



The Humble Parent and Teacher

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

John 15:5

"I am the vine." These are Jesus' words. If we are honest, parents and teachers, our naturally proud hearts beat to a different rhythm. Each parent naturally thinks, "I am the vine. I am the one upon whom my child should rely. I should be their source of knowledge, strength, and comfort." As a teacher, I naturally think that much depends upon me. I view myself as indispensable. I see myself as one who can influence, mold, and change my students for the better. But our proud hearts deceive us. We need to diminish pride and enlarge humility. Self must decrease and God must increase. Jesus Christ is the source of life, not I. Jesus is indispensable; I am not. Jesus can produce the desired fruits; I cannot.

The Lord Jesus also states, *"Ye are the branches."* This is a picture of our Christian homes and schools. We are set apart by God and placed in a special covenant relationship with Him. Baptism verifies that a special tie has been established. A connection has been formed. Our branch is connected in an outward way with the vine. We are placed in an outward covenant relationship with the Triune God. To *"abide in"* Him, however, and to *"bring forth much fruit,"* refers to a living connection, one in which the sap of life flows, an inward and saving relationship.

What happens to dead branches? Do we not trim them out of our trees? Does not Scripture refer to them as worthless, to be cast into the fire? What happens to a branch that is cut off from its trunk or vine? Does it not soon wither and die? Even if the branch was full of rich leaves and blooming flowers, when it is severed from its life source, it soon withers and dies. This is Jesus' teaching here. This is the lesson for parents and teachers. Has your teaching become lifeless? Has your parenting become dry? Could it be that you are not firmly connected to the life-giving Vine?

John 15:5 speaks positively of abiding in Christ and bringing forth much fruit. But it also speaks negatively, *"for without me ye can do nothing."* Would you like to determine your degree of humility? Use this as a gauge: *"for without me ye can do nothing."* To what degree have you internalized this truth? How evident is this truth in your daily walk? The Greek expression translated "without me" can also be expressed as "severed from Me." Severed from Me, ye can do nothing. Parents, why are we then so foolish? Teachers, why are we so ignorant? Why do we strive to accomplish living results, using a dead branch? Living fruits will never be produced from our best intentions, words, or actions. We need the life-giving grace and application of Jesus Christ. Without Him we can do nothing.

The pruning of pride is painful for my self-exalting spirit. But the unfruitful growth of self-pride must be cut back. It can feel so disappointing to a parent and so disheartening to a teacher when we experience that our best endeavors seem to make no impact, and our best attempts do not accomplish the desired goal. But think of this honestly. Why do we become so discouraged? Is the problem, parents, that you think that you can do God's saving work? Are you thinking that you can renew your child's heart and turn him from loving sin to loving God? Is it when you realize that you cannot, that you become despondent? Teachers, do you think you can perform the works of the Almighty? Do you think you can turn the hearts of your students? Is it when you realize that you cannot, that you are ready to give up? Could it be that the overgrown tree of self-pride needs to be cut down to prepare room for the fruitful vine to grow? Could it be that you must experience the

one truth, *“for without me ye can do nothing,”* to receive the opposite truth, *“he that abideth in me, the same bringeth forth much fruit”*?

Parents, is it possible that your despair comes from looking too much to the branch and not enough to the vine? Teachers, is it possible that your discouragement is produced by expecting too much from yourself and not enough from God? Your hope needs to be founded less on your prayers to God, and more on Jesus’ prayers for you and your children. Your expectation needs to build less on your promises to God, but more on God’s promises in Jesus Christ for you and your students. Not our plans, but God’s plan is what counts. Not our abilities, but Christ’s power is to be our focus. Our hope and expectation is not to be founded in our teaching and parenting, but in God’s.

What a difference there is between a proud or a humble parent, between a condescending or an understanding teacher! Observe the difference when they show interest in their children, discipline their students, or see their children’s sinful behavior. The humble parent sees himself more in the light of God’s Word. He is a sinner, the same as his children. He is dependent on the same grace and Savior as his students. What love and patience this realization produces, even when firmly disciplining! The humble teacher sees more clearly that repentance and faith in the lives of his students are the fruits of God’s work, not his. What hope and encouragement this can give, even when it appears that students are hardening themselves to it!

The humble parent needs Jesus for everything. The humble teacher knows that without Jesus nothing is possible. The self-centered try to live from their dry branch. The humble live from the nourishing vine. The proud seek to abide in self. The humble strive to abide in Christ. Are you a humble parent or teacher, *“abiding in Christ”*?

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