

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

I Am the Vine. You are the Branches

John 15:1-17

Introduction

Today we come to the last of Jesus’s “I am” statements. Once again we are in the upper room with his disciples before his crucifixion. Christ’s desire is that we find our life, our abundance, and our joy in him. We do that through “abiding” in him, like fruit-bearing branches cling to a healthy vine. Jesus also wants us to “bear fruit” in our lives. We aren’t saved for our own comfort, but to produce something good and life-giving in the world. How about you? Are you abiding in Christ and producing good fruit?

Read John 15:1-17

- 1: **How do you think we become better, stronger Christians?**

- 2: **What does the image of the vineyard represent in the book of Isaiah? (See Isaiah 5:1–7 and 27:2–6).**

- 3: **What might Jesus be saying about himself as it relates to this Old Testament image?**

- 4: **What is the Father’s role as it relates to the vine, and what does that mean he does with the vine? (John 15:2)**

- 5: **What is the purpose of pruning a plant, and how is it done?**

- 6: **What does this idea of pruning communicate about what God does to us believers? How have you seen God “pruning” you?**

- 7: **How does the image of a vine and branches help us understand what it means to “abide in Christ”? (vv. 4–5)**

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8: According to Jesus, how do we bear fruit in the Christian life? What type of fruit do you think Jesus is talking about? (vv. 4-5)

9: Have you ever felt your own inability to love God or other people the right way, or felt powerless to do the right thing? How does verse 5 help us address that feeling?

10: Jesus mentions three practical ways of abiding in him. Describe them, and write down the result of abiding in Jesus in each way.

- v. 7
- vv. 9–11
- vv. 12, 16–17

11: Do you think fruit-bearing is something Jesus sees Christians doing on their own or with others?

12: What is the relationship between fruit-bearing and discipleship? (v. 8) What might we conclude if we aren't bearing fruit?

Closing Thoughts

Faithful Christians are fruitful Christians. There's no such thing as a fruitless Christian life—or a Christian who never grows. If the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, then you are alive and growing, part of God's new creation, and part of his family (Rom. 8:9–17). That means you must bear fruit. How can a healthy apple tree *not* produce apples? If you aren't growing and bearing fruit, then you are either not a healthy Christian, or you are not really a Christian at all. It's as simple as that.

There's also no such thing as a lone-wolf Christian. A Christian who cuts themselves off from Christian community is a Christian who cuts themselves off from Christ. The love of such a Christian grows cold, they lose touch with the Holy Spirit, and they shrivel up inside. It's been said that growth in Christ is always growth together. It is in the community of the church that *obeying* Christ's commandments is really experienced, enjoyed, and encouraged. It's the focal point of Christian love.

But all these things are pointless discussions if we aren't personally and deeply drawing on the riches and grace of Christ Jesus. Trying to produce good fruit by our own efforts is like trying to turn an oak into an apple tree by tying apples to its branches. After a while, the fruit will rot. First the tree must change, then it will bear fruit. As we conclude, once more let me challenge you to find your life-source and joy-source in Jesus. Let his love and grace nourish you. Find your everything in him. If you do, the rest will follow. Go in peace.