

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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Abiding In The Vine

Dear Friend,

Recently, the Lord drew my attention to a particular chapter in John that before now didn't seem to say a lot to me. I could read and understand the words, but unlike so many other areas in the Bible, the messages contained in these words remained a mystery. Then when I read it this time, I began to see glimpses of light shining through the words as the Holy Ghost began to open them up to me and John 15 ceased to be such a mystery.

Sadly, I think we sometimes give up long before the Holy Ghost has the opportunity to unlock the mysteries of the word of God to us. Often we read verses or chapters that make no sense to us because we are just not mature enough spiritually at that moment for the Holy Ghost to reveal the mysteries within. The two worst things you can do in that case is to never look at those verses again because you think they are just too difficult to understand, or you accept what another person says they mean without allowing the Holy Ghost to teach you. Either response makes it difficult for the Holy Ghost to do His job.

In my case, I never just stopped reading John 15, even though it didn't seem to say very much to me. I read it occasionally, generally when I was looking at either John 14 or 16. I visited those two chapters much more often because I had a greater depth of understanding in them. I remember at times thinking, "I wonder why this 15th chapter was stuck in between these two incredible chapters?" That is a true sign of ignorance on my part to think that chapter 15 had less to say than the other two.

I would like to share with you some of the glimpses of light given to me by the Holy Ghost. What I believe HE showed me is that Jesus actually summed up the entire Christian experience in John 15. I believe the content of this chapter, along with chapters 14 and 16, paints a beautiful picture of what our lives are to be like as Christians. Ignoring chapter 15 would cause a person to miss the entire picture painted by all three of these chapters together.

Chapter 15 begins with Jesus explaining the necessity of the new birth into the family of God, illustrated as a branch bearing fruit as it is connected to the vine. (John 15:2)

“Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

There is so much being said in this one verse. To begin with, it is clearly saying that a fruitless branch is not going to be allowed to remain. To be clear, there is only **one reason** a person is not able to spend eternity with Jesus and that is because they refuse to accept Him as Lord. That being the case, the **first fruit** that must be present is the fruit of the reborn human spirit. Without it there is no way for a branch to remain in the vine.

Throughout the rest of the chapter, Jesus shows us the life we are to live once we are born again. He outlined our Father’s expectations for us as His children, with one point being crystal clear; **He does not expect us to remain the same.** Notice these two words “every” and “purgeth”. Every born again person, that’s 100% of us who are Christians, are to experience the purging process. This is the same process Paul spoke of in Romans 12:2.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

The “transformation” process that Paul spoke of here goes hand in hand with the purging process Jesus spoke of in John 15:2. It is all accomplished by one thing going inside of us, **God’s word**. Look at what Jesus said. (John 15:3)

“Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

In other words, Jesus was telling them that they had just experienced a taste of this purging process by listening to His words. This is God’s expectation for us that we don’t remain “just saved people waiting to go to heaven” and praying that God makes the time we have left on earth as comfortable as possible. But instead, we realize that God’s desire for us is to bear more fruit, which will require this purging process. Thank God, He made the process so simple that all we have to do is put His word inside of us and not try to figure out what it is saying, rather let the Holy Ghost reveal the hidden messages to us.

You might be saying; “Mark, that sounds way too easy”. Think about it, as easy as this process is, how many Christians are actually doing it? Instead, they will

allow someone else to tell them what the word of God says without ever asking the Holy Ghost to teach them. Doesn't it seem better to have the one who inspired those words to be written down teach you what they are saying? That is the ministry of the Holy Ghost.

With that in mind, in order to receive the truth in John 15 **we must try to lay down any preconceived ideas that we might have.** Also, we must not approach the word of God thinking we already know everything there is to know about a given verse or chapter. These are the things that will keep us from receiving the true message contained in God's word. Approach His word like you have never read it before and let the Holy Ghost do His job.

So, if in John 15 Jesus is outlining to us what a successful Christian life is to look like my question is; "How does mine compare with what He describes?"

Answering that question begins by first understanding; "What our life is to look like according to what Jesus said?" If our lives can line up with what Jesus describes here it would seem that we should have the most fulfillment possible in this life. Thank God, He didn't leave us in the dark to try and figure out what He wanted us to do. Jesus has outlined His expectations for our lives as children of God. For example; (John 15:7-8)

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." (8) Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples."

Everything begins with our connection to the vine, which is our identification in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. From there, we should expect to be fruit producing branches. Again, the first fruit produced is the fruit of the reborn human spirit. No one will go any further with Jesus until they experience the new birth. But, that is just the first fruit. There is more fruit to be produced as the branch continues to abide in the vine and God's word continues to purge any unnecessary things from our lives.

Think about how simple God has made this whole process. First we accept the Lordship of Jesus and bear the fruit of a reborn human spirit. Then, we take God's word and just read it and in so doing the purging begins. Our desires are now beginning to more align with His desires for us and the superfluous things in our life begin to fall by the wayside.

Our prayer life gradually moves from being centered on our own needs to being focused on the needs of others. We should be moving away from a self-

centered existence to a self-less life in which the well-being of others is more important to us than our own. That is the example set for us by our Lord Jesus.

The end result is a life of fulfillment and joy as we rest in the assurance that we are loved by our heavenly Father and by our Lord Jesus. In John 15, what Jesus outlines is a selfless life that is not lived with the sole purpose of being the most comfortable we can possibly be. At the same time Jesus wasn't suggesting that we grit our teeth and accept every horrible circumstance as being from God and just pray that you make it through to the end.

The life Jesus outlines is one of surrender in which we stop striving, accept His Lordship, be connected to the vine and allow His life to flow through us. We take His word and read it and allow it to prune away all the unwanted parts of our flesh. This will cause rich, beautiful fruit to form on our branches, fruit that God uses to draw others to Himself through you.

What we get by living this selfless life is the peace and assurance of knowing we don't have to strive to be accepted by our Father. Contentment will begin to settle into our hearts, which can dominate our entire being. The fruit of joy will begin to appear on our branches, which will not only bless us, but others as well.

Jesus is saying that if we are willing to live opposite to how the world lives, a life of selflessness instead of self-centeredness, we can expect to experience the very best that is possible in this world. It will be a life of love that flows from the inside out, along with fullness of joy. This will be because you are living as Jesus lived when He walked this earth as our example.

This love isn't contingent upon what other people do or don't do for us. It is love that is pure and free of bias. It propels us to want to lay down more of our lives for the sake of others. This is what abiding in the vine truly looks like. It looks like nothing in this world, because it is not of this world. Living this way causes great contentment, as well as, the realization of others being added to the kingdom because of your life.

There is much understanding to receive in John 15. I shared more in the [Abiding In The Vine](#) series this month, but I also encourage you to read the word and allow the Holy Ghost to teach you and you will experience the best life has to offer on this earth; a life lived like Jesus.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins