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Abide in My Love

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Abide in My Love

Day 28

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 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.... As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (John 15:4-5, 9)

Jesus’ analogy of the vine and the branches paints a beautiful picture of our life in union with Him. Think of a flourishing grapevine; in Christ, our lives are vibrant and bountiful like the branches of that grapevine.

Jesus is the vine; He is the root, trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit. He is the *entire* vine and we are part of Him. The vine is the whole and we, the branches, are an integral part of that whole.

The vine and the branches are of the same substance. There is no separation between them. The same sap runs through both. We fit together perfectly with Jesus; He is a part of us and we are a part of Him. He lives in us and we live in Him; we abide in His love.

When the branch is connected to the vine, it flourishes. The life of the vine flows through the branches and produces grapes. Apart from Christ, we are lifeless branches.

But we can be fooled. The limbs of a dead Christmas tree can be hung with pretty ornaments. We can decorate ourselves to fit people-pleasing norms. From the outside, ornaments look “nice,” but only fruit carries the seeds of life. The independent soul is capable of making ornaments, but it is not capable of producing fruit.

Fruit doesn’t come from being “nice” or religious. Apart from God, our thinking, our studying, our hard work, even our prayers, can’t produce fruit. No matter how well-intentioned our efforts be, fruit of the vine—fruit of the Spirit—is not “fruit of our effort.” Fruit of the Spirit comes as we are led by the Spirit in ongoing relationship with God.

Fruit of the Spirit differs from gifts of the Spirit. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell *upon* the 120 believers waiting in Jerusalem and they received gifts of the Spirit. Still today the Holy Spirit comes *upon* us and we receive gifts of the Spirit including speaking in tongues, prophecy, words of knowledge, and the working of miracles.

But fruit of the Spirit comes from a deep, abiding relationship *within*. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22). Fruit are traits of Christ’s nature which bubble up from *within* us.

Fruit is evidence of His life in us. It comes naturally as we rest in Jesus just as a branch abides in the vine. We are full of love, joy, and peace because Christ in us is these things. “Abide in Me.” “Abide in My love.” These words hold the key to our life in Christ. Fruit comes naturally as we rest in God’s love.

Branches can’t produce fruit without being part of the vine and the vine can’t produce fruit without its branches. Jesus gives us a vital place in His life and work. We are wanted and included in God’s plan to share His goodness with the world. We are His open arms. We are his mouthpiece speaking words of truth and encouragement. He has chosen to show His goodness to the world through us. We are fruit-bearing branches overflowing with His life.

You, my friend, are an integral part of the greatest love the world will ever know. God’s nature is reflected through the earthen vessel of your humanity. Life on earth is your opportunity to bring to others, the goodness of God ... so that they too can be an integral part of the greatest love the world will ever know.

Ponder for a Moment

Picture a flourishing grapevine with branches overflowing with grapes. What does this image portray about your life as a vital part of Jesus, the vine?

Recall a particularly memorable time when you were able to care for someone with extraordinary kindness and compassion. Record your experience.