

Session 1 Abiding in the Vine (Jn. 15:1-6)

“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty.” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)

I. THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE REALM OF FIRE

- A. The primary theme that Jesus speaks to His disciples about in **John 13-17** is the subject of God’s love and glory. Jesus’ main objective is to lead us into the revelation of God’s divine love and the experience of the glory that He possessed with His Father before the foundations of the earth. Our destiny is to be swallowed up into the eternal fellowship of the Godhead forever.
- ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Cor. 1:9)***
- ⁴...and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 Jn. 1:4)***
- ²²“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one...” (Jn. 17:22)***
- B. As love in the culture and the world continues to grow cold, *understanding* the Trinity as our **model** and *intimately engaging* with the Divine Community, the *everlasting burning*, as our **source** will equip the heart of the Church in the fullness of the love of God in times of great pressure.
- C. In John 13-17, Jesus envisions, calls, and equips the Church to engage with God in order to walk fully in five components of the love of God He wants to us to experience and express.
1. ***God’s love for God*** (Jn. 13:3; 14:31; 15:9, 12; 17:23-24, 26)
 2. ***God’s love for us*** (Jn. 13:1, 23, 34-35; 14:21, 23; 15:9, 12; 16:27; 17:23)
 3. ***God’s love in us towards Him*** (Jn. 14:15, 21, 24, 28; 15:12, 17; 16:27; 17:26)
 4. ***God’s love in us towards another*** (Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12, 17)
 5. ***God’s love in us for hostile world through the apostolic witness*** (13:35; 14:12; 15:18-27; 16:8-9)
- D. God’s love for the world through the apostolic witness is expressed by the ***fellowship*** of sufferings. Peter wanted to lay down his life; however, Jesus told him that when it comes to accessing the Godhead only Jesus’ blood could accomplish this. Yet, He prophesied to Peter that he would follow Jesus’ path of suffering later. The end-time Church will enter the fellowship of suffering to reach a hostile world and call them to into the Divine Community.
- ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (Jn. 15:20)***
- ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. (1 Pet. 4:14)***

II. THE DIVINE COMMUNITY OF SINGLE ACTION

- A. Robert Kysar in his book, *John, the Maverick Gospel*, refers to the Trinity as the Divine Community of single action. This refers to the truth that the Triune God, who is One, dwells in community, and that, though each Person in the Godhead has their distinct roles, they are singular in their action and execution of the divine plan. In John 13-17, Jesus instructs in how to walk in deep intimacy with the Trinity as our model, source, reward, as well as our destiny.

²⁰*At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. (Jn. 14:20)*

²¹*“... as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us...” (Jn. 17:21)*

³⁴*“... love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (Jn. 13:34)*

⁹*“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)*

- B. *John 13-17*, the Upper Room Discourse, is deeply connected together. Jesus' time in the Upper Room, *John 13-14*, and His continued instruction in chapters *15-17* are connected.
- C. *John 17*, as Jesus' priestly prayer, prophesies the glorious destiny of the church fully in the embrace of the Divine Family dynamic as belonging to God, fully loving Him, deeply committed to one another in unified love, and a faith witness of the gospel of Jesus to the earth. *John 13* shows us what is required, which is to love in the same manner as Christ loved us.
- D. In *John 14*, Jesus teaches His disciples how, by His death on the cross, we will have full access to the Father's presence through spiritual union. It is through spiritual union the grace of the Father and His power is released in our hearts to fulfill what is required. *John 15* is Jesus instructing His disciples that it is essential to actively engage (abide) in the relationship in order to bear fruit (Jn. 13:34-35; 14:12; 14:27; 15:4, 11-12, 27; 16:1, 33; 17:20-26). *John 16* highlights how the church is to function as a witness of God's love to a hostile world.
- E. The Trinity is seen in each chapter of this discourse, yet each Person is more prominent than another in each chapter. Each Person has a specific role in bringing the church into her destiny. John 14 shows the role of the *Father*, John 15, the role of the *Son*, and John 16, the role of the *Spirit*.
- F. John 15 focuses on abiding as the key to a victorious and vibrant Christian life. There are several elements applicable to the fruitfulness we are to bear, however, in context, the premier fruit we are to bear is love as the ultimate inward and outward manifestation of God's supernatural work in our heart. Jesus links the bearing of fruit (15:1, 4-5, 8) to the keeping of His command (15:10-12) which He states is 'to love another' (15:17). Jesus called His people to love one another as He loves us (13:34; 15:12-13; 17:21). This includes loving our adversaries (15:17-18). The John 13:34 requirement to love is only possible through interaction with Jesus.

³⁴*A new commandment (15:17)... you love one another; as I have loved you,... ³⁵*By this all will know that you are My disciples,” Jn 13:34-35**

⁸*“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples ... ¹⁷*These things I command you, that you love one another (Jn. 15:8, 17)**

III. THE TRUE VINE, THE VINEDRESSER, AND ISRAEL

- A. John 15:1 is the last of the seven “I Am” statements found in John’s gospel. These statements are Jesus’ self-revelation that connected the essence of His interaction with the redeemed with His divinity (Ex. 3:14). See *Jn. 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 9, 5; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5.*
- B. Jesus identified Himself as the *True Vine*, speaking of Him being the source of life to which we, the branches, are connected, without which connection we are unable to produce fruit. Jesus, as the vine, is the source of life and the sustaining power of fruitful Christian living. There are personal, corporate, as well as eschatological implications to the revelation of Jesus “the Vine.”
- C. The understanding of Jesus as *True Vine* is not accidental, as it points to His mission as Israel’s Messiah and life source (Ps. 80:8-9; Isa. 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; Ez. 15:1-8; 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1). Israel came out of Egypt like a vine (Ps. 80:8-9) and was consistently found unable to obey His commands (Jn. 15:2, 5), thus ending up lifeless, withered and burning with judgment (15:6). Jesus, the True Vine, will increasingly be understood as part of Israel’s messianic hope, as well as the hope for nations to become a global vineyard and garden as God’s glory fills the earth.
- D. Jesus comes to Israel to rescue her as the True Vine and be the true life source that will enable her to faithfully obey (Isa. 1:26; Zech. 8:3). He came to deliver her from her false sources. Moses said to his people (Deut. 32:32) that Israel was connected to a different life source, a vine from Sodom.
³²“For their vine is of the vine of Sodom (Isa. 1:7-9) and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter. ³³Their wine is the poison of serpents, And the cruel venom of cobras.” (Deut. 32:32-33)
⁷Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire ... ⁸So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard ... ⁹Unless the Lord of hosts Had left to us ... a remnant, we would have become like Sodom ... like Gomorrah. Isa 1:7-9
⁸And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. (Rev. 11:8)
- E. Jesus told His disciples the Father was the Vinedresser of the Vine. True to His covenant, Israel’s maintenance development and fruitfulness takes place under the Father’s leadership.
²In that day— “Sing about a fruitful vineyard: ³I, the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. ⁴I am not angry. If only there were briers and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire. ⁵Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.” ⁶In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit. (Isa. 27:2-6)
- F. When Jesus returns in the next ages during His reign on the earth (Heb. 2:5), He will undo the curse and cause earth’s return to the blessing of the garden of Eden (Heb. 4:6–9b). The “curse” of sin may be lifted progressively rather than instantly.
¹The wilderness and the wasteland ... the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; ... the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. (Isa. 35:1-2)

IV. ABIDING IN THE VINE

- A. John 15 is one of the more critical passages in scripture. It is one of the clearest teachings on the subject of interacting with God and why it is imperative. In many ways, it is Jesus expounding more in-depth His self-revelation as “I am the Life”. As the Vine, Jesus is the life source.

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God ... (Gal. 2:20)

- B. Life can be an abstract concept. To possess it means having the ability and capacity to function, change, sustain, and reproduce. Life is experienced physically, but we are also designed to experience it in our spirit and soul as well. However, before Christ we are dead.

⁴“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses...” (Eph. 2:4-5)

- C. The other key component to the growing fruitfulness of a vine is the role of the vinedresser (the Father). The vinedresser is responsible for the pruning, nurturing, and development of the vineyard. The vine (Jesus) provides the life and the vinedresser (Father) prunes.

- D. Pruning is the process of trimming, cleaning and removing dead elements in order to further facilitate growth, development, and fruitfulness. The Father does the pruning as the Vinedresser. This speaks of His direct, skillful, and intimate involvement in our lives.

- E. Every believer is called to live a life of fruitfulness. Jesus is emphatic about the importance of fruitfulness, as it glorifies God and who He is. Jesus warns that a life not given to fruitfulness is useless and is subject to judgment (15:2, 6). This inserts urgency into the process.

⁶If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. (Jn. 15:6)

⁹... do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work ... (Col. 1:9-10)

- F. The call to abide in the vine and bear fruit is rooted in the confidence of already being clean before the Lord through the cross. The process of abiding does not earn acceptance, but it is because we have been cleansed (Jn. 13:10; 15:3, 13), accepted (Jn. 15:16), and loved (Jn. 15:9).

- G. The fruit that Jesus requires isn't merely a humanistic better version of self or a moral improvement of self, but it is moral quality that comes from a deep inward trinitarian fellowship and formation as They seek to express themselves in us and through us toward one another and the world. What Jesus is after is impossible without a life of abiding in Christ. Abiding is the active engaging and experiencing of the life of Christ through talking to Him.

⁴Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, ⁵“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (Jn. 15:4-5)