

True Disciples

As we have noticed in our previous studies, Jesus in John 14-17 is ministering closely to his private disciples. In chapter 14, he largely comforts his disciples, reminding them that his departure is actually a blessing to them and that he is preparing a place for them, will return to earth to receive them unto Himself, and will send the Holy Spirit to comfort and console them. In chapter 15, he gives them some guidelines for how they are to live their lives after His ascension to the right hand of the Father.

John 15:1-17

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. **3** Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. **11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

12 This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command you. **15** No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. **17** These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Let us notice two major ideas in Jesus' teaching:

True disciples must abide in Jesus Christ (vv. 1-11) and true disciples must abide lovingly with fellow disciples (vv. 12-17).

I. True disciples must abide in Jesus Christ (vv. 1-11)

There are three reasons that Jesus teaches us that we must abide in Him.

- A. Jesus is the true vine (v. 1a). This is the seventh of seven "I am" statements, and in this one specifically Jesus presents Himself not as the deity but as the true Israel. In the Old Testament, Israel is repeatedly referred to as the vine or the vineyard. Jesus is saying that although Israel has completely failed and will be destroyed (remember 70 AD), Jesus is the true Israel, the true vine, in which we will find the forgiveness and blessing of God. We must abide in the true vine in order to be of God's people.
- B. The Father is the vinedresser (vv. 1b-3). Here, Jesus presents the Father as the One who continually cultivates His vineyard. John Stott, "God the Father is pictured here as an indefatigable gardener." In His "gardening" of His church, the Father does two things:

3. What is the “fruit” that believers are to bear?

4. What are the ways in which the Father sometimes “prunes” His disciples?

5. Why is it essential that true disciples of Jesus love one another?

Going Deeper

1. What are the ways in which you need to strengthen your intimacy with Jesus Christ?

2. Do you have some relationships among fellow believers in which you need to love more freely and fully? What loving steps can you take in these relationships?