

YOU

Sermon Series: Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus

To be used with: Joining God's Work

Sermon Title Possibilities: Growing through Persistence

Scripture: John 15:1-8

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study “*Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus*,” this sermon from John 15:1-8 explains that spiritual growth comes through persistence. Believers must remain faithful to our relationship with God, to the revelation from God, and to the reproduction of disciples for the glory of God

Introduction: John 15 is a part of Christ's last conversation with His core. In this chapter Christ speaks extensively about how to have an abiding life (v.1-8), an abundant life (v.9-11), and an abounding life (v.12-16). In this chapter we come to the last “I Am” statement in the gospel of John. He has told them that “I am” the bread of life, the light of the world, the door of salvation, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the truth, way, and life, and now He tells them “I am the true vine.”

Essentially, He communicates that He is the source of life, joy, growth, and impact in the life of every believer. The emphasis in this chapter is on abiding in Christ for the sake of bearing fruit. Certainly it is a reference to convert fruit (where people are getting saved through our influence), but more directly, it speaks of character fruit (where we are bearing the fruit of the Spirit and becoming more like Jesus Christ). The text teaches us that we through our ***Relationship with Him***, through the ***Revelation from Him***, and through ***Reproducing disciples for Him***.

1. Bearing Fruit through Relationship with Christ (v. 1-2)

Christ speaks of Himself as the “True Vine” and of believers as those who are in Him. He says, ¹ “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper.

² Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.” We are connected to Christ like a branch that is connected to a vine. We receive our life from Christ. We receive our sustenance from Christ. Our growth in the likeness of Christ is in direct proportion to our connection to the life of Christ. We connect to the life of Christ relationally.

Our relational connection with Christ is cultivated by focusing on Him, fellowshiping with Him, and functioning like Him. Friend, we must think on Christ, talk to Christ in prayer, and live like Christ in the world. The more we do these three things, the more the Lord changes our hearts. And, the more he changes our hearts, the more we bear fruit.

2. Bearing Fruit through Revelation from Christ (v. 3-7)

In these verses, Christ tell us that we are cleansed by the Word (v.3), we are conformed into His image by the Word (v.4-6), and we are brought closer to God by the Word (v.7). Christ makes it clear that we can not bear fruit without Him (v.5), that when we're not relationally connecting we are withering (v.6), and that we experienced more answered prayer when we are connected to Him relationally (v.7).

We must abide (our translation says remain) in Him. In verses 4-16 Christ uses this term "remain" eleven times. The word means to continue steadfastly in a person, practice, and relationship. Christ is calling us to bear fruit (become more like Jesus) by remaining in—continuing in, being steadfast in—the Word of God.

3. Bearing Fruit through Reproducing Disciples for Christ (v. 8)

Friend let me say to you, God does not simply want you and I to be a Christian. He wants us to be disciples who make disciples. In verse eight He says, "My father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples." A disciple reproduces. A disciple not only reproduce the character of Christ, but he also carries out the commission of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

One of the best ways to mature in Christ is to minister for Christ. The apostle teaches that we grow while we minister (Ephesians 4:11-16). We've become so professionalized and secularized that we only think that those with Bible degrees and ministry training are fit for service in the church. But Christ took a ragtag bunch of unlearned men and used them to establish His Church. Christ wants to use you to bring glory to God and good to the world through the reproducing of disciples of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: In the Christian life, everything rises and falls on relationship, revelation, and reproduction. Our relationship with Christ must take top priority—we must cultivate it daily. The revelation of Christ—the Word of God—must be our spiritual food that we ingest daily. And, reproducing disciples for Christ must be never-ending work—that we engage in constantly. May the Lord help us to bear fruit through relationship, revelation, and reproducing disciples of Jesus Christ.

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