

Abiding In Christ

Lesson 6

Bearing Fruit

Leader Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies

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Lesson 6

John 15

Bearing Fruit

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

Prayers

Introduction

The purpose of the branch in Jesus’ parable is to bear fruit, but it cannot be fruitful unless it is attached to the vine. Jesus is the vine. We owe our lives to Christ. He gives his life to us, consecrates us, and puts his spirit in us so we can be in him. The object of our union with Christ is to be fruitful disciples through our love and ministry to others. We admit that we do not fully understand his calling or God’s power, but we do know God is faithful to his promises and calls us, keeps us, nourishes us, and will supply all our needs. We know we are weak, but God is infinitely strong. We are a branch in Christ, abiding, resting, and growing, so we trust, obey, and serve him with a heart of gratitude.

Read

Jn 15:1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

Jn 15:2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Jn 15:3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Jn 15:4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Jn 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Jn 15:6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

Jn 15:7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

Jn 15:8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Jn 15:9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

Jn 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

Jn 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Jn 15:12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Jn 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Jn 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

Jn 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Jn 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit —fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Jn 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.

Discuss

1. What do you think about when you hear the phrase about bearing much fruit?
 - a. What things appeal to you?

Abiding in Christ, seeing God's kingdom advance, and being used by God in Christ's work of redemption are exciting and powerful.

- b. What things are scary?

We might need to get out of our comfort zone in ministering to others; we might get pruned to be more fruitful!

2. Jesus refers to the importance of bearing fruit throughout his parable of the vine. What is the main spiritual truth he makes with the parable of the vine and branch?

I cannot bear fruit unless I am in Christ.

Many people do good and kind things for others and make our society a better place. Their motives vary. Some had a good upbringing and think it is the right thing to do, or they might seek self-satisfaction or recognition. Christians might also serve for these reasons, but our motivation for Christian service should always be our devotion to Christ and love for others. Our actions are the result of God's Spirit in us.

3. Jesus was God's suffering servant spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah, "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isaiah 53:3). He took the form of a servant, born in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7), not to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28). The Son of God became incarnate to do God's will, to redeem humanity from sin through his innocent blood. The Greek word for servant is "doulos." Doulos is better translated as slave, but is rendered as servant because of the connotation of abuse and cruelty of slaves in our culture. Despite Jesus calling his disciples his friends, the apostles commonly referred to themselves as a doulos (slave) of Christ, identifying with the character and actions of a slave. Complete the following the sentence; I am a slave of Christ because_____.

- a. I am a slave of Christ because **I was bought at a price**

¹Co 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

1Co 7:22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. ²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

b. I am a slave of Christ because **my life is not my own; Christ lives in me.**

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

c. I am a slave of Christ because **I put the needs of others above my own.**

Eph 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

1Co 10:24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

d. I am a slave of Christ because **I do his will.**

Eph 6:6 [Slaves] Obey them [your masters] not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

Lk 14:23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.'

Jn 12:26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.

Mt 12:50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

e. I am a slave of Christ because **I obey his commands**

Jn 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Jn 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ^j

Jn 15:12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

4. We often think of bearing fruit as evangelism and making disciples, and that was the task Jesus prepared the apostles to do. But bearing fruit encompasses all types of service in Christ's name. Read the following illustrations and complete the sentence, "A servant (slave) of Christ _____.

a. Mt 10:32 A servant of Christ **acknowledges Christ before others.**

Mt 10:32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

b. Mk 10:42-44 A servant of Christ **becomes a slave to others.**

Mk 10:42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

c. Mt 25:21 A servant of Christ **is faithful in with gifts he has been given.**

Mt 25:20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

Mt 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

d. Luke 12:48 A servant of Christ **has been entrusted with much**

Lk 12:48 From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

e. Philippians 2:3-7 A servant of Christ **looks after the interests of others.**

Phil 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Phil 2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

f. Galatians 5:13 A servant of Christ **serves others humbly**

Gal 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

g. Matthew 25:34-36 A servant of Christ **is charitable**

Mt 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'

Mt 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,

Mt 25:36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

h. 1 John 4:10-11 A servant of Christ **loves others.**

1Jn 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1Jn 4:11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1Jn 4:12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

i. Ephesians 4:11-13 A servant of Christ **prepares God's people for service so that all come to maturity.**

Eph 4:11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ^r may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

5. In verse 15:3 of the parable of the vine and branches, Jesus told his disciples they were prepared for service because they were already "clean." What did Jesus mean by this? Refer to the following verses:

Jn 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

Jn 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Jn 17:18 As you sent me into the world, have sent them into the world. ^u

Jn 17:19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Isa 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Isa 6:6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

Isa 6:7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Isa 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

They were sanctified by their faith they placed in Jesus as the Son of God. In this case, sanctified means both made holy by their faith and set apart for God's service as apostles, (sent by God).

6. How does Christ prepare us to be his servants?

- a. ^{1Co 1:2} To the church of God [in, your location here], to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours

^{1Co 6:11} And that is what some of you were [sexually immoral, thieves, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers], But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God

Christ sanctifies us and sets us apart to serve him

- b. ^{Jn 15:7} If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

^{Jas 1:5} If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Christ gives us the wisdom we need to serve him.

- c. Lk 12:11 **“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”**

Christ gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us in what we say to others

- d. Jn 15:4 **Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.**

Jn 17:22 **I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

Christ places us in him so that we bear fruit.

- e. Lk 10:1 **After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.**

Christ sends us out to develop and strengthen our faith, preparing us for greater service

Mk 8:34 **Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ^k**

Mk 8:35 **For whoever wants to save his life ³⁰ will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.**

7. Jesus calls us to be his servants to love others. Yes, other people need our help and experience the love of Christ through our service. But, Christ calls us into service for our own spiritual transformation. What some of the benefits of serving Christ?

- a. Proverbs 11:25 **A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.**

We are blessed when we bless others through serving Christ.

- b. Phil 2:3 **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ^{Phil 2:4} Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

Phil 2:5 **Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:**

We develop humility through serving Christ. Focusing on the needs of others fosters humility to offset our preoccupation with ourselves.

- c. Jn 16:24 **Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.**

Ro 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, ¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

We know true joy through serving Christ. Seeing others come to Christ in faith and mature in their devotion to Christ and others is wonderful. This was Christ's purpose and our joy to share.

- d. ^{2Co 3:18} And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Our union with Christ through his indwelling Spirit is transformational. Christ's love for others becomes our love so that we seek to minister to others as we go through our daily chores. Christ's ministry to others was not a project or interruption; it was his life.

8. The parable of the vine comes after the disciples' argument about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven and Jesus' example of servanthood by washing his disciples' feet. Why is leadership through submission and humility such a difficult lesson to learn?

Jesus' teaching of leadership by submitting to the needs of others is completely opposed to the values of leadership in our culture. In our culture, leadership is about recognition, power, and influence. Leadership bolsters pride, not an attitude of being a slave to others. Our desire for recognition and approval in what we do is part of our nature, but Jesus taught that our works should be done in secret, without the applause of others. He said, "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:3-4).

9. How are submission and humility different from an inaccurate self-concept of thinking too lowly of ourselves?

Jesus perfectly illustrated humility and submission. Jesus had an accurate self-concept; he knew exactly who he was. Jesus was the Son of God, sent from heaven to be the Savior of the world. Through knowing who he was, he could humble himself to do his Father's will and serve humanity. If we serve with a poor self-image, we fail to see our identity as God's redeemed and righteous children who are so precious that God had his Son die for us. We are equipped to love and submit to others' needs because we recognize our own brokenness and the grace we have received.

10. In verse 15:6, Jesus uses a powerful illustration of what life without abiding in Christ looks like. In contrast to the fruitful branch receiving nourishment from the vine, the branch cut off from the vine withers and is thrown into the fire and burned. Why would Jesus use this illustration for those who loved him best? Also, refer to several other Jesus' teaching on judgment:

Mt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Mt 13:47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.

Mt 13:48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.

Mt 13:49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jn 14:5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jn 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Ac 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Jesus warned the crowds, the Pharisees, and his disciples about the certainty of judgment and the eternal consequences of not having faith in him as the Son of God, Savior. In his final evening with his disciples, Jesus turned their focus to the eternal consequences of their calling – to keep their faith in him and declare the gospel to the world so that no one might perish. Likewise, we share the knowledge of the certainty of judgment and God's plan of salvation through faith in Jesus. Our knowledge and faith should spur us to be eager to praise Christ to our friends, loved ones, and family members who do not believe so that no one might perish.

11. Jesus wanted his disciples to have assurance of their calling when he told them to abide in him.

What assurances did he give them in verses 15:12-17 in the parable of the vine and the branches?

Jn 15:12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Jn 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Jn 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

Jn 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Jn 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit —fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Jn 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.

Jesus told his disciples he loved them, he would lay down his life for them, and they were his friends. He taught them everything he learned from the Father and that he chose them to be fruitful in their calling.

12. The parable of the vine and branches is a picture of the intimacy we share with Christ. The vine and branch are in complete union. The branch cannot thrive without the vine, and the purpose of the vine is to nourish the branch. We owe our lives to Christ, and he gave his life for us. He reigns in heaven and intercedes for us to the Father to supply the richness and fullness of our Father's grace. He supplies all we need to be his faithful servants; all we need to do is ask and consecrate our lives to him. What assurance do you have that you are abiding in Christ?

- a. Verse 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Our failure to obey Christ's commands undermines our assurance that we are in Christ. We all sin and it was for our redemption and forgiveness of our sins Christ became incarnate to unite us with God.

Christ knows our struggles and contrition. As the Apostle wrote, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1 8-9).

b. ^{Jn 15:12} **My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.**

The more I study the Bible, the simpler it becomes. We are called to love God and love others; this is the fruit Jesus speaks of in the parable of the vine and branch. Jesus’ words to the Ephesian church in Revelation 2 strike me. The Ephesian Church worked hard in service, persevered through suffering and persecution, knew scriptures to test false teaching, and hated sexual immorality. Yet, in the busyness of their service, they lost their love for Christ. They had nothing without love.

c. Can you think of other assurances that you are abiding in Christ?

If we ever doubt our faith and salvation, we are assured we abide in Christ when we reflect on God’s love for us. God has loved us since before creation and made wonderful plans for us to be with him in eternity. God knows us, and his love for us does not depend on our actions, whether good or bad. God is active in making his plans for us come true. He sent his Son to die for our sins, gives us faith to believe in Christ as our Savior, gives us his Spirit so that we are in union Christ, and places us in Christ so that Christ is our holiness. God has placed us in Christ and will hold us there until he calls us home.

Closing Prayer, Attributed to St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
Where there is offense, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.
Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

AMEN