

The Secret to a Fruit-Bearing Life

I. Slide1 Announce:

A. Slide2-5 Larry:

B. Prayer: Lord, as we look at you being *the True Vine*, trim our **thoughts**, prune our **motives**, snip off our bad attitudes, then **pluck & enjoy** the fruit from our lives. May our fruit bring **You** glory.

II. Slide6 Intro: The Secret to a Fruit-Bearing Life

A. Setting: *Rise, let us go from here* (14:31). The last supper being over they are still in the room preparing to leave, **or** they have just left & are on the way to Gethsemane. Maybe passing *a vineyard* when this subject came up...**or** passing *the Temple*.

1. Slide7 Josephus the Historian, in *Wars of The Jews* 5.210, describing the Temple said, *“but that gate which was at this end of the first part of the house was...all over covered with gold, as was its whole wall about it; it had also golden vines above it, from which clusters of grapes hung as tall as a man’s height.”*

B. Now we get to define what He meant by “in”. *In Him, in you, in Me*. See 14:20 & Jn.15:1-8

1. It has to do with an *intimate relationship you can enjoy & cultivate with God*.

C. What would you say is the **goal of your life**? Some would say *success*. Others to be *comfortable*. **God’s** goal for your life...is for you to be **fruitful**.

1. Who knows that fruit doesn’t grow at Trader Joe’s **or** Albertsons? No, some professional gardener *worked very hard* to get that fruit to market to be enjoyed. [and it is God/our Gardener that’s *hard at work* making us bear fruit]

D. Brian, what’s the key to a joy filled, spirit saturated christian life? When our life is ordered around *abiding in the presence of Christ*.

1. It’s when our goal isn’t to *get something from God, do something for Him, find principles to manipulate Him, or follow rules to live under Him*. **No** our goal isn’t to **use God, but our goal is God**. [Read text]

III. Slide8 LOOKING FOR FRUIT (1,2)

- A. **It's a Metaphor** - The visual picture of the vine & branches tells us that the central idea is *a vital union*.
- B. **3 Symbols:**
1. **Vine = Jesus**. He identifies Himself as **the genuine vine**, **the only source of spiritual fruit**.
 - a) The imagery alludes to OT depictions of **Israel** as **Yahweh's** vineyard (Is.5:1-7). **But now Jesus replaces Israel** as the central focus of Yahweh's plan of salvation, fulfilling the role of Israel as the true vine.
 2. **Vinedresser = Father**. God the Father is pictured here as *a busy, active, faithful gardener*, working in His vineyard. [maybe Jesus' *greatest compliment* is when Mary thought He was the gardener]
 3. **Branches = Genuine Believers**. Here He distinguishes between **our position** in the Vine (**Christ**) & **our production**. [and *the sap* that runs in Jesus veins, runs in ours, *i.e.* HS]
 - a) **Slide9 Jabuticaba** (ZJHA-boochi-kaba) - *the Brazilian grapetree*. The fruit grows right on the tree trunk. I think God created this tree to **keep us humble**...showing He doesn't even need *a branch* to grow fruit.
- C. **Main Truth:** the importance of *abiding in Him* in order to **bear fruit**.
1. **Fruit** is used 6x's & **abide** at least 15x's (not always translated *abide*).
 2. The main point of the teaching here is **fellowship**, **not sonship**.

IV. Slide10a **PRUNING FOR FRUIT (2,3)**

- A. The pruning may refer to **hardship** that (eventually) produces **faithfulness** and **closer relationship with God**, **such as** the disciples are *about* to experience.
1. We have to submit to the pruner's knife, cutting away all of our **other goals** and **ambitions**.
 2. Think about this intimate process...*the vine-dresser is never closer to the vine, taking more thought over its long-term health and productivity, than when he has the knife in his hand*. NT Wright, *John For Everyone, Part 2*.

B. In viticulture 2 principles are generally observed: **1st**, all **dead wood** must be ruthlessly removed. **2nd**, the **live wood** must be cut back drastically.

1. **Why? Dead wood** harbors **insects & disease** & may cause the vine to **rot** [plus, it's *unproductive & unsightly*]
2. **Why? Live wood** must be trimmed back in order to prevent such heavy growth that the life of the vine goes into the wood **rather** than into the fruit.
3. **We know that we are abiding when the Father prunes us.**
4. **He cuts away the good, so that we can produce the best.**
 - a) Which helps to explain why a dedicated Christian often has to go through *suffering*.
 - b) Sometimes He cuts back so far that His method seems **cruel**. **Nevertheless**, from those who have **suffered the most**, there often comes *the greatest fruitfulness*.
5. **Is God pruning your life now? Yes**, the pruning knife is sharp. **Yes**, it will be painful. **Yes**, you'll probably bleed more sap. **But**, *fruit is coming*.
 - a) New book out by Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering is Never For Nothing*.
 - b) The branch that is *good for something* gets the *special privilege* of the pruning knife
 - c) There is a productive vine, pruned for *greater production*.

C. **Slide10b** I see **4 Kinds** of People here:

1. **Unbelievers** (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.* [note **contrast** to vs.7] **eg.** Judas Iscariot last chapter.
 - a) This is none other than *plastic fruit zip-tied to a tree*. [plastic fruit varies in quality]
 - b) I believe that vs.6 then is speaking about **hell**. *Did you know that most Americans believe in heaven but not hell.* Jesus talks more about **hell** than anyone in Scripture. **13%** of His teachings are about *punishment & hell*.
 - c) **Here's the issue...** if you're **not doing life w/God right now**, you can't expect Him to believe *you'd want to do it later with Him?*
2. **Unhealthy Believers** (2). *Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away*
 - a) 4 different Views of **He takes away**: [αἶρω *EYE-ro*]

- (1) A christian losing their salvation. (but Jesus just said, *All that the Father gives me will come to me, & whoever comes to me I will never cast out*)¹
- (2) Fake-christians like Judas. (I don't bel you can lose your salvation but you can fake it)
- (3) Christians taken to heaven. *taken away* (flesh killed, but their soul/spirit saved)
- (4) Christian lifted up to get healthy. Not *taken away* but *lifted up*. (lifting grapes off the ground, put back onto the trellis). [24x's John uses, 1/3 *lift up* 2/3 *cut away*] **I lean towards this 4th one, lift up.*

3. Believers in a Season of Pruning (2-5).

- a) Are you a believer in a period of pruning?
- b) Watch out for *sucker shoots/Tree suckers* that will rob you of nutrients. [a plant sucker is an effort by the tree to grow more branches, especially if the tree is under stress]²
- c) Pruning is *painful* but **profitable**. [oh and *busyness* is not fruitfulness]

4. Believers Growing more Healthy & Fruitful (7,8 actually through vs.17).

- a) Vs.4,5, 7,8 describes the **How To** of living Healthy & Fruitful lives.

V. Slide11a ABIDING FOR FRUIT (4-8)

- A. The main subject is Abiding - Jesus uses the image of fruit, not that of *a seed taking root*.
 1. His thrust is not on *becoming a Christian* but on *becoming a productive Christian*.
- B. The result of Abiding is Fruit - A branch is good for 1 thing...bearing fruit.
- C. Slide11b To abide in Christ means *to be in communion with Him* so that our lives please Him
 1. It's *living in loving community* because that's what the Trinity has always done.
- D. To abide in Christ *does not mean to keep ourselves saved*.

¹ John 6:37

² <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/trees/tgen/tree-sucker-removal-and-tree-sucker-control.htm>

1. **It means**, to live in His Word & pray (7). **It means**, to keep our lives clean through His Word (3). **It means**, to obey His commandments (10).
- E. Jesus's **1st** secret to a fruit-bearing life was to ***submit to the Pruning***. The **2nd** is to ***Keep on Abiding***.
1. **Abide** = *dependence on, rely on, wait for, draw strength from*.
 2. **How did Jesus live out His abiding life/organic union with the Father?**
 - a) He had ***constant contact*** w/the Father. He often took deliberate steps to withdraw to be alone. [a relationship of ***complete dependence***]
- F. **Slide11c** Christ said 4 things to us: [1] ***Come to Me*** (as Savior) [2] ***Learn of Me*** (as Teacher) [3] ***Follow Me*** (as Master) [4] ***Abide in Me*** (as Life).
1. **So, to abide** is the highest requirement of Christ & applies to all His disciples.
- G. (5) **Stretch your branch** far from the root & bear your **strength & sweetness** to those who stand ***outside the wall***.
1. In Jacob's last words to Joseph (Gen.49:22) he said, ***Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall***. (NIV)
- H. **3-Fold progression of spiritual productivity**: **Fruit** by abiding. **More Fruit** by pruning. **Much Fruit** by continuing to abide.
- I. **Slide12 What Fruit?** Well, probably the cluster of fruit in Gal.5:22,23a.
1. Jesus didn't indicate ***the nature of*** the fruit here, **but Paul** expounded on it. ***Love, Joy, Peace - Patience, Kindness, Goodness - Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control***.
 2. inner attitudes (sourced in God). relational qualities (expressed to others). personal qualities (guides indiv conduct)
- J. Slowly **evaluate** each one in your life, ***savor each fruit***. **Think of Christ-likeness**.
- K. **Slide13 How would you express each one?** Here's how I did:
1. **Love is**: when we become **transparent**, & Jesus shows through very **apparent**.
 2. **Joy is**: an ***attitude cultivated*** when the heart smiles.
 3. **Peace is**: enjoyment of **godliness & contentment**.
 4. **Patience is**: the discipline to **stop & pray** before any decision. Not feeling the worlds pressure to hurry through life.

5. **Kindness is:** what is shown even to those who *bend us the wrong way*.
6. **Goodness is:** so general a term it spans every area of our life, in which we strive for the highest Good in all things.
7. **Faithfulness is:** trustworthy in words spoken & deeds promised.
8. **Gentleness is:** not weak but meek. *Like a strong father picking up his newborn for the 1st time.*
9. **Self-Control is:** learning to say *no to me*.

L. **Slide14** *I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing.* (Msg)

M. **Note**, the command is not to *produce fruit* but to **abide**.

1. When we're abiding, fruit comes **naturally**.
2. The fruit in view here is not produced by **the branch** but by **the Vine** itself.
 - a) Without **abiding**, a branch *cannot produce* even a **bud** of real fruit.
 - b) *The vital sap comes from Him alone. Nothing, yes nothing of genuine or eternal value...It's only plastic fruit.*
3. **W/o Me you can do nothing** (5b)...*Lasting*.
4. *Nothing, nothing, nothing you do w/your talents, gifts, money, or time, can bear even one little spiritual grape...w/o Christ.* bb

N. If we **abide in Jesus**, we will exhibit *the fruit of the Spirit*. [but this of course takes time]

1. These are not **superficial character adjustments** that happen overnight.
2. They involve a **reshaping** of the *innermost dispositions of the heart*, which is *a lifelong process* of **sanctification** by the spirit.
3. **We can't go home & try to pop out a fruit**. Remain abiding **and** earnestly seek God's Spirit to *fill you, reshape you, & do an inner makeover in you*.

O. **Results?** Our **prayers answered** (7) & the **Father glorified** (8) & **fruitful lives** (8) [the identifying mark of a true believer] [**Fruit:** character qualities of **Christlikeness**]