

John 15-16 Study Guide

REMAIN IN JESUS

John 15:1-16:15,33

Key Verse: 15:5

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

In 15:1-17, Jesus used the metaphor of a gardener, vine and branches to describe the relationship between the Father, Son and the disciples. Fruit-bearing is essential for branches. Jesus explains how his disciples can bear fruit: It is by remaining in him. We can also learn what kind of fruit Jesus wants us to bear. In 15:18-16:15 Jesus explains how the disciples can carry out his mission in a hostile world and how the Holy Spirit will help them.

I. Remain In Jesus (15:1-17)

First, Jesus taught his disciples how to live a fruitful life (1-8). Jesus explained what kind of relationship his disciples would have with him after he left this world by using a vine and branch metaphor. The Father is the gardener, Jesus is the true vine, and the disciples are branches (1,5). They have an inseparable relationship. The Father’s purpose for his disciples was to bear much fruit. Therefore, the Father cuts off fruitless branches, which refer to people who deliberately reject Jesus as the Messiah, like Judas Iscariot. The Father also prunes fruitful branches, which refers to divine discipline through his word for those who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah, like Peter and the rest of the disciples, to make them even more fruitful (2-3). Jesus is the true vine, the source of life, who alone can make his disciples fruitful.

Bearing fruit is very important for Jesus' disciples. Everyone wants to live a fruitful life. The problem is how to bear fruit. Jesus said, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine" (4). In the same way, no one can bear fruit unless they remain in Jesus (4c). People try to bear fruit through their own hard work without Jesus. Instead of having a relationship with Jesus, they make good programs, build networks, or surf the web to find something. They should realize that they are just branches, which cannot bear fruit by themselves. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. If we do not remain in Jesus, we become like branches that are thrown away and wither, and are burned in the fire (6). Our spirits are drained and we become "burned out." So we feel lifeless, dry and useless. We have to realize that Jesus is the only source in bearing fruit. As we remain in Jesus, and Jesus remains in us, we will bear much fruit.

In this passage, the words "remain in me" and "I remain in you" or their equivalent are repeated several times (4a,4b,5,6,7). This is union with Jesus through faith in him and commitment to him. When we remain in Jesus and his words remain in us, we can ask God for whatever we wish, and it will be done for us (7b). Jesus' words and prayer should go together for fruit bearing. When we bear much fruit, it reveals the Father's glory and we can show ourselves to be Jesus' disciples (8).

Second, the fruit Jesus wants us to bear (9-17). Jesus loves his disciples as the Father loves Jesus (9). His love for his disciples is divine; it is intimate, eternal, sacrificial, holding nothing back, and lacking nothing. Jesus' love is different than any love that we experience in this world, such as romantic love or brotherly love. The disciples had received Jesus' love and now they needed to remain in this love. The way of remaining in his love is to keep his commands (10). Keeping his commands is not burdensome; it is the way of experiencing the true joy that Jesus gives us (11). Jesus' command is: "Love each other as I have

loved you” (12). Jesus explained that the greatest love is to lay down one’s life for one’s friends (13). Jesus demonstrated this love for his disciples so that his disciples would learn how to love one another. Jesus loved his disciples as friends, not in a hierarchy. Masters and servants have a hierarchical relationship based on duty. But Jesus’ disciples are equals. So many conflicts have arisen in Christian history when this kind of love was not practiced. We need to love one another as friends. The evidence of being Jesus’ friends is obedience to his command to love one another (14). Jesus’ friends enjoy a privilege of knowing the Father’s business, which refers to God’s work for world salvation (15). Jesus’ friends participate in this work willingly and serve the world with God’s love. We need to remember that we did not choose Jesus, but Jesus chose us (16). This gives us a deep sense of privilege and assurance of bearing fruit, not based on our performance, but on Jesus’ election. Jesus appointed us to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last, the fruit of eternal life (16; 4:36). Jesus also promises that we will receive what we ask for when we do so in his name. All we have to do is to depend on Jesus and obey him. Jesus’ command is to love each other (17).

Many people misunderstand the concept of fruit. They think it is limited to visible achievements. When they do not see this kind of fruit, they feel that they are a failure compared to others and fall into a sense of unworthiness and inadequacy. They are tempted to be competitive and fall into jealousy. We need to have a right concept of fruit. One fruit is love. Another fruit is joy (11). And another is peace (14:27). When we remain in Jesus we can have love, joy and peace (Gal 5:22). In brief, it is to grow in Jesus’ character and to be used in the work of saving lost souls.

II. Jesus Teaches the Work of the Holy Spirit (15:18-16:15,33)

First, Jesus' disciples need to understand why the world hates them (15:18-25). Jesus was sending his disciples into the world (18a; 15:16; 17:11). Here, "the world" refers to that which is hostile to God because it is under the control of the devil (12:30; 14:30). Jesus testified that the works of "the world" are evil (7:7; 1Jn 2:16). So the world hated Jesus (18b). When the disciples work in the world, they should not expect love, honor and recognition from the world. Rather, they can expect to be hated and persecuted. When these things happen, it would be easy for them to be confused and to lose their identity. It is important to remember that the world hated Jesus first. Jesus' disciples do not belong to the world, but to Jesus (19). For this reason, some people would persecute them and others would obey them, because of Jesus' name (20-21). Another reason the world hates Jesus is that he exposes sin and guilt (22). Whoever hates Jesus hates God the Father as well (23-24). This irrational hatred fulfills Scripture (25).

Second, the Holy Spirit helps Jesus' disciples (15:26-16:15,33). The "Advocate", *Paraklytos* in Greek, is also called the "Advocate," "Counselor," "Helper," "Comforter," and "the Spirit of truth." Jesus sends him from the Father. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus (15:26). The disciples also must testify about Jesus (15:27). Jesus warned of severe persecution that was coming. The disciples would be put out of the synagogue, which meant to be cast out of society. They would even be killed by people who thought they were serving God (16:2). Yet, they should not fall away (16:1). Rather, they should testify about Jesus (15:27). They should remember what Jesus said (4). Jesus had helped his disciples until this time. But now Jesus was going away (5). So they were filled with grief (6). But Jesus planted independent faith in them, which was to depend not on Jesus' physical presence, but on the Holy Spirit. So it was for their good that Jesus was going away (7a). Only by going away could Jesus send the Holy Spirit to them (7b). When the Holy Spirit comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment (8). The most serious sin is not

believing in Jesus (9). Another serious sin is self-righteousness. The Holy Spirit convicts people that their own righteousness is wrong (Ro 10:3). Only Jesus' righteousness makes one truly right with God (10). Before Jesus came, Satan was holding people under the power of sin and death. But through his death and resurrection, Jesus destroyed Satan (Heb 2:14), and Satan now stands condemned. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus' victory over Satan known and frees people from slavery to him. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth and tells what is yet to come (13). The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus (14-15).

In this world we have many troubles, but Jesus encourages us, "Take heart! I have overcome the world!" We can be victorious because Jesus won the victory and the Holy Spirit is with us (33).