

Dr. David L. Turner, John, Session 17,

John 15:1-16:15

6-Min. Video Overview

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So, picture this: Jesus is spending his last precious hours with his closest friends. You can just imagine the tension in the room, right? A lot of uncertainty. He knows he's about to leave them, and he needs to give them some of his most important lessons ever.

And to do it, he uses an image they would understand instantly. And that's really the big question we're tackling here. In a moment this critical, why talk about farming? Why a vine? Well, you have to remember who he was talking to.

These people lived and breathed agriculture. A vineyard wasn't just some nice picture; it was their life, their culture. So by choosing this metaphor, Jesus was speaking their language to get at a huge spiritual truth.

A truth about our purpose, our faith, and what it really means to follow him. Okay, so it all kicks off with this one simple but incredibly deep statement. I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

This is it. This is the core analogy that unlocks everything else he's about to say. He's not just telling a nice story.

He's literally defining the relationship between us, him, and God the Father. All right, so let's dive into this thing. To really get what Jesus is saying, we've got to know who the key players are in this whole farming allegory.

Who's who in this divine vineyard? It's actually pretty straightforward. First, you've got God the Father. He's the farmer, the gardener, the one who owns the vineyard and is in charge of the whole operation.

Then there's Jesus. He says, I am the vine. He's the central plant, the source of all the life, all the nourishment.

And that leaves us, his followers. We're the branches. And a branch, as you know, is completely dependent on the vine for everything.

Simple, but so, so powerful. Now here's something that might make you pause. Why did Jesus use the word true? Why specify he's the true vine? To get that, we have to rewind a bit and look at a really powerful symbol from Israel's history.

See, this whole vineyard idea wasn't new. His audience would have heard it and immediately thought of something else. In the Old Testament, especially in the book of Isaiah, the nation of Israel is often called God's vineyard.

God, acting as the farmer, did everything you could possibly do for a vineyard. He planted it. He protected it.

He took care of it. But time and time again, the vineyard just didn't produce the good fruit he was looking for. You know, things like justice and righteousness.

And this is where it all just clicks into place. When Jesus calls himself the true vine, he's making an absolutely massive claim. He's basically saying, I am the fulfillment of what Israel was always meant to be.

I am the successful vineyard. Through me, God's people will finally produce the right kind of fruit. He is the new center of God's entire plan.

Okay, so if we're the branches, what's our job? What's our responsibility in all of this? Jesus boils it all down to one single crucial command. This one word defines our entire existence. And that command is to abide.

Now this isn't just a fancy religious word. It means to remain, to stay connected, to live in a constant state of dependence. Think about it.

A branch can't do anything on its own. It's not about checking off a list of tasks. It's about maintaining this living, breathing, organic connection to the vine.

So how do you do that? How do you actually abide? Well, Jesus links love and obedience together. He says that if you keep his commands, you will remain in his love. You can't really separate them.

Obedying him is how you live in his love. And the natural result of that connected, loving obedience is that you will bear fruit. It just happens.

Which, of course, leads to the next big question, right? When Jesus talks about bearing fruit, what does he actually mean? Is it one specific thing, or... Well, according to the source analysis, it's kind of all of the above. Fruit can be external things, like new people coming to faith. And it can definitely be internal things, like developing a character that looks more like Jesus.

More love, more joy, more peace. The bottom line is, fruit is pretty much anything good that gets produced from a life that is totally dependent on Christ. But this is important.

This beautiful picture also has a really serious, kind of sobering side to it. Jesus is crystal clear that not every branch ends up in the same place. There are two very, very different outcomes for a branch.

So what are these two paths? What's the ultimate feat of any given branch on this vine? It all boils down to one simple question. Does it, or does it not, bear fruit? And wow, the two options could not be more different. First, you have the fruitful branches.

What happens to them? They get pruned. Now, anybody who's gardened knows pruning involves cutting, and it can seem harsh. But the goal is life.

The farmer does it so the branch will produce even more fruit. It's a sign of health. But the unfruitful branches? Their fate is final.

They're cut off, gathered up, thrown into the fire, and burned. It's a terrifying image. And the text suggests it's a direct reference to people like Judas, who looked like a follower for a while, but produced nothing of value.

So you see, the crucial point here is that this is not a feel-good story for a casual faith. It's a serious call to a genuine, persevering faith. It completely pushes back on any idea that you can say you're a follower of Jesus, but have no responsibility to stay connected and actually live it out.

Perseverance isn't an optional extra. So let's just zoom out one last time here. Why? Why is this connection, this abiding, so critical? What's the ultimate point of producing all this fruit? Because it's not just for the branch's own good.

Well, for one thing, that connection is your lifeline. Because Jesus gives his followers a very blunt reality check. He says, hey, just so you know, the world is going to hate you.

Staying connected to the vine is the only way you're going to find the strength to endure the opposition that's going to come your way. And this all leads right into the mission. Jesus shows that telling the world about him is a divine partnership.

And you got to notice the order here. It's not all on us. First, the Holy Spirit does the primary work.

He testifies to the world. Then we come alongside and join in what the Spirit is already doing. We are partners, not the pioneers.

And then Jesus drops the line that just sums up the entire teaching perfectly. It's maybe one of the most humbling sentences in the Bible. Without me, you can do nothing.

It's this radical call to complete dependence. Any good thing, any fruit, any success, it doesn't come from the branch. It all flows from the vine, period.

Which brings us to this powerful, powerful summary. In this picture, Jesus paints: you're not the root. You're not the source of life.

And you're not even the final product. That's the fruit. Your role, our role, is simply to be the connection, the conduit, the pathway through which the life of the vine flows to produce that fruit.

And that brings us full circle right back to that simple yet incredibly profound image of a branch on a vine. If a branch's one and only job is to abide, to stay connected to its life source, then it really leaves us with a pretty critical question to ask ourselves, doesn't it? How strong is your connection?