

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## JOHN 15.1-8



**T. M. Moore**

*A Scriptorium Study*

*And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,*

*He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

The Gospel of John: John 15.1-8  
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## Introduction to *John 15.1-8*

Jesus continues to instruct His disciples on the life of abiding in Him.

To believe in Jesus is to abide in Him. To abide in Him is to bear much fruit. To bear much fruit is to glorify the Father. This is why Jesus came, and this is the life He has appointed for us.

We are branches in the Vine of eternal and glorious life. We expect to bear *much* fruit, and we earnestly seek the Lord to do so in us. There will have to be some pruning along the way, and prayer without ceasing. But because we believe in Jesus, we seek what He does, that we may bear much fruit for God's glory.

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## 1 Vine and Branches

Read and meditate on John 15.1, 2.

Jesus provides more detail on the nature of our calling as His disciples. Discipleship involves an intimate and organic relationship with Christ in which we bear much fruit and glorify the Father. It's like a vine and fruit-bearing branches.

*<sup>1</sup>Then He explained to them, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Each branch in Me that bears no fruit, He takes away, and every fruitful branch He prunes. That way it bears more fruit."*

- John 15.1, 2

*Reflect*

1. Jesus and His disciples left the upper room and headed across the Kidron Valley to Gethsemane. It's not hard to imagine that, as they walked, they may have passed a small vineyard, which Jesus used as an occasion to deepen His teaching about discipleship. The Bible says that the creation reveals the glory of God, and can teach us about His attributes and will (cf. Ps. 19.1-4; Rom. 1.18-21). Jesus frequently made use of the creation to teach about the Kingdom – seeds, coins, fields, birds, pearls, and more. Are you as alert as Jesus was to the opportunities creation presents for learning something about God or our relationship with Him? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, I know You speak to me through Your creation. Help me to...*

2. Jesus described Himself as the vine. Why do vinedressers plant vines? What are they looking for? What does this suggest about the mission Jesus was sent on by His Father? Is that mission completed merely by our becoming saved and receiving the gift of eternal life? Explain. *Lord, You are looking for fruit in line with Your Father's will. I am Your disciple, and I need to...*

3. The fruit of a vine comes not from the vine itself but through the branches which grow out of the vine. But the branches draw what they require for making fruit from the vine, and not from themselves. Branches that bear fruit are pruned so that they may bear more fruit. What's the principle at work in this? How does pruning make fruitful branches more fruitful? *Lord, I want to be more fruitful for You, so...*

4. What kind of fruit are disciples of Jesus supposed to bear? How does that fruit come into being in and through us? How should we expect the Lord to prune us, so that we will be more fruitful? *Be at work in me, Lord, to will and work of Your good pleasures, that I may...*

5. The Lord's purpose for us is that we should bear fruit, and that that fruit should remain (Jn. 15.16). Bearing fruit is *central* to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We should expect both to bear fruit and to be pruned to bear more fruit. What does this suggest about how we should approach our daily lives? How can disciples help one another to be more fruitful for the Lord? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

"He wants to show us how important it is to love, to hold fast to our love toward him and how much we gain from our union with him. This is why he says that he is the vine, by way of illustration. Those united,

anchored and rooted in him, who are already partakers in his nature through their participation in the Holy Spirit, are branches. For it is his Holy Spirit who has united us with the Savior Christ since connection with the vine produces a choice of those things that belong to it. And our connection with the vine holds us fast. From a firm resolve in goodness we proceed onward by faith and we become his people, obtaining from him the dignity of sonship.... He says that he is a vine, the mother and nourisher, as it were, of its branches. For we are begotten of him and in him, in the Spirit, to produce the fruits of life." *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

How would you explain this vine/branches lifestyle to a new believer?

*Closing Prayer*

I waited patiently for the LORD;  
And He inclined to me,  
And heard my cry.  
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,  
Out of the miry clay,  
And set my feet upon a rock,  
And established my steps.  
He has put a new song in my mouth—  
Praise to our God;  
Many will see it and fear,  
And will trust in the Lord.  
Blessed *is* that man who makes the LORD his trust,  
And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.  
Many, O LORD my God, *are* Your wonderful works  
*Which* You have done;  
And Your thoughts toward us  
Cannot be recounted to You in order;  
*If* I would declare and speak *of them*,  
They are more than can be numbered.  
Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;  
My ears You have opened.  
Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.  
Then I said, "Behold, I come;  
In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.  
I delight to do Your will, O my God,  
And Your law is within my heart."

Psalm 40.1-8

**Psalm 40.1-8** (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,  
Lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!  
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.  
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.  
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

Off'rings You do not require – open now my ears, O Lord –  
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.  
Take my life in ev'ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

## 2 Abiding in Christ

Read and meditate on John 15.3, 4.

Jesus commanded His disciples to abide in Him, reminding them first of the essential precondition for such abiding.

*<sup>3</sup>“And you are clean because of all my words – my judgments and my laws, which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>So remain in Me, and I in you. As it is plain no branch can bear fruit of itself, but must abide within the vine, unless you trust in Me, abiding in Me, then you too will bear no fruit.”*

- John 15.3, 4

Reflect

1. Jesus emphasized to the disciples that they were “clean.” This is the precondition for abiding in Christ. Unless we are *clean*, we can in no way abide in Him. What did Jesus mean by *clean*? Why were they clean? By what means had they then been made clean? Review John 13.10. Is being *clean* a once-for-all matter? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, I know that I need daily cleansing, and even throughout the day, I need to be made clean. Today, as I walk with You...*

2. Meditate on Hebrews 4.12, 2 Timothy 3.15-17, and 2 Corinthians 3.12-18. How does the Word of Christ make us clean? What does it do in us, for us, and through us? How would you explain the cleansing power of the Word to someone who was new in the faith? What should this mean for us with respect to the Word of Christ? *Lord, let Your Word show me...*

3. The word *abide* is literally, *continue*. It has a double aspect: We are to continue in Christ, and He will continue in us. How does Jesus continue in us? How can we be certain of that? How do we continue in Him? How can we know when we are no longer continuing in Him? What should we do then? *Help to be sure today, Lord, that I...*

4. We are branches in the vine which is Christ. As such, our heavenly Vinedresser is looking for us to bear fruit. What are the primary hindrances to a Christian bearing the kind of fruit we considered in the previous lesson? How can we overcome these hindrances, so that we bear the fruit the Lord is looking for from us? *I know that today, Lord, I will face temptations, distractions, and other hindrances to bearing fruit. I need You to...*

5. Be cleansed, abide, bear fruit. Put these three ideas into a single sentence. Memorize that sentence, and share it with some Christian friends today, either in person or via text or email. Share what this means to you. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

“He makes his disciples a palpable and convincing demonstration of the art of the purifier of their souls. For already, he says, they are purged not by participating in anything else but merely by the word spoken to them, that is, the divine guidance of the gospel. And this word proceeds from Christ. What man or woman of sense, then, can any longer call into question that the Father has, as it were, a pruning knife and hand through whose instrumentality everything exists, that is, the Son, fulfilling the activity of that husbandry in us which

he attributes to the person of the Father, teaching us that all things proceed from the Father by the instrumentality of the Son? For it is the Word of the Savior that purges us; the husbandry of our souls is attributed to God the Father. For this is his living Word, sharp as a sword, ‘piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.’ For, reaching into the depths of each person’s inmost soul and having every person’s hidden purpose revealed before it as God, it brings its keen edge to bear on our vain pursuits by the working of the Spirit. For this is what our purification consists in, I suppose. And all things that are for our profit in the attainment of virtue it increases and multiplies to bear the fruit that is conceived in righteousness.” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

To us is extended the unimaginable privilege of abiding in Jesus Christ. But this doesn’t just happen. We must be daily cleansed. We must fall on the Sword of the Spirit and be equipped by the Word of God. And we must continue in Jesus throughout the day. Faithful practice of the disciplines of the Lord will bring forth fruit in our lives. Why do you suppose so many Christians don’t practice these disciplines more faithfully? How can you make sure that you do?

*Closing Prayer*

“Hear, O My people, and I will speak,  
O Israel, and I will testify against you;  
I *am* God, your God!  
I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices  
Or your burnt offerings,  
*Which are* continually before Me.  
I will not take a bull from your house,  
*Nor* goats out of your folds.  
For every beast of the forest *is* Mine,  
*And* the cattle on a thousand hills.  
I know all the birds of the mountains,  
And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine.  
“If I were hungry, I would not tell you;  
For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness.  
Will I eat the flesh of bulls,  
Or drink the blood of goats?  
Offer to God thanksgiving,  
And pay your vows to the Most High.  
Call upon Me in the day of trouble;  
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”  
But to the wicked God says:  
“What *right* have you to declare My statutes,  
Or take My covenant in your mouth,  
Seeing you hate instruction  
And cast My words behind you?”

Psalm 50.7-17

**Psalm 50.5-21** (*Austrian Hymn: Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*)  
“Gather now My children holy, those bound close to Me by blood.”  
Let the heav’ns declare His glory, for the Lord Himself is Judge:  
“Hear, My people, I will charge you; I alone am God, your God!  
I will bring a solemn charge to gain you to Me for your good.

“Not for rituals I accuse you – let your worship to Me rise.  
Naught to Me is any use, Who dwells in glory in the skies.

*The Gospel of John: John 15.1-8*

All is mine throughout creation; I your help do not require.  
Offer Me no vain oblation: hear what I from you desire:

“Sacrifice of thanks now render; pay to God your solemn vows;  
Let the troubled, each offender, seek Him in the midst of woes.  
In the day of strife draw near Him; He will hear, and He will save.  
Honor God, rejoice, and fear Him, give to Him your grateful praise.

“All of you My Word despising, who are you to claim My grace?  
Praise may from your lips be rising, but you scorn Me to My face.  
You approve of all transgressions, scheme against your mother’s son!  
I will crush your vain aggressions and destroy what you have done.

### 3 The Vine

*Read and meditate on John 15.5.*

Because many of our favorite Scripture texts are so familiar to us, we can easily overlook the great depths of spiritual insight they contain. Jesus' description of Himself as the Vine is one of those texts, so we're going to focus on it for today.

*<sup>5</sup>"I am the vine, and you are branches. Each one who abides in Me, and I in him, will very fruitful be. For without Me you can do nothing."*

- John 15.5

*Reflect*

1. Let's work back to front: It's clear from this passage that the Christian life is a life of *doing*, and not merely of *believing*. What's the difference? Can we be said really to *believe* as Christians, apart from the *doing* such belief requires? But does this *doing* earn us anything? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, You are sending me today to be Your witness, and for this I'll have to...*
2. There are many things we *do* each day that do not find us thinking about Jesus or looking to Him for help. Give some examples. But though we may not be *believing* in Jesus as we are *doing* these things, is it possible for us to do them *without* Jesus? Explain. Since without Jesus we can "do nothing," how can *whatever we are doing* at any moment serve to enhance our relationship with Him? *Teach me to give thanks, Lord, as often as I can, for all the things You do in and for and through me each day. As I think back to just the past few moments, I thank You for...*
3. Jesus said we can expect to bear "much fruit" as we abide in Him and He abides in us. How does a person plan his week who expects to bear "much fruit" such as we have been considering in John 15? *Lord, I think I need to plan better, to be bolder and more visionary as I prepare each week and each day for...*
4. The fruit on branches is the outward manifestation of what flows from the vine. The vine taps into the resources necessary for fruit, which it draws from its rooting, and sends them up to the branches, from which the fruit emerges. The branches are conduits for fruit. What do branches need to make fruit? What do you need to bring forth the fruit our heavenly Vinedresser is looking for in you? *Grant me grace and truth, Lord, in increasing measure, so that...*
5. Jesus is the Vine. He draws in the resources we need and sends them to us day by day. He keeps in contact with us, lest we be broken off from Him, and begin to wither. Without Jesus we cannot bear fruit. Without Jesus we can do nothing. Do you think it would be a good idea to maintain as much *conscious contact* with Jesus as possible throughout the day? How might we do that? How might we help one another do that? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

"Look further into what the Truth has to say.... For just to keep anyone from supposing that the branch can bear at least some little fruit of itself, after saying, "the same brings forth much fruit," his next words are not, without me you can do but little, but "you can do nothing." Whether then it is a little or a lot, without him it is impracticable. For without him nothing can be done. For although, when the branch bears little fruit, the husbandman purges it that it may bring forth more, yet if it does not abide in the vine and draw its life from the root, it can bear no fruit whatever of itself. And although Christ would not have been the vine had he not

been man, yet he could not have supplied such grace to the branches had he not also been God.” *Augustine*  
(354-430 AD)

We do not contemplate as we should just how utterly dependent we are on Jesus. Do you think your love for Him would grow, if you took the time to give thanks for all He does for you each day? Explain.

*Closing Prayer*

Praise the LORD!

For *it is* good to sing praises to our God;

For *it is* pleasant, *and* praise is beautiful.

The LORD builds up Jerusalem;

He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.

He heals the brokenhearted

And binds up their wounds.

He counts the number of the stars;

He calls them all by name.

Great *is* our Lord, and mighty in power;

His understanding is infinite.

The LORD lifts up the humble;

He casts the wicked down to the ground.

Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;

Sing praises on the harp to our God,

Who covers the heavens with clouds,

Who prepares rain for the earth,

Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

He gives to the beast its food,

*And* to the young ravens that cry.

He does not delight in the strength of the horse;

He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.

The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,

In those who hope in His mercy.

Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!

Praise your God, O Zion!

Psalm 147.1-11

**Psalm 147.1-11** (*St. Ann: Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

Praise God, for it is good to sing loud praises to the Lord!

With joy our songs of praise we bring to God and to His Word.

The Lord builds up His Church and He His people gathers in.

The broken hearts He tenderly repairs and heals their sin.

The stars He counts, He knows the name of every chosen soul;

His pow’r is great, and great His fame Who understands us whole.

The humble God exalts above; the wicked He casts down.

Sing thanks to this great God of love; let songs of praise abound.

He brings refreshing rain to earth and feeds the beasts so dear.

He puts in man’s strength naught of worth, but loves those who God fear.

## 4 Cast Out Branches

*Read and meditate on John 15.6.*

True branches bear fruit, because they abide in the Vine. They who will not abide in the Vine will not bear fruit. They are not true branches, and they will be cast out.

<sup>6</sup>“He  
*who does not trust in and abide in Me,  
he is a cast out branch, is withered, and  
is gathered for the burning.”*

- John 15.6

*Reflect*

1. We have been looking at what it means to abide or *continue* in Christ, as Jesus commanded. Summarize your understanding of what it means to abide or continue in Christ our Vine. Complete the following prayer: *Abide in me, Lord, and help me to abide in You by...*

2. The evidence that we are abiding or continuing in Christ is that we bear “much fruit” (v. 5). Summarize the kind of fruit our heavenly Vinedresser is seeking from those who abide in His Vine. *Today I will have opportunities to bear fruit for You, Father, since...*

3. Connected to the Vine, but not abiding in it, are branches that do not bear fruit. Meditate on Hebrews 6.1-9. Here were people who confessed all the right things, had “tasted” of eternal life and the Spirit, but had “fallen away” so severely they could not be recovered. Such people, the writer insists, unlike those to whom he was writing, never really had salvation (v. 9). Should we expect to see such “branches” in our churches today? How can we recognize them? *Lord Jesus, let the fruit of Your life and power flow to and through me, so that I...*

4. Non-abiding branches “wither.” How can you tell when someone associated with a church is “withering”? What can such non-abiding branches expect from their non-abiding, unfruitful “connection” to Jesus? What does that mean? *Lord, when I see signs of withering in my own life, help me to...*

5. Jesus appears to have been warning His disciples here about the consequences of not abiding in Him. Should pastors and church leaders speak such words of warning to church members who are connected to the Vine, but clearly not abiding? Should you? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

*Summary*

“The Father is like the vinedresser, for, if he sees some who do not love me [Christ], he cuts them off like fruitless branches and sends them off to the fire, but if he sees the opposite, he takes care of them so that they may bring forth even more fruit through the spiritual gifts he gives.” *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

We do not abide in Christ and bear fruit to *earn* salvation, but because we have *freely received* it. Fruit *confirms* abiding. Lack of fruit confirms *not* abiding. Meditate on Hebrews 10.24. Why is this so important? How should you practice this?

*Closing Prayer*

Show me Your ways, O LORD;  
Teach me Your paths.  
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

For You *are* the God of my salvation;  
On You I wait all the day.  
Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses,  
For they *are* from of old.  
Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;  
According to Your mercy remember me,  
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.  
Good and upright *is* the LORD;  
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.  
The humble He guides in justice,  
And the humble He teaches His way.  
All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth,  
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

Psalm 25.4-10

**Psalm 25.4-10** (*Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord*)  
Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!  
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Remember mercy, Lord, and steadfast love to me!  
And all my sins before You let them not remembered be!

My sins have been of old, Your love is new each day;  
According to Your goodness, Lord, regard my sinful way.

Upright and good are You, You lead us in Your way;  
The humble You instruct in truth and guide him day by day.

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness;  
All they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

## 5 Whatever We Want!

Read and meditate on John 15.7.

Again, Jesus told His disciples, and us, that we can have whatever we want in life (cf. Jn. 14.14). The key is in wanting what we should.

<sup>7</sup>“But the man  
who will abide in Me, and keep My Word  
abiding in him, he will ask the Lord  
whatever he desires, and it shall be  
done for him.”

- John 15.1

Reflect

1. The most important word in this verse is the first one: “if...” In the Greek, this form of *if* suggests *possibility*. Something can happen *if* a condition is met. What does Jesus promise can happen? This condition has a twofold aspect. What is the condition? From what we’ve studied thus far, what does that mean? Complete this prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for holding out such precious and very great promises. Help me to...*
2. Let’s look first at the promise: “ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” This sounds very much like what Jesus promised in John 14.14. What *condition* had to be met to realize the promise in that verse? The key to this promise is the phrase *what you desire*. How might we *misunderstand* this promise? *Help me, Lord, to desire only...*
3. Compare the *condition* set forth in John 14.14 with the *condition* set forth here. In what ways are they similar? How does the condition here help to clarify the condition in John 14.14? Obviously, we need to work hard to *meet* these conditions, so that we can gain the promise they hold out to us. As we work at meeting these conditions, how should we expect that to affect our *desires*? *Today, Lord, help me want what You want, seek what You call me to seek, and delight in what You delight in. That way...*
4. Our translation obscures the fact that a second *condition* is put forward in this verse, the meeting of which is necessary if we are to have all that we desire. Here’s a better translation of the second part of verse 7: “...if you ask whatever you desire...” The second condition, therefore, is that we must *ask*. Meditate on James 4.2, 3. How does James lead us to think about *asking*? Meditate on Matthew 7.7, 8. How does Jesus help us to think about what our *asking* should look like? How would you explain this to a new believer? *Lord, help me to ask in the way You prescribe, so that...*
5. If we *continue* in Jesus, and Jesus’ words *continue* in us; if we pray in Jesus’ Name; and if we do not ask in a merely self-serving manner, what *desires* are we likely to express in prayer (cf. Matt. 26.39)? Does it make sense to you that the more we desire the *will of God*, the more powerful and satisfying our prayers will be? Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“If you abide in me,” he says, “and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” For when someone abides in Christ in this way, is there anything he or she can wish for besides what will be agreeable to Christ? When they abide in the Savior in this way, can they wish for anything that is inconsistent with salvation? Some things, indeed, we wish for because we are in Christ, and other things we desire because we are still in this world. For at times, in connection with our present living quarters, we are inwardly prompted to ask what we know would not be expedient for us to receive. But God forbid that such

a thing should be given to us if we abide in Christ, who, when we ask, only does what will be for our advantage. Abiding in him when his words abide in us, we shall ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us. For if we ask, and the doing does not follow, what we ask must not be connected with our abiding in him or with his words that abide in us. Instead they must be connected with that craving and infirmity of the flesh that are not in him and do not have his words abiding in them. For to his words, at all events, belongs that prayer that he taught and in which we say, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.' Let us only not fall away from the words and meaning of this prayer in our petitions, and whatever we ask shall be done unto us. For his words may only be said to abide in us when we do what he has commanded us and love what he has promised. But when his words abide only in the memory and have no place in your life, the branch is not in the vine because it does not draw its life from the root." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

If we desire to know God and Jesus Christ, we will have what we desire, for this is why Jesus came to earth (Jn. 17.3). How can we know when our desires are not what they ought to be? What can we do to redirect our desires, so that we can have what the Lord desires for us?

*Closing Prayer*

Trust in the LORD, and do good;  
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.  
Delight yourself also in the LORD,  
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.  
Commit your way to the LORD,  
Trust also in Him,  
And He shall bring *it* to pass.  
He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,  
And your justice as the noonday.

Psalm 37.3-6

**Psalm 37.1-6** (*Neumark: If Thou but Suffer God to Guide Thee*)

Let not the wicked make you worry;  
Envy not those who break God's Word.  
Like dying grass will they be sorry,  
And fade like every dying herb.  
Trust in the Lord and do His will;  
Dwell in His grace, be faithful still.

Delight yourself in God's salvation;  
He'll give you all your heart's desire.  
Commit to Him your every station,  
And His good purpose will transpire.  
Your righteousness a blazing light  
He will bring forth against the night.

## 6 This Way to Glorify God

Read and meditate on John 15.8.

As Jesus glorified the Father, so too may we. Here's how.

*<sup>8</sup>“Bear much fruit, and you will be  
My true disciples, and will glorify  
My Father.”*

- John 15.8

Reflect

1. As branches on the Vine which is Christ, believers are called to bear much fruit. What role do prayer and the Word of Christ have in this? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I have no strength on my own to bear much fruit, but I know that...*
2. What does it mean to glorify the Father? That is, how does the “much fruit” we bear as Jesus’ disciples glorify the Father? Is glorifying the Father something we should prepare for daily? Explain. *I want to glorify You daily, Lord, so...*
3. When are we being Jesus’ disciples? To ask the question another way, What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Should this be part of our explanation of the Gospel? Explain. *I want people to know that I am Your disciple, Lord, so I need You to...*
4. If we are not bearing “much fruit,” can our claiming to be disciples of Jesus be credible? Why or why not? How much fruit is *much* fruit? Can we ever know? Should we ever cease trying to bear *more* fruit (cf. Gal. 6.9, 10)? Explain. *Lord, I know that bearing much fruit does not earn Your love or the gift of eternal life. But since I know that You love me, and that I have this great gift, I want to bear much fruit so that...*
5. What are the greatest obstacles to bearing much fruit as a follower of Jesus Christ? How can Christians encourage and assist one another in this calling? Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“The Savior, in thus speaking to the disciples, commends still more and more the grace whereby we are saved when he says, ‘By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and be made my disciples.’ Whether we say glorified or made bright, both are the translation of one Greek verb, namely, *doxaizein*. For what is *doxa* in Greek is ‘gloria’ in Latin. I have thought it worthwhile to mention this because the apostle says, ‘If Abraham was justified by works, he has glory, but not before God.’ For this is the glory before God, whereby God, and not man [humankind], is glorified, when man is justified, not by works, but by faith, so that even his doing well is imparted to him by God. Just as the branch, as I have stated above, cannot bear fruit of itself. For if God the Father is glorified in this, that we bear much fruit and are made the disciples of Christ, let us not credit this to our own glory, as though we had it from ourselves. For such grace is from him, and the glory in this is therefore not ours but his. And so, in another passage, after saying, ‘Let your light so shine before people that they may see your good works’—to keep them from the thought that such good works were of themselves—he immediately added, ‘and may glorify your Father who is in heaven.’ For here is where the Father is glorified, that we bear much fruit and are made the disciples of Christ. And by whom are we so made, but by him whose mercy has preceded us? For ‘we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.’” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

The fruit that comes out in our lives – love, joy, peace, and all the rest – will make God the Father known in

our world. But we must guard against thinking this is *our* work. It is not. It is Jesus, at work within us by His Spirit, willing and doing of His good pleasure (Phil. 2.13). What should our response be when Jesus glorifies the Father through the fruit we bear?

*Closing Prayer*

The LORD *is* my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation.  
The voice of rejoicing and salvation  
*Is* in the tents of the righteous;  
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.  
The right hand of the LORD is exalted;  
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.  
I shall not die, but live,  
And declare the works of the LORD.  
The LORD has chastened me severely,  
But He has not given me over to death.  
Open to me the gates of righteousness;  
I will go through them,  
*And* I will praise the LORD.  
This is the gate of the LORD,  
Through which the righteous shall enter.  
I will praise You,  
For You have answered me,  
And have become my salvation.  
The stone *which* the builders rejected  
Has become the chief cornerstone.  
This was the LORD's doing;  
It is marvelous in our eyes.  
This is the day the LORD has made;  
We will rejoice and be glad in it.  
Save now, I pray, O LORD;  
O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.  
Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the LORD!  
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.  
God is the LORD,  
And He has given us light;  
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.  
You *are* my God, and I will praise You;  
*You are* my God, I will exalt You.  
Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good!  
For His mercy *endures* forever.

Psalm 118.14-29

**Psalm 118.14-29** (*St. George's Windsor: Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*)

In the Savior we are strong! He is all our strength and song!  
To His grace now raise your voice; in His righteousness rejoice!  
For the Lord does valiantly; we shall live eternally.  
Praise His works with all your breath, you whom He redeems from death.

All who know Christ's righteousness His great Name now thank and bless!  
Though His gate full righteous is, He our saving mercy is.

*The Gospel of John: John 15.1-8*

Cast aside and left alone, Christ is now our Cornerstone!  
God has made His Son and Word our salvation: Praise the Lord!

Blest are they who in His Name come and Jesus' grace proclaim.  
God His light upon us shines in the Savior's sacrifice.  
Praise and thanks to You, O Lord; we extol Your holy Word!  
Thanks to You for You are good! Thanks to our great loving God!

## 7 Living for God's Glory

Read and meditate on John 15.1-8.

Jesus came to reveal the glory of God. He was about to accomplish a work that would bring great glory to God. And He instructed His followers to seek the Father's glory by abiding in Him and bearing much fruit.

*<sup>1</sup>Then He explained to them, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Each branch in Me that bears no fruit, He takes away, and every fruitful branch He prunes. That way it bears more fruit. <sup>3</sup>And you are clean because of all my words – my judgments and my laws, which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>So remain in Me, and I in you. As it is plain no branch can bear fruit of itself, but must abide within the vine, unless you trust in Me, abiding in Me, then you too will bear no fruit. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, and you are branches. Each one who abides in Me, and I in him, will very fruitful be. For without Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>He who does not trust in and abide in Me, he is a cast out branch, is withered, and is gathered for the burning. <sup>7</sup>But the man who will abide in Me, and keep My Word abiding in him, he will ask the Lord whatever he desires, and it shall be done for him. <sup>8</sup>Bear much fruit, and you will be My true disciples, and will glorify My Father."*

- John 15.1-8

*Reflect*

1. Meditate on Matthew 5.13-16, 1 Thessalonians 2.12, and 1 Corinthians 10.31. Glorifying God is why Jesus came (Jn. 1.14), and it's why He has called us to be His disciples. How can we know when we are glorifying the Father as Jesus and Paul intend? Is glorifying God something we can *plan* for (cf. Ps. 90.16, 17)? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, the better I know You, and the more closely I walk with You each day, the more I will...*

2. We cannot glorify the Father apart from Jesus, for apart from Him we can do nothing. We must *continue* in Him, so that the life He *is* (Jn. 14.6) can flow to, within, and through us to others. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to *continue* or to *abide* in Jesus? How can we sustain this throughout the day? What can we expect if we don't? *Lord, guard and shield me from anything that might...*

3. Christians are a work in progress. To bear much fruit we must not only continue in Jesus, but we must be pruned by our heavenly Father. How can you know when the Father is "pruning" you as one of the branches in His Vine? What is the Holy Spirit's role in this (Jn. 16.8-11)? What is your role in that pruning process? *Lord, show me where I need to be pruned, then help me...*

4. Prayer is important to living fruitfully for the Lord. How should the goal of bearing much fruit and glorifying the Father guide our prayers? How can we engage in prayer to aid us in realizing that goal? What is the relationship between prayer and continuing or abiding in Jesus? *I don't know how to pray as I should, Lord! Help me as I...*

5. Imagine that you are sharing the Gospel with a friend, and your friend seems interested in professing faith in Christ. You need to make sure your friend understands what it means to follow Jesus, because merely expressing faith in Him is but the starting point. Unless we intend a life of following Jesus, our profession of faith in Him will be useless. How would you explain what it means to follow Jesus to your friend? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

*Summary*

“Let them praise you who behold you, and let them admire the marshaled bands of the church like the serried rows of vine branches. Let everyone among the faithful gaze on the gems of the soul. Let them find delight in the maturity of prudence, in the splendor of faith, in the charm of Christian affirmation, in the beauty of justice, in the fecundity of pity, so that it may be said of you, ‘Your wife is a fruitful vine on the sides of your house,’ because you imitate by the exercise of your abundant and generous giving the bountiful return of a fruit-bearing vine.” *Ambrose of Milan (333-397 AD)*

To *believe* in Jesus is more than just to affirm His work, give assent to His claims, or agree with His teachings. It is to *receive* Him into our lives, and to enter His (Jn. 1.12). To believe in Jesus is to abide in Him, to bear much fruit by Him, and to glorify the Father in Him. These are the defining aspects of the life of faith. How well do they define your faith in Jesus?

*Closing Prayer*

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,  
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!  
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;  
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;  
But when He cried to Him, He heard.  
My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;  
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.  
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.  
Let your heart live forever!  
All the ends of the world  
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,  
And all the families of the nations  
Shall worship before You.  
For the kingdom *is* the LORD's,  
And He rules over the nations.  
All the prosperous of the earth  
Shall eat and worship;  
All those who go down to the dust  
Shall bow before Him,  
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.  
A posterity shall serve Him.  
It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,  
They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,  
That He has done *this*.

Psalm 22.23-31

**Psalm 22.29-31** (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

All the prosp'rous of the earth shall before His mercy fall;  
Bending low before His worth, hear them humbly on Him call.  
Even those low in the grave He will by His mercy save.

Let the generations all witness to His saving grace;  
Let them to all nations call, "Bow before His holy face!"  
Let the children of the earth hear of Jesus' saving worth!

*The Gospel of John: John 15.1-8*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. How do you understand the abiding/pruning/fruit-bearing process in the life of a believer?
2. We can get whatever we want in prayer, so long as our focus is what it ought to be. Explain.
3. How does bearing much fruit bring glory to God? How can we prepare for this each day?
4. What are the greatest obstacles to bearing much fruit? How can believers help one another to overcome these?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 15.1-8? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Items for prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.