

The Vine & the Branches

John 15:1-5

The Fruitful Life

- ❑ Most of us want to live a beneficial and productive life – a life characterized by positive qualities. This may be called a “fruitful life.” What does the Bible say about this?¹
- ❑ Jesus told his disciples to “go and bear fruit – fruit that will last” (*John 15:16*). Paul talked about “the fruit of the Spirit” (*Galatians 5:22-23*). How can we live “the fruitful life?”

The Vine

- ❑ On the night before Jesus’ death, he told his disciples he was going away; but he would return and take them to the “Father’s house” (*John 14:1-3*). In the meantime, God would send the Holy Spirit to be their Counselor and Teacher (*14:16, 26*). After telling his disciples these things, Jesus began to teach them using the vine to illustrate his teaching.
 1. Read John 15:1-5. The vine illustration includes four parts: 1) the vine; 2) the branches; 3) the gardener; and 4) the fruit. What does each of these parts represent?



- ✿ Vine (*15:1, 5*):²
- ✿ Branches (*15:5*):³
- ✿ Gardener (*15:1*):
- ✿ Fruit (*15:16*): See below.

“Fruit”

2. In John 15, “fruit” is what the branches are supposed to bear (*15:5, 16*). What is this “fruit?” What does the word “fruit” represent in the following verses?
 - ✿ Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33
 - ✿ Galatians 5:22-25⁴
 - ✿ John 4:31-38 (in verse 36, “crop” is literally “fruit”)⁵

¹ The Bible often uses the words ‘fruit’ and ‘fruitful,’ in both literal and metaphorical ways. In the Old Testament, the word ‘fruitful’ often refers to physical reproduction – e.g., ‘Be fruitful and increase in number’ (Genesis 1:28). However, this study will concern other meanings of ‘fruit’ and ‘fruitfulness.’ Keep reading!

² Jesus says, ‘I am the true vine’ (15:1a). In the Old Testament (OT), the vine was a common symbol for God’s people Israel (e.g., Psalm 80:8-16; Ezekiel 15:1-8; 17:1-21; 19:10-14). However, the OT typically used the vine to illustrate Israel’s failure to produce fruit. In contrast to Israel’s failure, Jesus is the ‘true (*alēthinōs*) vine.’

³ The primary application is to believers – those who are *truly* ‘in Jesus’ (15:5). However, the metaphor might also apply to false believers, or to the smaller branches that are ‘pruned’ (cut off) from a main branch (15:2).

⁴ The context includes verses 16-26, which contrasts living according to the flesh with living according to the Spirit.

⁵ Jesus’ ‘food’ (sustenance and satisfaction) is to do the Father’s will and accomplish His work (4:34). A complete understanding of this passage is found in the context of Jesus’ ministry among the Samaritans (4:1-42). However, our focus here is the use of the word *karpon* (fruit) in verse 36. The ‘crop (fruit) of eternal life’ refers to the result of ‘sowing’ (sharing, proclaiming) the gospel – that is, people trusting in Jesus as Savior, thus receiving eternal life.

- ❑ Christians are expected to bear “fruit.” In the New Testament, “fruit” has different aspects. Fruit is the evidence of one’s true identity (*Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33*). Fruit is the Christ-like character produced by the Holy Spirit (*Galatians 5:22-23*).⁶ Fruit is the result of one’s actions or labors (*Matt.3:8; Philippians 1:22*) and includes people who respond to the gospel by believing in Jesus Christ, thus receiving eternal life (*John 4:31-38; 15:16*).⁷
- 3. In nature, what is necessary for a branch to bear fruit? In the Christian life, what is fundamental (foundational) for “bearing fruit?” (*see 15:4-5*) Why is this so?

Living the Fruitful Life

- ❑ To bear fruit, branches must “remain in the vine” (*15:4-5*).⁸ Jesus says, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you” (*15:4*). What does it mean to “remain in Jesus Christ?” How do we “remain in him” and thus live “the fruitful life?”⁹ As we continue in this study series, we will consider the following components of “remaining in Jesus Christ” and “bearing fruit.”
- ✿ God’s Word – “If ... my words remain in you” (*15:7*)
 - ✿ Prayer – “ask ... and it will be given you” (*15:7, 16*)
 - ✿ God’s Discipline – “my Father ... prunes” (*15:1-2*)
 - ✿ Obedience – “If you obey my commands ...” (*15:10, 14*)
 - ✿ Love – “love each other” (*15:12, 17*)
 - ✿ Joy – “that your joy may be complete” (*15:11*)
 - ✿ Sharing Christ and the Gospel – “Go and bear fruit” (*15:16*)
 - ✿ Living by the Spirit – “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (*Galatians 5:16, 22-25*)
- 4. Read John 15:8. What is the ultimate purpose of “bearing fruit?” (*15:8*)¹⁰



Reflection/Application

- What “fruit” is evident in your life? What does your fruit indicate about you? Do you want to bear fruit that will last? Only in the Vine (Jesus) can we have life and fruit that will last. Do you need to be connected to the Vine through faith in Jesus Christ?
- Do you want to live “the fruitful life?” Reflect on this lesson, read John 15:1-17, and continue to participate in this study series.

⁶ ‘the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control’ (*Galatians 5:22-23a*). ‘Christian fruit’ is ‘Christ-like fruit’ (that is, fruit consistent with the character of Christ).

⁷ In John 15:16, ‘bearing fruit’ probably includes leading others to faith in Christ. This is actually God’s work, but He uses believers in the process. In particular, believers are called to share the gospel. Fruit is the seed-bearing part of the plant. Fruit is designed to reproduce. Believers are to ‘reproduce’ fruitful believers so that the church grows.

⁸ To ‘remain’ (*menō*) is to dwell or abide. In nature, the branch must be connected to the main plant, which provides the life and substance necessary to produce the fruit. Likewise the Christian must be united with Christ to have the life and substance needed to bear Christian fruit (*15:5*). We must be ‘in Christ.’ We are totally dependent on Christ.

⁹ A person is ‘in Christ’ only by God’s grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Much of ‘remaining’ in Christ is simple trust, and is realized through awareness of his presence and our dependence on him. We are connected to the Vine by God’s grace through faith. However, faith is demonstrated, deepened and strengthened through certain activities.

¹⁰ Bearing fruit is for the Father’s glory. The Gardener should be honored and praised for his beautiful fruit!