

Secrets of the Abundant Life (2) The Secret of Bearing Fruit is Abiding John 15:1-10

Introduction:

- I. In our previous lesson we saw that "The Secret of Living is Bearing fruit"
 1. As disciples of Jesus, we are to Him as branches are to the vine
 2. Bearing fruit is our primary responsibility as branches
 3. In the very act of bearing fruit, we experience 📖 the "abundant life" that Jesus offers:
 - a. "Joy" for those who win souls to Christ
 - b. "Happiness" for those who share with the less fortunate
 - c. "Assurance" for those developing Christ-like qualities
 - d. "Peace" for those offering the fruit of prayer and praise
- II. In contrast, those "branches" that do not bear fruit are in danger of becoming cut off from the vine
 1. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away" (John 15:2a).
 2. In other words, 📖 those disciples who do not bear fruit will be "cut off" from Jesus by the Father! (John 15:1-2a).
 3. How then can we be sure to be fruitful as branches of the vine?
 4. We have seen that the secret to living is bearing fruit...what is the secret of bearing fruit?

Body:

- I. Discerning the secret of bearing fruit
 - A. Notice how often Jesus uses the word "abide"
 1. In ten verses, he uses the word ten times! (John 15:4(3), 5, 6, 7(2), 9, 10(2)).
 2. Why is this word mentioned over and over again? Because...
 - B. 📖 The secret of bearing fruit is abiding!
 1. A branch does not bear fruit by struggling, but by abiding in the vine...
 - a. When you walk through a vineyard, do you detect tension and struggle among the branches as they bear fruit?
 - b. No! Instead there is a calm and confident resting - an abiding - as branches draw their life from the vine in order to bear fruit
 2. 📖 In the Christian life, we experience first a "union," then a "communion"...
 - a. When we become Christians, there is first a "union" with Christ
 - 1) Paul describes this union as taking place in baptism (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-5).
 - 2) Having "put on Christ" and being "united together" with Him, our union with Him is like that of a branch to a vine (John 15:5a)
 - b. As we "abide" in this union, we have "communion" or fellowship with Christ in a very close and personal way (John 15:4a).
 3. This "communion" or mutual abiding with the vine (Christ) enables the

branches (disciples) to bear fruit!

- a. The branch receives from the vine the strength necessary to bear fruit; so the Christian receives from Christ strength to do what he could not do on his own (John 15:4-5).
- b. Paul often wrote of the strength or power available to those in Christ
 - 1) In his own life and in the lives of others (Philippians 4:13, 19; 1 Corinthians 1:29).
 - 2) He wanted others to know of the great power available to them (Ephesians 1:18-20; 3:20)
 - 3) He gave examples of how this power could transform people
 - a) 📖 The Corinthians—1 Corinthians 6:9-11
 - b) 📖 Even himself—1 Timothy 1:12-16; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10
4. So the secret of bearing fruit is abiding in Christ and He in us. Through such communion and fellowship, we benefit from Christ's strength so that we may be able to bear fruit and in turn experience the "abundant life."

Are we abiding in Christ, and He in us? We need not wonder, for there are several things that will be manifest in our lives when we are abiding in Christ

II. 📖 Evidences of abiding in Christ

A. 📖 Bearing much fruit (John 15:5b)

1. This is the most obvious sign
2. When one is consistently bearing the sort of fruit described in the previous lesson, that is certainly good evidence of a close relationship with Christ!
3. The lack of fruit can be an indication of one of three things:
 - a. There never was a "union" to begin with
 - b. There was a union, but "communion" is not taking place, leaving one in jeopardy of being "cut off"
 - c. There was a union but the branch has already been cut off!

B. 📖 The father's pruning (John 15:2b)

1. We should expect to see evidence of the Father's work in our lives, in which...
 - a. Things that would hinder us are being "cut away"
 - b. We are ever being developed so as to be more "fruitful"
2. One way that the Father does this is through the Word.
 - a. Notice John 15:3 - "clean" (katharos) is closely related to "prune" (kathairo).
 - b. The Word of God can be a very powerful instrument in the hands of the Lord (Hebrews 4:12-13; Ephesians 6:17).
 - c. As we read or hear it, it can expose us for what we really are, and when received properly, help us make great changes (James 1:22-25).
3. So if we are not constantly growing through the influence of the Word of God,

clearly we are not abiding in Christ!

- C. 📖 A Growing sense of dependence (John 15:5c).
 - 1. We will come to realize that apart from Christ we can do nothing (of real, lasting value).
 - 2. But those who abide in Christ will become like Paul, who realized the true source of his strength: his union with Christ! (2 Corinthians 3:5; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 4:13)

- D. 📖 Prayers being answered (John 15:7, 16)
 - 1. As we abide in Christ, we will find our prayers being answered
 - 2. Of course, such answered prayers will depend upon several factors:
 - a. That we keep His commandments and do the things that please Him (1 John 3:22).
 - b. That our requests be according to God's will (1 John 5:14).
 - c. That our requests not be for selfish gain (James 4:3).
 - 3. But one who abides in Christ should be able to look back and see evidence of answered prayers (though not always answered in the way we expected).

- E. 📖 Love for Christ and his people (John 15:9, 12).
 - 1. Since God is love (1 John 4:8) and Christ is God (John 1:1), those who abide in Christ will abide in love (1 John 4:7-8).
 - 2. Indeed, Christ commands us to love one another (John 15:17).
 - 3. And those who do not love the children of God, have not known God (1 John 3:14; 4:8, 20-21).

- F. 📖 An inner joy (John 15:11)
 - 1. Not the absence of trial or trouble, but a joy borne of the assurance that Christ has overcome the world, and that we can also through Him (John 16:33; Philippians 4:4)
 - 2. Indeed, one of the first visible signs of backsliding (of not abiding in Christ) is the loss of joy, especially about things spiritual! (Psalms 32:3; 51:12).

Conclusion:

- I. These, then, are just a few of the evidences that we are abiding in Christ:
 - 1. 📖 Bearing much fruit
 - 2. The Father's pruning
 - 3. A growing sense of dependence
 - 4. Our prayers being answered
 - 5. Love for Christ and His people
 - 6. An inner joy

- II. To be sure, not every believer who abides in Christ will have ALL these blessings in the SAME DEGREE at the same time
 - 1. But they will be present in some measure, and they will be strong enough to be evident (to ourselves at least, if not always to others).
 - 2. And they should always be *increasing!* (John 15:2; 2 Peter 1:8).

- III. It is good for us as branches to 📖 examine ourselves regularly to see if we are truly abiding in Christ (2 Corinthians 13:5).
 - 1. 📖 For the secret of the abundant life is bearing fruit
 - 2. 📖 And the secret of bearing fruit is abiding in Christ
 - 3. 📖 And so if we are not abiding in Christ, we cannot enjoy the abundant life!