

## **If You Want to Be Fruitful**

John 12:24-26

John 15:1-11

We all want to be effective Christians, those who make a 'success' of our Christian lives. A Christian who is growing, who is at the center of God's will is a fruitful Christian. A fruitful Christian is a servant, a useful, mature Christian.

God gives us the keys to the Christian life through the use of an illustration, growth and fruit bearing in a vine.

In John 15, Jesus likens the Father to a husbandman, Himself to a Vine, and believers to branches. The Father wishes us to bear fruit. Christ is the source of it all. Clearly then, fruit is Christlikeness, for the fruit of Christ must be Christ Himself. The branches are there to reproduce themselves, and bear the fruit.

Jesus mentions 4 kinds of Christians

- 1) The fruitless Christian: this one He disciplines
- 2) The one bearing fruit - He prunes
- 3) The one bearing more fruit
- 4) The one bearing much fruit

How do we bear much fruit?

### **I. Everyday, Do Some Dying**

12:24

A seed cannot become a plant until it dies, till it surrenders its self-life. It must die to being a seed and give in to becoming a plant. Likewise, we as branches must die to the proud desire to be another vine. A branch must accept its role as a branch, totally dependent on the vine. Can you find anything in nature like an 'independent branch'? That would be unnatural. Indeed, a branch which severs itself from the tree would in fact be dead. That's why Jesus effectively said in verse 25 'He that loves to live life his own way will lose it, He that dies to his own life will truly get it.'

What must I die to?

**Sin:** obvious trespasses, disobedience. We must die or mortify sin in our lives. Say no to the temptation. Why do we sin? Because we want our own way. Dying to sin is to say, "I am a branch, I must get into my place", say no to sin.

**Self:** living for self. I must die to going my own way. Jesus said if any would come after Him they would have to 'deny self'. That's literally disown self utterly. Then He said we would have to take up our cross, that speaks of death. We must die to wrong priorities, squeezing God out. Anywhere where I am pleasing God above self needs to die.

Why should I die to sin and self? Because Jesus died for you. He died in love for you, so you should die in love for Him. I John 4:19, we love Him because He first loved us.

How do I die? Jesus set the example in Philippians 2:5-11. He also provides the power. Romans 8:13 and chapter 6 show us that we are dead with Christ and now have the power by the Spirit to say no. You can't die to self by the power of self. You need the motive to be God , love Him, and the means to be God , His Spirit.

## **II. Everyday, do some abiding.**

15:4-5

Notice that in 12:24 it also uses the word 'abideth' If you don't die to self , you abide alone. We will all abide somewhere, we need to choose whether we will abide alone or in Christ. Christ says, abide in Me.

Abide, that means remain or stay connected. So long as a branch remains connected to the vine , the sap can flow through it and it can bear fruit.

For a Christian, our 'connection' to Christ is through the Word and prayer. Notice in verse 7 there is reference to Christ's words, and to prayer. Abiding is fellowship with Christ , not only in devotional times , but always seeking to remain in fellowship with Him at all times.

Notice some things:

V4 , the Vine is the source , the branches depend completely on the vine.

Only if you die to self, will you desire to abide. Branches which love their own life abide alone. As you practice Spirit-empowered self-denial, you will seek to abide in Him for life.

V5 , fruit only comes if you abide. You cannot skip this step and expect to be fruitful. You may imitate or counterfeit fruit, but it will not be fruit that remains. Communion with Christ is your source. Without Him you can do nothing.

V6 There are profound consequences for not abiding. , fruitlessness.

Abiding is seeking to know and behold Christ. First, you need to die to your own life and way of handling life and begin to replace it with His life and His way of thinking.

Why must we abide?

Because He loves you. V9 , Abiding is loving Him back.

How do I abide?

Like He did , by remaining in His presence at all times.

By His power , the Spirit that illuminates the scriptures as we read and meditate, and who empowers us and intercedes for us as we pray.

Consider that the bigger the trunk ,the more sap can flow and the more abiding takes place.

## **III. Everyday , do some obeying (v10)**

The branch gives up its right to be its own, receives sap from the vine and then it must do what comes naturally , bear fruit.

A believer says , 'not my way' , that's dying. Then 'I want to learn His way' , that's abiding. Then 'do it His way' , that's obeying.

A believer who is dying to self and abiding will find obeying comes naturally. Obeying is doing it His way.

Notice some things:

- branches don't produce fruit , they bear it. By keeping themselves in the vine, they bear fruit. The vine produces the fruit , they simply have to carry it. Likewise we don't produce Christlikeness. By obeying we allow the Spirit to empower us and produce the fruit of righteousness, we bear it. It's His work in us. We must merely die to our selfish ways, learn His way and by His Spirit seek to imitate His way.
- Branches bear fruit in keeping with the vine. Branches don't try and concentrate on the type of fruit , they remain closely attached to the vine and they will produce fruit like the vine. If Christ is the vine , what will the fruit be? Christlikeness- His character. Galatians 5:22-23, 2 Peter 1:5-7
- Notice it is not fruits but fruit. Christlikeness is one fruit that is produced with many different facets.
- It is not living life by God's rules as much as it is imitating Christ's life by His power.

Good fruit comes from good abiding. Colossians 3:16 tells us to let the Word dwell richly in us.

Why should we obey?

- 1) Because He loves us v9
- 2) Because as we obey , we experience His love v10
- 3) It is a way of loving Him back 14:15

How do I obey?

Like He did , "I always do the things that please Him" You obey by His power , walking in the Spirit.

When you obey you reproduce yourself , your fruit will cause new life in others, as God uses it.

Notice , trees don't taste their own fruit. It is to be eaten by others. So Christlikeness is not to be eaten primarily by ourselves , but by others.

Dying, abiding, obeying , all 3 are to be empowered by the Spirit. All 3 require 100% effort. All 3 require 100% dependence.

God wants you to bear fruit more than you do. If you are fruitless, then expect discipline. If you are bearing fruit, expect pruning.

The result which God seeks:

- 1) Much fruit , which remains.
- 2) The Father is glorified v8
- 3) Our joy will be full v11 , a satisfied, fulfilled life.