level of purity and cleanness.

The pruning can often be very painful but if we allow the HS to shine his light on those areas which need changing and work with him on the things that need to change the fruit that will grow through it will be healthy and vibrant.

(Verse 3-4 ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also 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)

Jesus is saying that they have been pruned. They have left family, homes they are being persecuted and still producing fruit however

he is saying that need to remain close to him in order to keep producing the fruit.

It's very tempting to go alone in life. Independence is the curse of our age. We create our own bubbles - literally over the last year, we haven't had to see people who may challenge us or help us, and I suspect many of us have got quite used to that.

My concern that the bubbles that people have formed over the last year will spiritually stifle our growth as people get comfortable with not attending worship and not being challenged by dealing with everyday life.

We have all had to do church very different over the last years but as we begin to be able to worship together let's be careful not to stay cut off from the church community.

Summing up how do know what fruit Jesus is wanting to produce in our lives.

1. Learn to abide and abide permanently.
2. Ask is God trying to prune us in certain areas of our lives, and then humble yourself and say yes Lord have your way.
3. As we stay humble and abide, we will realise that all we ever needed was Jesus and him alone, when that happens our desires will change from things of earth to desiring the things of heaven which will bring God glory.

However regardless of if we stay close or not, we will be pruned or cut off. Do we want to be those who are cut off – I suspect our answer will be no, but are we willing to be pruned in order that we produce more fruit? A much more difficult question to answer and one I leave you to ponder this week.

Let's pray.