

Dr. David L. Turner, The Gospel of John, Session 17, John 15:1-16:15, Podcast Audio Overview

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Ever feel like you're supposed to be this amazing, fruitful person, but you're coming up a little, well, short? Yeah. Today we're diving into a lecture by Dr. David Turner on John 15.1 to 16.15, where Jesus compares himself to a vine and his followers to the branches. We've got a lot to unpack here, especially this idea of abiding in Christ and what happens to those unfruitful branches.

It's a really powerful image. This whole vineyard metaphor might seem a little strange at first, but Dr. Turner points out it has really deep roots in the Old Testament. Back then, Israel was often seen as God's vineyard.

And get this, just like a vineyard that's supposed to produce delicious grapes, Israel was supposed to produce good fruit, live in a way that reflected God's goodness, but often things didn't go quite as planned. Oh, absolutely. And it's not just like a one-off thing.

This vineyard imagery pops up all over the Old Testament. Really? You see it in Isaiah 5 with that beautiful but kind of heartbreaking song of the vineyard where God does everything right, but the vineyard yields only bad fruit. It's a powerful metaphor for how God felt when his people didn't live up to their potential.

So it's kind of a bummer situation. But then we fast forward to the New Testament, and Jesus comes on the scene calling himself the true vine. Right.

I mean, what's that all about? Well, Dr. Turner connects this directly back to those Old Testament images. Okay. It's as if Jesus is saying, I am the true embodiment of what God intended for his people.

I'm here to finally bear the fruit that Israel couldn't. Okay. So that's where we come in, right? The branches are grafted into this true vine, and we're supposed to be part of this fruit-bearing action.

Right. But here's where things get a little, well, intense. Yeah.

What about those branches that don't produce fruit? What happens to them? Yeah. Dr. Turner does not shy away from that question at all. Okay.

He actually tackles a pretty controversial idea here: this belief that once you're saved, you're always saved, no matter what. Right. But he makes a pretty compelling case that just being connected to the vine isn't enough.

Okay. We have to actually see evidence of real faith and dependence on Christ in our lives. So you might be thinking, okay, this is all pretty intense.

How do I know if I'm an unfruitful branch? Well, Dr. Turner does offer some guidance, but he warns against turning it into a spiritual to-do list. Exactly. He's not about checking boxes.

It's really more like he uses the analogy of a natural, organic connection between the vine and the branches. Okay. Just as a branch naturally draws life from the vine, we should naturally draw life from Christ through the Holy Spirit.

You know, I've always struggled with this idea of obedience. Does it mean following every rule blindly? But Dr. Turner's take on it, like connecting it to abiding, really shifted something for me. It's about cultivating a deep intuitive connection with Jesus that flows into every area of our lives.

Right. And, like, naturally, you want to live in a way that reflects that connection. That's a great point.

And he emphasizes that this connection isn't just some, you know, passive feeling. Remember what Jesus says in John 15.10, if you keep my commands, you will remain in my love. True abiding involves actively seeking to understand and follow Jesus's teachings.

So it sounds like we need to be intentional about both relying on the Spirit and like really digging into the Bible. Absolutely. Yeah.

We can't obey commands we don't know. Right. And Dr. Turner emphasizes that relying on the Spirit doesn't mean we just sit back and wait for things to happen.

It's an active partnership. It's like a two-pronged approach: dependence on the Spirit and diligent study of the Bible. Yeah.

Go hand in hand. And just to clarify, the fruit we're talking about isn't limited to just converting people to Christianity. It's anything good that flows from our connection to Christ.

Okay. Acts of kindness, developing Christ-like character, using your gift to serve others. It all counts.

That's a good reminder. Sometimes we can get so focused on bringing people to Jesus that we forget about all the other ways we can be fruitful in our daily lives. Right.

Right. And all of this begs the question: what happens to those unfruitful branches? We'll dive into that more after a quick break. Sounds good.

Okay. So we're back. And I have to admit, this whole unfruitful branches thing has me thinking.

If it's not just about being saved, then what does it mean? Does it mean we can lose our salvation? That's the million-dollar question, isn't it? Right. Dr. Turner doesn't really give us a definitive answer, and I think you'd probably say it's not that simple. Okay.

But he does point out that the warning about unfruitful branches is meant to make us stop and examine ourselves. Are we truly abiding in Christ, or are we just going through the motions? So it's less about freaking out and more about a kind of healthy self-check. Exactly.

And it's a reminder that this whole abiding thing is an ongoing process. It's not like a one-time event or a guarantee. We need to constantly be tending to our relationship with Christ, just like a gardener tends to a vineyard.

I love that analogy. Speaking of challenges, Dr. Turner also talks about how following Jesus isn't always sunshine and roses. Right.

There's this whole aspect of, well, persecution. Yeah, it's true. Jesus himself warned his disciples that the world would hate them just as it hated him.

Right. He didn't really sugarcoat things. He told them straight up that they would face opposition.

And that opposition can be pretty brutal, right? Yeah. History is full of examples of people who have suffered for their faith. Absolutely.

But here's the thing. Jesus doesn't leave us to face it alone. He promises to send the Holy Spirit, the Helper, to guide and empower us.

And that's where this idea of abiding comes full circle. If we're deeply rooted in Christ, if we're drawing our strength from him, then we're better equipped to face whatever challenges come our way. Exactly.

It's like when you're facing those really tough times, when you're feeling the heat, that's when your connection to the vine, to Jesus, becomes even more important. It's what sustains you. You know, there's something else Dr. Turner said that really struck me.

He was talking about how maybe we should think of Christian witness as like the Holy Spirit is doing the heavy lifting and we're just helping out. That's a fascinating perspective, isn't it? Yeah. I mean, we often put so much pressure on ourselves to have all the right answers, to convince people to believe, but what if it's not all on us? Dr. Turner actually quotes John 15:26-27, where Jesus says, when the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. So it's like a tag team effort. The Holy Spirit is actively working in the world, drawing people to Christ, and we get to participate in that work.

So instead of feeling like it's all on our shoulders to win arguments or convert people, we can rest in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit's already at work, like opening hearts and minds. Precisely. Our role is to be faithful witnesses, sharing our experiences of Christ's love and grace. But the ultimate work of transformation belongs to the Spirit.

That takes a lot of pressure off, doesn't it? It does. It's not about having all the answers or coming up with, like, perfect arguments. It's about simply being authentically who we are, people who have been transformed by Christ's love.

And that, in and of itself, is a powerful witness. You know, when we live lives that reflect Christ's character, when we show love and compassion to others, it can't help but make people curious. It's like that saying: preach the gospel at all times.

If necessary, use words. Exactly. Our actions often speak louder than our words.

And when our actions are rooted in Christ and that deep, abiding relationship we've been talking about, it can have a really profound impact on those around us. So if we're truly connected to the vine, if we're actively seeking to, like, know and obey Christ, then we don't really have to worry about, you know, being cut off. That's how I understand it.

The warning about unfruitful branches is a challenge, a wake-up call to make sure our faith is genuine. Okay. It's a call to action, not a reason to live in fear.

I like that. It's about living in freedom, not fear. Freedom to be who God created us to be, to bear fruit in whatever way he's called us to.

Absolutely. And remember, that fruit can take so many forms. It's not just about converting people to Christianity.

It's about reflecting Christ's character in everything we do, loving our neighbor, pursuing justice, and living out the gospel in tangible ways. And that's where things get really interesting. Dr. Turner didn't get into the specifics of Jesus's teachings in this lecture, but I think it's a great question to ponder.

What teachings of Jesus resonate most with you? And how can you put those teachings into practice in your daily life? Yeah. It's a great question, isn't it? Which of Jesus's teachings speak to us most deeply, and how can we let them transform our actions? It's not enough to just, like, admire his words. We need to let them shape how we live.

Yeah. It's like that old saying: don't just be a hearer of the word; be a doer. And I think Dr. Turner would totally agree that, like, the doing is where the real fruit comes in.

Absolutely. And that brings us right back to this whole idea of abiding. It's not just about believing certain things about Jesus.

It's about having an active, ongoing relationship with him that, like, actually changes how we think and how we make decisions and how we interact with the world around us. You know, it makes me think of that beautiful passage in 1 John 4.66. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them. Yes, that verse perfectly highlights the connection between love and abiding. We can't say we're abiding in Christ if we're not, you know, actively showing his love in our daily lives.

Okay, so we've covered a lot of ground today. We have. We've explored the symbolism of vineyards in the Bible, the challenge of those unfruitful branches, and how important it is to abide in Christ through obedience and relying on the Holy Spirit.

We've also touched on how the Holy Spirit empowers us to bear fruit, both in our personal lives and as we, you know, engage with the world around us. So after this deep dive, what stands out to you as the most important takeaway? You know, for me, it's the reminder that how much fruit we bear is directly connected to our relationship with Christ. We can't produce lasting, meaningful fruit on our own.

We need to be constantly drawing life and nourishment from the vine, from Jesus himself. I love that. It's such a powerful image.

And it reminds us that, you know, we're not in this alone. We have the Holy Spirit as our guide and helper, and we have each other to encourage and support along the way. Exactly.

We're meant to be branches connected to the vine, but also connected to each other, growing together and bearing fruit together. So as you go about your week, I want to leave you with this thought. What does it practically look like for you to abide in Christ in your everyday life? What steps can you take to deepen your connection with him and allow him to produce fruit in you? Maybe it's, you know, committing to daily prayer and Bible study, or maybe it's intentionally looking for opportunities to show Christ's love to those around you.

Whatever it looks like for you, remember that abiding is an ongoing journey, not a destination. It's about staying connected to the source of life, to the true vine, and letting his love flow through us and out into the world. That's good.

Thanks for joining us on this deep dive into John 15. Until next time, keep seeking, keep growing, and keep abiding.