



The parent & teacher abiding in Christ

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

Imagine walking in a vineyard between the rows of grapes. You look at a branch full of promising fruit. What would happen to these grapes, however, if you severed their branch from the vine? The grapes, of course, would die. Why? Because the vine gives the grapes nutrients and life.

Jesus teaches us an important truth here for our personal lives, but also as parents and teachers. We need Him in order to bring forth fruits of love to God and to others for God's glory, including in the lives of our children and students. In fact, we need to abide in Jesus. Imagine, if it were possible, to sever a branch of grapes from its vine and then to re-attach it, pull it loose again and reinsert it, over and over again. What would the condition of the grapes be? Certainly not healthy! Jesus teaches us that to bring forth healthy fruit we, the branches, must abide in Him. To "abide" means to dwell permanently, to live there. We abide at home, but we do not abide at a hotel. Likewise, we are not called to travel to Jesus and connect with Him on occasion. We are not to stay with Him for a few minutes a day or for one day in the week. He is not to be like a hotel that we visit on our travels but He is to be our home – the Person in whom and the place where we live and abide.

Parents and teachers, our children and young people learn from what we say but most from who we are – not from what we confess at church, not from what we may say when we have visitors, but from how we live; from where we abide.

What does it mean to abide in Christ? It means to be inseparably connected to Him as the living branch is inseparably connected to the vine. The more I abide in Christ, the more my motives, goals, emotions, thoughts, words, and actions become Christlike. The more my life is found in Him, the more Jesus' life flows into me. This produces wonderful, God-glorifying fruit!

This verse also teaches us the opposite truth. The less we abide in Him, the less godly fruit we produce. In fact, the Lord instructs us, "Without me ye can do nothing." This means that you can take your children to church, enroll them in a Christian school, read the Bible at the table, and pray with them before they go to bed. It is good to faithfully do these things. But if you do them without abiding in Christ, severed from the Vine, you will achieve little. Your spiritual fruit will wither. The recipe is there, but the key ingredient is not. Spiritual life is missing. Christ is lacking in the Christian activities described. Parents, it is good that you read Christian materials on how to parent and use the means that you can to grow as a parent. Teachers, it is important that you study and use professional development opportunities diligently to learn more about your students and how they learn and develop, and how to teach and connect with your students. But the most critical thing – the life of it all – is that you personally abide in Christ.

How can I abide more in Jesus? Verse 7 in this chapter tells us. "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.*" Immerse yourself in Christ's words, in the Bible. As the living Word, Jesus spoke the written Word. Study the Scriptures; they testify of Him. Then Jesus tells us, "*Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" If we abide in God's Word, then we abide in Him. When we abide in Him, then God's will is our will. When we ask what we want, it is what God wants and teaches in His Word, for our will reflects His. Verse 7 is not referring to a "name it and claim it"

gospel, as some teach today; it is not a case of me asking or commanding God to do my will. Just the opposite: it is me doing God's will. This is me abiding in Him.

Yes, we are totally dependent upon God. But what a wonderfully rich and gracious God to depend on! The more we realize this and the more we abide in Christ, the more fruit there will be; genuine, healthy, beautiful, Christlike fruits of *"not my will, but thine be done."* These fruits will be witnessed by our children and students, and they will be exposed to real experiences of glorifying God and worshipping Him!

Are you a dependent parent, an "abiding in the vine" teacher?

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