Exploring the Bible—Gospel of John (16)

The True Vine

**Scripture Reading:**

1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes it away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If one does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. 8 In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so you will become My disciples. 9 As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full. 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you. 17 These things I command you that you may love one another. (John 15:1-11, 16-17)

**Ministry Reading:**

The first part of John 15, verses 1 through 11, shows us the relationship between us and the Lord. The second part, verses 12 through 17, shows our relationship with one another. In this part of the chapter we see that the branches should love one another to express the divine life in fruit-bearing. These verses reveal that fruit-bearing has very much to do with our loving one another. We must keep a right relationship with one another in life, that is, in love by life. We must keep our relationship in love and love one another by the life that is in us. This life is the Lord Himself. Loving one another is the church life, the Body life. The Body life is a life of love and a life in love. We should not love one another with a human love but in the divine life and with the divine love.

We are not branches of many separate trees; we are all branches of the same tree. So we need to maintain a good fellowship with all the other branches as well as with the tree. This is why in this chapter the Lord also tells us to love one another (vv. 12, 17). If we do not love one another, it will be very difficult to bear fruit. If we do not love one another, it means that our fellowship with the vine tree has been cut off. Therefore, there is no way for us to bear fruit. In order to bear fruit we must love one another.

The life within all of us is one life. The life in you is exactly the same as the life in me. This resembles the circulation of the blood in our physical body. The blood in our body circulates through every member of our body. In like manner, the inner life of all the branches is one. This life should continually circulate through all the branches. Then all the branches will be so living and filled with the riches of life in order to bear fruit. Although the branches are many, they are one. They are one with the vine and with one another. All the branches together with the vine are one entity, one organism.

The branches have been chosen and appointed to bear remaining fruit. In verse 16 the Lord said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I appointed you that you should go forth and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.” The King James Version uses the word ordained instead of appointed. I like the term ordained. We all have been ordained. To be ordained means to be appointed. Ordained is an old-fashioned word for the modern word appointed. All of the sisters, including the younger sisters, must realize that they have been ordained. Do you know that we all have been ordained? We have been ordained to bear fruit. Do not say that you are too young for this. Regardless of how young you may be, you have been chosen and ordained to bear remaining fruit.

**Practice or Application:**

In this chapter there are four ways of referring to the fruit: bearing fruit (v. 2), much fruit (v. 8), more fruit (v. 2), and remaining fruit (v. 16). How long the fruit remains depends on how much life we impart into it. It all depends upon the amount of life we impart into the new converts. This determines how long they will remain. Often in bringing people to the Lord we impart into them only a small amount of life. Therefore, they scarcely remain. It is difficult for them to remain for a longer time.

The branches have been chosen to bear remaining fruit through praying in the Son’s name. When we pray for fruit-bearing, we must pray in the Son’s name. To ask in the Lord’s name requires us to abide in the Lord and to let Him and His words abide in us that we may actually be one with Him. Then our asking will be His asking. This kind of asking is related to the fruit-bearing and surely will be answered by the Father. As we pray in this way, we must claim that we are one with the Son. We should not beg but rather claim that we are one with Him. Whatever the Son is and has is ours, and we are in His name. Pray in this way.

We should not only pray in the Son’s name but also be one with the Son, live by Him, and let Him live in us. This matter is very crucial. Our prayer depends upon our living. We must be one with the Lord in our living. Then we can be one with Him in our prayer and pray in His name. It is by this kind of living and prayer that we can bear fruit that can remain.

The branches need to love one another in the life of the Son, in the love of the Son, and in the commission of the Son which is to bear fruit for the glorification of the Father. We need to love one another in the Lord’s life, the divine life, in the Lord’s love, and in His commission of fruit-bearing. Life is the source, love is the condition, and fruit-bearing is the goal. If we all live by the Lord’s life as the source, in the Lord’s love as the condition, and for fruit-bearing as the goal, we surely will love one another. Having different sources of life, different conditions, or different goals will separate us and prevent us from loving one another.

Christians are fond of talking about loving one another. If we love one another in our human life, that will bring in death. If we love one another in an emotional way or for our own purpose, that also will result in death. We must love one another in the life of Christ, in the love of Christ, and in the commission of Christ. We must not love one another in our natural life, with our emotions, or for our own purpose. We must love one another in the divine life, with the divine love, and for the purpose of bearing much fruit that the Father may be glorified (v. 8).

Question for Discussion: What does it mean to bear fruits in John 15? Share your experience and let us encourage one another to bear remaining fruits.

Reference: Life-Study of John, Msg. 33-35