



What do you expect your life to be like? Do you have expectations? I'm sure you have some. Maybe you expect to reach a certain age. Or maybe you expect to live a certain type of lifestyle. Perhaps you expect to have your dead-end job until retirement.

Expectations are such strong influences on us because expectations frame our experiences, for the positive or the negative.

What do you expect your spiritual life to be like? What are your expectations?

I'm sure you have some for this as well. Maybe you expect everything to work out just like you want, as if there's a mystical cloud of goodness to hang over you. Or maybe you've read the Bible a lot so you know that you should expect trials. Perhaps you expect God is waiting to punish you.

In our scripture passage today, John 15:1-17, we are looking at some very famous words of Jesus, "*I am the vine, you are the branches.*" In this passage I believe Jesus is laying out clear expectations for the person who believes him to be the Way and the Truth and the Life.

Abide

Abide involves the inactive of **receiving**. "*Abide I me, and I in you*" (v. 4). "*Whoever abides in me and I in him...*" (v. 5). "*Abide in my love*" (v. 9).

"Abide in your seat." You had to get there—in the past. That's a completed action. You are currently simultaneously doing nothing to stay, yet keeping yourself from leaving.

In our relationship with Jesus, we inactively receive as well. We receive His love, His grace, His regeneration, His pardon from the penalty of our sin, His salvation imputed to us. A part of abiding is a state of mind. We trust in all of this. We depend upon all of this. We abide in Him.

Abide also involves **activity**, "Abide in your seat." Abiding correctly involves listening, thinking, engaging your mind. In our relationship with Jesus, we actively abide as well. The Greek word for abide is *meno*, meaning dwell, be present, remain, to continue.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away (like Judas), and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (that's a painful experience we can all relate to.) **Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken**

to you. 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. 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. 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. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. 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. 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. These things I command you, so that you will love one another (John 15:1–17).

The branch derives everything from the vine as it abides.

"Apart from me you can do nothing" (v. 5).

Obviously, the branch would be nothing without its connection to the vine. The vine provides nourishment. The vinedressers actually talk about the juices flowing from the vine to the branches. These juices could include sugars, nutrients, DNA.

Jesus is making a parallel between this idea and our relationship with him. We derive everything we need from him. He is our source of spiritual nourishment.

They've discovered that the vines in Napa Valley are lazy vines. Because the soil is so good, they don't have to work for their nourishment. Typically, their root system is 25'-30' deep. Conversely, the root systems in the surrounding mountains, elevation 2500', are 80'-120' deep. These vines produce heartier fruit: more

anti-oxidants, an earthier taste, more seasoned—better fruit! The more stress and hardship a vine endures, the better tasting fruit it produces. Some vines in Europe date back to the 1700s. They've endured wars, famine, fires and the fruit they produce is so amazing people pay between \$12,000 and \$250,000 per bottle.

Jesus, as our true vine, has been stressed and broken and tortured to such an extent that no one could experience more. He is the Vine dating back to eternity. He is the Vine stressed to the ultimate. Because of this, He produces the Absolute Best Fruit through his people.

Beware of not abiding.

“Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away” (v. 2).

“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” (v. 6).

In these two verses, Jesus offers a dire warning for a person who does not abide. To understand what this means, we'll first look at how abiding begins and secondly we'll look at whether the abiding, once started, can be lost.

How does abiding begin? Abiding begins by Jesus loving us (v. 9) and choosing us (v. 16). This is consistent with the writing of the Apostle Paul through Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, just to name a few.

Secondly, can the abiding be lost if there is no fruit coming from your life? This is the question of, can a person lose their salvation. And the answer is, no. Jesus is not saying that here and that would be completely inconsistent with the scriptures.

So what does verse 2 mean? *“Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away . . .”* I believe Jesus is referring directly to Judas Iscariot here. From all appearances, Judas looked like an abiding branch, like the other 11 disciples. Yet, he was never one of them, meaning he never bore true fruit. Similarly today, there are people who can look like a Christian—meaning that they attend church, serve in some way and perhaps join a small group, a lot of moral behavior—yet are not abiding because they have never put their faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

Symbolically, verse 6 is referring to death and the torment of hell that the scriptures describe after death for anyone who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. A dire warning for sure, but not meant to scare a follower of Jesus Christ. Instead, Jesus is more likely describing these “non-abiders” as a comparative tool. Because everyone He's talking to is abiding. Jesus is talking about the relationship between **abiding** and **expecting** in this passage.

Jesus' main goal in these verses is to encourage His followers. Encourage them that amazing fruit will be growing out of their

lives. Not because they are amazing men but because they abide in Him and He is amazing.

The abiding is the means. The fruit is the result.

Expect

Fruit naturally comes from the DNA of the vine.

Since Jesus is our vine, the fruit we produce should look like His fruit. The specific fruits described in these 17 verses are the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. Jesus **is** the fruit of the Spirit. When we abide in Him, we should expect to see these fruit come from our lives.

I remember a powerful moment for me, nine years ago, when I realized that I had a major deficiency in my life. I did not love people. I liked people. I was enthusiastic about leading people to Christ and helping them grow spiritually. But when people's lives got messy and there was a need for compassion and love, I was uncomfortable, awkward and cold. Honestly, I didn't want the mess of their lives to make my life messy.

One day, as I was praying about yet another messy person that I'd kept at a distance, the Lord revealed to me, “Shawn, the problem is that you don't love people.” And I shamefully agreed.

The question that I was trying to answer was, how do I become loving? Now this question could be applied to any fruit of the Spirit that you lack in your life. In my case, it was love.

Answered prayers (verses 7 and 16). Jesus was so close to His heavenly Father that when he made requests, God answered. We should expect this fruit to come from our lives as well.

Joy (v. 11). Joy is gladness or delight, which sounds very similar to happiness. The difference between joy and happiness is that happiness is contingent on circumstances (the highs and lows each of us experience in life) and Christian joy is contingent on a deep-seeded awareness that God is in control of our lives. He is constant and unmoved and we are His loved child. We should expect to see this fruit grow out of our lives.

Love (verses 12 and 17). Strengthen the abiding by reading the Word of God, memorizing the Word of God, knowing the Word of God, praying the Word of God.

Branches need pruning for great fruit.

“Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (v. 2).

“My Father is the vinedresser” (v. 1).

Naturally, vines grow wildly. They do their own thing. Bunches will grow into each other. Left in this wild state, they produce something called berries—small, poor-tasting fruit.

The role of the vinedresser is vital. They prune in order to produce quality fruit. That's his job—position and prune the branches. If pruning doesn't happen, the grapes they produce are useless.

Think of the parallel between this idea and us. We naturally grow every direction. God, as the loving and all-knowing vinedresser, prunes us. And while it hurts to be pruned, it is for our own good and later we produce a better fruit.

- Patience – Prune selfishness

- Love – Prune pursuit of personal comfort

- Peace – Prune unhealthy perfectionism

Consider how foolish it would be for a real branch to balk and complain when the gardener came along to cut it back. “Hey, this is the way I was made. Let me growwwwwww! Your pruning is restricting my style.”

Just as foolish as this is, it is foolish for us to complain under the loving pruning of God. He loves us. The pruning is temporarily painful and eternally beneficial. The point of it all is to give glory to God (v. 8).

Can you recognize God's pruning work in your life? If so, can you trust that He knows exactly what He's doing with you? Can you trust Him?

When a vinedresser is nurturing a new branch, one he's grafted into an old vine, it will take 3-4 years for quality fruit to be produced. That's 3-4 years of abiding, pruning, adjusting for maximum photosynthesis and watering. And 4-5 years before a high yield of quality fruit can be produced.

The insights and parallels to our spiritual lives are obvious. Young Christians, while you are zealous for spiritual things, be cautious. While you might think you are ready to change the world, the pruning of the Father must take place before the fruit you produce is high quality. For mature Christians, recognize the value of soaking in the Word of God for years and years; recognize the value of hardship you've endured. God, the loving vinedresser, has been preparing you in order that you will produce high quality fruit.

Conclusion

It seems pretty simple, doesn't it?

(picture of a vine shown)

As you consider your abiding with Jesus, look at how that branch is connected to the vine. That's you and me. How would you evaluate your abiding and fruit bearing today?

I said at the very beginning that our abiding is based upon receiving from Jesus. We receive His love, His love, His grace, His regeneration, His pardon from the penalty of our sin, His salvation imputed to us. A part of abiding is a state of mind. We trust in all of this. We depend upon all of this. We abide in Him.

Are you trusting and depending upon Him for everything today? Maybe today the message is one of hope: trust and depend in Jesus. You've been trying to do everything in your own abilities and power. And God is reminding you of this timeless principle that He will produce through you, as you abide. So, trust and depend.

Perhaps conversely, you are growing wildly. You've been neglecting your spiritual life. The message for you today is a wake-up call. God is getting your attention. You are destined and designed by God to bear **His** fruit. It is time to thoughtfully receive from Jesus and actively start reading the Bible again and actively start talking to God more.

How does a person do this? First off, confirm that you are abiding.

Second, live each day conscious of your connection to Jesus. That means you are thoughtfully abiding. And God will start pruning your life.

Third, get rid of obvious sinful habits. You don't have to wait for God to prune that out.

Some of you might be in desperate need for some fruit today. You are dying for some self-control or some gentleness. Ask! These verses tell us that God will give us what we ask for. If you ask for increased fruit in your life, the answer is always **yes!**

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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