**John 15:1-17 “Abiding in Jesus”**

***Introduction:*** The Christian life is compared to a branch connected to a vine, highlighting the importance of remaining in Jesus to thrive spiritually. Like deep-sea divers reliant on a surface-supplied air system, Christians depend entirely on their connection to Jesus, the true source of spiritual life. In John 15:1-17, Jesus uses the imagery of a vine and branches to illustrate the necessity of abiding in Him for spiritual growth and fruitfulness.

**I. The Relationship We Need (vv.1, 4-5)**

***Observation:*** Jesus declares, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser." He emphasizes the necessity of remaining in Him, just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine. ***Interpretation:*** Jesus contrasts Himself with Israel, the vine that failed to produce the fruit of righteousness. Unlike Israel, Jesus is the true vine, and believers must abide in Him to draw spiritual life and bear fruit. Abiding in Christ involves maintaining a living, spiritual relationship through His Word, prayer, and a life of obedience. Without this connection, believers cannot bear fruit, as life and fruitfulness flow from Him. ***Application:*** Reflect on your relationship with Jesus. Are you cultivating a daily, abiding relationship with Him through His Word and prayer? Consider ways to deepen your connection and dependence on Him.

**Study Questions:**

**1.** How does the imagery of the vine and branches help us understand our dependence on Jesus?

**2.** Why is abiding in Jesus described as both necessary and fruitful?

**3.** Jesus says, 'apart from me you can do nothing.' How does this challenge our notions of self-reliance and achievement, especially in a culture that values independence?

**II. The Pruning We Undergo (vv.2-3, 6)**

***Observation:*** The Father, as the vinedresser, removes unfruitful branches and prunes fruitful ones to ensure even greater fruitfulness. ***Interpretation:*** Pruning symbolizes the Father's loving care in removing hindrances to spiritual growth. It involves trials, suffering, and the transformative power of God's Word which refines our character. Fruitful branches are lovingly pruned for greater growth, but branches who do not bear fruit face total removal, illustrating a lack of genuine saving faith in Christ. ***Application:*** Trust God's pruning process in your life. Reflect on recent challenges or disciplines from God's Word that might be His way of refining you for greater fruitfulness.

**Study Questions:**

**1.** How can we embrace God's pruning in our lives?

**2.** Jesus speaks of branches that appear to be 'in Him' but are taken away. How does this relate to the concept our understanding of true faith versus mere religious association?

**3.** In what ways does God's Word act as a pruning tool in our lives? How can we actively engage with Scripture to allow this refine us?

**III. The Fruit We Bear (vv.7-17)**

***Observation:*** Jesus outlines four types of fruit that result from abiding in Him: answered prayer, loving obedience, joy, and self-sacrificing love. ***Interpretation:*** Abiding in Jesus aligns our prayers with His will, resulting in answered prayers that glorify the Father. Loving obedience flows naturally from a relationship of love with Jesus, and His joy fills our lives when we abide in Him, transcending all our circumstances. We are called to love others sacrificially, reflecting Jesus' love for us. ***Application:*** Evaluate the fruit in your life. Are you experiencing answered prayer, walking in loving obedience, filled with joy, and loving others selflessly? Seek to abide more deeply in Christ for fruitfulness in these areas.

**Study Questions:**

**1.** What does it mean for our prayers to align with God's will?

**2.** Why is self-sacrificing love considered a fruit of abiding in Christ?

**3.** Jesus shifts from calling his disciples servants to friends. How does this change in relationship status affect our understanding of obedience and intimacy with Christ?

**Application for the Week:**

**1**. Daily Connection: Commit to spending intentional time with God each day this through prayer and Bible study Start with 10-15 minutes and gradually increase.

**2.** Fruit Inventory: Take some time this week to reflect on the fruit in your life. Where do you see evidence of Christ working through you? Where do you need growth?

**3**. Pruning Reflection: Identify an area where God might be pruning you right now. How can you embrace this process rather than resist it?

**4.** Love in Action: Choose one practical way to demonstrate self-sacrificing love to someone this week, reflecting Christ's love for us.

**5**. Accountability: Partner with someone to encourage each other in abiding in Christ throughout the week.