

# John 15:1-12 • How to Abide in Christ

## Introduction

There's a very familiar chorus that nearly everyone knows by heart that begins:

You are the Vine,  
We are the branches,  
Keep us abiding in You.

Naturally this chorus is based on Christ's dissertation recorded in John 15; but it may shock you to find that the lyrics of this chorus are not precisely biblical. According to John 15 Jesus is, indeed, the Vine, the Father is the Vinedresser, and we are the branches, but **nowhere** is it recorded, "Keep us abiding in You." The word "abide" is used 10 times in this passage and you need to pay careful attention as to how it's used and to whom it is addressed. This is a great example of why even what we think are the most familiar verses or phrases in the Bible need to be studied in their context so that the Truth is not diluted by what we **think** it says rather than what it **really** says. If we were to only understand this verse based on this chorus, we would think it's up to Jesus to ensure that we abide in Him when it's really a responsibility placed on us.

<sup>1</sup>"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>"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. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

<sup>8</sup>"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. <sup>9</sup>Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

<sup>12</sup>"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

### [Read v.1-12]

**Q: Circle all the instances of "abide" in this passage. How are they the same or different?**

- "abide in Me" 5 times [v.4 twice, 5, 6, 7]
- "abides in the vine" 1 time [v.4]
- "abide in you" 1 time [v.7]
- "abide in My love" 2 times [v.9, 10]
- "abide in His love" 1 time [v.10]

The most significant indicators are the pronouns that indicate on whom is placed the primary responsibility to "abide": Us. Verse 4 and 5 use it to equally refer to Christ and us, and only the last reference in v.11 refers to Christ alone. The other 7 references place the action on us.

**Q: What does the word "abide" mean?**

A: All 10 instances in this passage use the same Greek word that means "to stay, abide, remain". Here are a few examples of its use in other verses that reinforce both its basic meaning and how it's applied in this passage:

*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*

—John 6:56

*the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

—1 John 2:6

*Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.*

—2 John 9

*But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.*

—James 1:25

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<sup>1</sup>“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

**[Read v.1-3]**

**Q: What is a “vinedresser”?**

A: The one who oversees the health and growth of the vine, who prunes it to keep it healthy and productive.

**Q: What circumstances will cause us to remain or be pruned?**

A: Whether or not we bear spiritual fruit.

**Q: Is “pruning” the same thing as “to completely cut off and throw away”?**

A: Not necessarily. Christ’s use of the word “clean” in v.3 indicates that pruning may include cleaning a branch to allow it to become fruitful. It’s true that one can prune—or remove—branches from a vine, but one can also prune—or clean—individual branches. Both conditions may be implied.

**Q: According to v.3, what cleans the branches, making them poised to bear fruit?**

A: Christ’s Word.

**Application:** *How does this make you feel about yourself? Your local church or ministry? Are you identifying more with a fruitful branch or one that may need to be pruned? How would God use Christ’s Word to “prune” or clean you, to make you ready to become fruitful?*

<sup>4</sup>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.

**[Read v.4]**

**Q: What is the basic teaching point?**

A: Spiritual fruitfulness is impossible to achieve on one’s own apart from Christ.

**Application:** *What’s a personal example of having tried to produce something on your own? And something in Christ? What was the main reason for failure as opposed to success?*

<sup>5</sup>“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. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

**[Read v.5-6]**

**Q: So how can we actually measure whether or not we’re abiding in Christ?**

A: By the amount of spiritual fruit.

**Q: What eventually happens to those who may acknowledge Christ, but don’t actually “abide” or constantly remain in Him?**

A: They are cut off from the nutrition supplied by the Vine and spiritually dry up. Eventually they are cast aside and burned.

<sup>7</sup>If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

**[Read v.7]**

**Q: By what does Jesus measure “abiding”? What is it specifically equated to?**

A: “...My words abide in You”. This is the basis for the teaching in James 1:23-25:

*For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.*

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<sup>8</sup>“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

**Q: Therefore, what is the condition to be met first before you “ask whatever you wish”?**

A: Consistent obedience to His Word.

**Application:** Do you equate “life” in Jesus to “obedience” to His Word? How should this change your behavior going forward? If your child was constantly disobedient to your instructions, how willing would you be to grant a favor?

**[Read v.8]**

**Q: Taking the highlights from the previous verses, how is the Father glorified?**

A: By our obedience to Christ’s Word. We remain firmly planted in Him, thus producing spiritual fruit.

**Q: Overall, according to this verse, what is this proof of?**

A: Our discipleship.

**Point:** Discipleship is not a “vote” for Christ, but a lifestyle committed to following His Word to the exclusion of everything else.

**[Read v.9-10]**

<sup>9</sup>Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

**Q: How did Christ serve as an example of what He’s commanding us in this teaching?**

A: Just as we are to keep His Word, so He has “kept My Father’s commandments”.

**Q: And what is the final, end product of abiding in Christ, of keeping His commandments?**

A: Not just love, but God’s love.

**Application:** Have you ever considered that your ability (or inability) to achieve God’s love is directly related to your obedience to His Word? What steps can you take to attain to God’s love?

**[Read v.11]**

<sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

**Q: How can this teaching lead us to personally experience Christ’s joy?**

A: It’s the joy of being a good, obedient child, knowing that you’ve achieved everything asked of you in precisely the manner requested. Biblical obedience is not prohibitive, but actually freeing.

**[Read v.12]**

<sup>12</sup>“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

**Q: Based upon the teaching to this point, what does it mean to actually “love”?**

A: It means to remain obedient to God’s Word.

**Q: How does this apply to our love of others?**

A: It must come from love that is first obedient to Christ, rooted in God’s Word, and holding them to these same standards.

**Overall Application**

- Have you considered that one of your biggest contributions to not just the Vine but the other branches is the quality of your obedience to God’s Word?
- How has this re-shaped your definition of “love”?