

Abiding Love

John 15:4-17

SS Lesson for 11/08/2020

Devotional Scripture: 1 John 4:16-21

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Key Verse: John 15:5

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Most of us in the West are highly connected to others. We check our phones constantly for new texts, new posts, and new updates. Our thumbs are flying in response. We have internet news outlets that we check daily, not satisfied to wait for the evening news or the morning newspaper. Though family or friends live far away, their faces come to us instantly in video calls. We live online in many ways. But these connections can be fragile or even illusory. Think of the lonely woman who connects with a man who lives 500 miles away, only to discover that the “man” is actually a bunch of “borrowed” pictures being used for a teenager’s entertainment. Or consider how easily an online connection can be severed, with just the click of a button. Though we are wired for relationships, we may find that those relationships are not always what we think and definitely not what we need. Our lesson today speaks of a different type of connectedness, the one between Jesus and his followers. How does this work though? How can we be connected to him?

John 15 is at the center of the Farewell Discourse (John 13-17), a series of speeches and a prayer given by Jesus during the last supper. Generally, this section has material unique to John among the Gospels. The content makes up about 17 percent of the total text of John. Jesus builds his case for mutual love by using common observations from the vineyard. The vineyard was a staple of agriculture in the ancient world. In the Bible, Noah is the first recorded grape grower (Genesis 9:20), and human society has prized the fruit of the vine ever since. The fruit thereby produced became a source of sustenance year-round, with many of the harvested grapes being converted into raisins and wine for later consumption (see 2 Samuel 16:1). One of the enticing descriptions of the Promised Land was its productive vineyards (Deuteronomy 6:10-11; 8:7-10). Indeed, a physical sign brought back by the ill-fated spying expedition into the Promised Land was a massive cluster of grapes (Numbers 13:23). Vineyards were a common sight throughout Galilee, Samaria, and Judea in Jesus’ day. Besides today’s text, he also used vineyard imagery in his parables of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), the two sons (21:28-32), the wicked tenants (21:33-39), and the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). Common experiences regarding vineyards are also assumed in 1 Corinthians 9:7. Grapevines would be pruned severely at a certain time of the year, leaving little more than a leafless, branchless stump that would be propped up with a rock or two. All the old branches would be cut off and carried away, providing valuable fuel for home fires. After new branches had grown, a second pruning would occur to remove the smaller branches. This allowed the larger branches to produce bigger clusters of larger grapes. Such pruning was part of cultivating the vines (Deuteronomy 28:39).

Key Verse: John 15:5

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.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

15:1. I am the true Vine (cf. v. 5). This is the last of the seven great “I am” statements in John (cf. 6:35). Israel was God’s choice vine on which he lavished care and attention (Ps. 80:8; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; 6:9; Ezek. 15; 17:5-10; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1; 14:8). He longed for fruit, but the vine (Israel) became degenerate and produced rotten fruit. Therefore Jesus, as “the true Vine,” fulfills what God had intended for Israel. The **Father is the Gardener** who cultivates and protects the Vine.

15:2. He (i.e., the Gardener, the Father) desires **fruit**, which is mentioned eight times in this chapter (vv. 2 [thrice], 4 [twice], 5, 8, 16). A progression is seen: **fruit** (v. 2), **more fruitful** (v. 2), and “much fruit” (vv. 5, 8). The fruit which God desired from Israel was loving obedience, righteousness, and justice (Isa. 5:1-7). **Every branch in Me that** does not bear fruit **He cuts off**. The phrase “in Me” does not mean the same thing as Paul’s words “in Christ.” Here it is part of the metaphor of the Vine and seems to mean, “every person who professes to be My disciple (a ‘branch’) is not necessarily a true follower.” A branch **that bears no** fruit is obviously dead. Therefore, like Judas, it is cut off. (See John 15:6.) Every year in Palestine gardeners prune their vines. They cut off the dead wood which has no life in it and trim the living branches so that their yield will be greater.

15:3. The disciples had been cleansed by Jesus and His message, but one, Judas, was not cleansed (cf. 13:10-11).

15:4. Fruitfulness is the result of the Son’s life being reproduced in a disciple. The disciple’s part is to **remain**. The word **remain**, a key word in John’s theology, is *menō* which occurs 11 times in this chapter,

40 times in the entire Gospel, and 27 times in John's epistles. What does it mean to **remain**? It can mean, first, to accept Jesus as Savior (cf. 6:54, 56). Second, it can mean to continue or persevere in believing (8:31 ["hold" is remain]; 1 John 2:19, 24). Third, it can also mean believing, loving obedience (John 15:9-10). Without faith, no life of God will come to anyone. Without the life of God, **no real fruit** can be produced: **Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.**

15:5-6. A disciple's continual abiding with Jesus (**If a man remains in Me**)—and the indwelling of Jesus in a believer (**and I in him**)—result in abundant **fruit** (cf. v. 8). But those who do not believe face disaster. **A branch** without life is dead and cut off (v. 2). It is worthless and therefore is **thrown into the fire and burned**. What did Jesus mean by these symbolic words about vine branches being burned? These words have been interpreted in at least three ways: (1) The "burned" branches are Christians who have lost their salvation. (But this contradicts many passages, e.g., 3:16, 36; 5:24; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:1.) (2) The "burned" branches represent Christians who will lose rewards but not salvation at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:15). (But Jesus spoke here of *dead* branches; such a branch **is thrown away and withers**.) (3) The "burned" branches refer to professing Christians who, like Judas, are not genuinely saved and therefore are judged. Like a dead branch, a person without Christ is spiritually dead and therefore will be punished in eternal fire (cf. Matt. 25:46). Judas was with Jesus; he seemed like a "branch." But he did not have God's life in him; therefore he departed; his destiny was like that of a dead branch.

15:7-8. In contrast with verse 6, the emphasis in these verses is positive: **remain** with Jesus and **bear much fruit**. Effective prayer is based on faith in Christ and on His **words** remaining in believers. Christ's words condition and control such a believer's mind so that his prayers conform to the Father's will. Since his prayer is in accord with God's will, the results are certain—**it will be given you** (cf. 1 John 5:14-15). Fulfilled prayers bring **glory** to the Father because, like Jesus, His **disciples** are doing the heavenly Father's will (cf. "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth" [Matt. 6:10]).

15:9-10. A believer is motivated by the wonder of Jesus' **love**, which is patterned after the Father's **love** in its quality and extent. **Remain in My love** might seem to be mystical but Jesus makes it very concrete. Obedience to the **Father's commands** is the same for a disciple as it was for the Son (cf. 14:15, 21, 23; 1 John 2:3; 3:22, 24; 5:3). Active dependence and loving obedience are the proper paths for all of God's children

15:11. Jesus had great **joy** in pleasing His Father by living a fruitful life (cf. Heb. 12:2). The purpose of His teaching is to give man an abundant life, not a joyless existence (John 10:10). The commands for His disciples to obey are for their **joy** (cf. 17:13).

15:12. One primary **command** was given by Jesus to believers: they must have mutual love (**Love each other**; this is repeated in v. 17). Christians grow by caring for and nurturing each other. The standard for that love is Christ's example of humble sacrificial service: **as I have loved you**.

15:13-14. The most a person can do for his friend is to die for him; such a death is a clear demonstration of **love**. Jesus demonstrated His love (v. 12b) by dying **for His friends**, those who obey Him. Abraham was called God's "friend" (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8) because he obeyed God. Like close friends, Abraham and God communicated well with each other (cf. Gen. 18:17).

15:15-17. A **servant** (lit., "slave") **does not** have a close relationship with his master, as friends do. Normally, a slave does what he is told without understanding **his master's** mind or **business**. Since Jesus had opened Himself to His disciples, the title "slave" did not fit their relationship. (When Paul spoke of himself as "a servant [lit., slave] of God" [Rom. 1:1], he had a different idea in mind. He meant he willingly and humbly served and obeyed God.) Jesus **called** His disciples **friends** because He had disclosed His Father's revelation to them.

Jesus then reminded them that contrary to the common practice of disciples picking a teacher, Jesus had chosen them (cf. John 15:19). The purpose of His choosing was so that they would produce lasting **fruit**. He **chose** them for a mission, and His **Father** would answer their requests in order to accomplish that mission (**whatever you ask in My name**; cf. v. 7; cf. "in My name" in 14:13-14; 16:23-24, 26). Friendship with Jesus involves the obligation of brotherly love: **Love each other** (cf. 15:12).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Love by Abiding in the Vine (John 15:4-11)

4 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.

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.

6 If 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.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

10 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.

11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Abiding in the Vine to bear fruit (4-8)

The fruit God expects includes the manifestations of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

The fruit God expects includes righteousness (Phil 1:9-11)

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

The fruit God expects includes good works (Col 1:10)

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

The fruit God expects grows and matures (Matt 13:31-33)

31 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." 33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

The fruit God expects must be productive (Luke 13:6-9)

6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. 7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 8 "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

The fruit God expects comes from His Divine power (2 Peter 1:3-8)

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Abiding in the Vine through abiding in love (9-11)

Abiding in love by being rooted and established in God's love (Eph 3:16-19)

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Abiding in love through righteousness (Ps 36:10)

10 Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart.

Abiding in love through the full extent of Jesus' love (John 13:1)

1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

Abiding in love through obedience (John 14:21)

21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

Abiding in love through the mercy of God (Jude 1:21)

21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Abiding by Loving One Another (John 15:12-17)

12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.
14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.
15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.
16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go 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 love one another.

Loving one another is commanded (12-13)

Commanded by Jesus (John 13:34-35)

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Commanded through being imitators of God (Eph 5:1-2)

5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Commanded through Jesus making love increase (1 Thess 3:12)

12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

Commanded because it is taught by God to do so (1 Thess 4:9)

9 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

Commanded through obedience to the truth of God's word (1 Peter 1:22)

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

Commanded to cover sins (1 Peter 4:8)

8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Loving one another through friendship (14-15)

Friendship with God first (James 2:23)

23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

Friendship that comforts during grief (Gen 38:12)

12 After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah, to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went with him.

Friendship that loves at all times (Prov 17:17)

17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Friendship that never forsakes (Prov 27:10)

10 Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you — better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.

Friendship that provides earnest counsel (Prov 27:9)

9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.

Friendship that provides strength (Eccl 4:9-12)

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! 11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Loving one another through choice (16-17)

Chosen through loving Jesus (John 21:15)

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Chosen through being created to do good works (Eph 2:10)

10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Chosen through responding to the gospel (Col 1:4-6)

4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

Chosen through being passed from death to life to love (1 John 3:14-16)

14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. 16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

Chosen through being commanded to love (John 13:34)

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Exhortation and Explanation (15:4-8)

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me—and I in him—bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up, and they gather them up and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples.

The teaching of our Lord concerning “abiding” in Him is based upon a fundamental premise, stated in verses 4 and 5: **“Apart from Me, you can accomplish nothing.”** This is a very basic biblical principle. Jesus means us to understand that the term **“nothing”** refers to spiritual fruit. There is a certain sense in which men can do nothing at all without Christ. They cannot live or breath or eat, apart from the provisions God has made:

24 “The God who made the world and everything in it, who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by human hands, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives life and breath and everything to everyone. 26 From one man he made every nation of the human race to inhabit the entire earth, determining their set times and the fixed limits of the places where they would live, 27 so that they would search for God and perhaps grope around for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 **For in him we live and move about and exist**, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring’” (Acts 17:24-28, emphasis mine).

Here, our Lord is quite clearly saying that we cannot bear spiritual fruit apart from abiding in Him.

In and of ourselves, we can do nothing to earn God’s favor or to merit His salvation. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We are all under divine condemnation, helpless and hopeless, apart from Christ (Ephesians 2:1-3). So, too, apart from abiding in Christ, Christians cannot do anything that will please Him. This is the point of Romans 7. Romans 6 teaches us the necessity of dying to sin and of living righteously, but Romans 7 informs us of the impossibility of doing so in the power of our flesh. And so Paul cries out, **“Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”** (Romans 7:24). It is only through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are enabled to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (Romans 8:3-4).

In theory, Christians know the truth that our Lord is emphasizing here, but very often we simply don’t believe it in a practical way. We really don’t believe that apart from Him we can do nothing. The message that we constantly hear from the “human potential” advocates and motivational speakers is that “we have much more

power within us than we know, and that by digging deep within ourselves and drawing upon our own hidden strengths, we can do great things.” This is not what our Lord teaches us concerning the bearing of spiritual fruit. *He instructs us that we can do “nothing” apart from a vital union with Him, in which we constantly draw from His life, His strength, His truth.* When we do “**abide**” in Christ, we bear much fruit (verses 5, 8), we bring glory to the Father (verse 8), and we prove ourselves to be disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 8).

Abiding in Christ is fundamental and essential. But just what does it mean to *abide* in Him? Our understanding of this great text depends upon our understanding of the word “**abide**” (KJV) or “**remain**.” The NET Bible has chosen to consistently render the Greek term (menw) “**remain**” in our passage. The difficulty with the Greek term is that it conveys more than any one English word is able to capture. Let me illustrate this by pointing out the various ways this word is rendered by the translators of the King James Version. Out of 120 occurrences in the New Testament, menw is rendered “**abide**” 61 times, “**remain**” 16 times, “**dwelt**” 15 times, “**continue**” 11 times, “**tarry**” 9 times, “**endure**” 3 times, and still in other ways 5 more times. In our text, the idea of “remaining” is clearly present, but the word “**remain**” somehow fails to convey the full force of our Lord’s words. A number of times in John’s Gospel, the term is used of “dwelling” in a certain place, of staying somewhere as one’s dwelling place:

38 Jesus turned around and saw them following and said to them, “What do you want?” So they said to him, “Rabbi” (which is translated Teacher), “where are you *staying*?” 39 Jesus answered, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was *staying*, and they *stayed* with him that day. Now it was about four o’clock in the afternoon (John 1:38-39, emphasis mine).

After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples, and they *stayed* there a few days (John 2:12).

So when the Samaritans came to him, they started asking him to stay with them. He *stayed* there two days (John 4:40, see also 8:35; 10:40; 11:6).

In addition to these instances, where menw speaks of one’s dwelling somewhere as a place of residence (even if only for a day or so), there are the two occurrences of the related term (monh) in John 14:1 and 23, which refer to the “rooms” (sometimes rendered “**mansions**”) or “**dwelling places**” that await us in heaven, in the Father’s house. Because of John’s use of these terms, I would suggest that we render the term menw “make one’s home” or “make one’s abode.” To “*abide*” in Christ as the True Vine is to “make our home” in Him, just as He also “makes His abode” in us. If we wish to stress the “**remain**” aspect of the term, we might translate menw “to make our permanent home.”

The idea of having God as our “**dwelling place**” is found as well in the Old Testament:

A Prayer of Moses the man of God. LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations (Psalm 90:1, NKJV, emphasis mine).

1 He who **dwells** in the secret place of the Most High Shall **abide** under the shadow of the Almighty. ... 9 Because you have made the LORD, *who is* my refuge, *Even* the Most High, your **dwelling place**, 10 No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your **dwelling** (Psalm 91:1, 9-10, NKJV, emphasis mine).

For You have been a **shelter** for me, A **strong tower** from the enemy (Psalm 61:3, NKJV, emphasis mine).

The name of the LORD *is* a **strong tower**; The righteous run to it and are safe (Proverbs 18:10, NKJV, emphasis mine).

Consequently, it would seem that “making your permanent dwelling place” is not far from the meaning of menw in our text. This helps us discern the message that our Lord is seeking to convey to His disciples, and ultimately to us. What, then, does it mean to “make the Lord Jesus our permanent dwelling place”? Let’s simplify this definition, and say that Jesus is instructing us to make Him our “home” as He makes His “home” in us. Think about what “home” means to us:

- Home is where your heart is; it is where you want to be (especially during holidays).
- Home is the place to which you return, the place to which you are eager to get back to (e.g., when you’ve been on vacation).
- Home is where you feel comfortable, and can really be yourself.
- Home is a place of safety and security.
- Home is where you bring your friends when you wish to have fellowship with them.
- Home is our base of operations; it is at the center of what we do.
- Home is where you find your strength for life; it is where you eat and sleep.

- Home is where the people and the things we love the most are found.

Isn't this what Jesus Christ should be for the Christian? Shouldn't He be our place of refuge and security? Should He not be the source of our life and strength? Shouldn't He be the reason for our fellowship with others? Shouldn't He be where our heart is?

To further explore this matter of Jesus Christ as our "abiding place," our "home," let us consider the opposite of making Him our home. What is it that should not be our "home"? Answer: this world. The old song goes, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through ..." Isn't that really true? John warns us not to become too attached to the world, not to love it:

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; 16 because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of God remains forever (1 John 2:15-17).

Isaiah had it right, and so did "**righteous Lot**":

So I said: "Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5, NKJV).

7 ... and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked. 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds) (2 Peter 2:7-8, NKJV).

This is why Christians are not to be "at home" in this world, but to find their home in Christ:

11 Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:11-12, NKJV).

4 For indeed we groan while we are in this tent, since we are weighed down, because we do not want to be unclothed, but clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment. 6 Therefore we are always full of courage, and we know that as long as we are alive here on earth we are absent from the Lord— 7 for we live by faith, not by sight. 8 Thus we are full of courage and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So then whether we are alive or away, we make it our ambition to please him (2 Corinthians 5:4-9).

Allow me to attempt to sum up the meaning of the word "**remain**" in our text. Jesus Christ is the "abiding place" for the Christian. He is the One from whom we derive spiritual life and strength and the means to become Christ-like. It is only through Him that we can "**bear fruit**." It is by "abiding" in Him that we also enter into the deepest union and fellowship. Thus, Jesus urges His disciples to "**abide**" in Him when He departs to be with the Father, assuring them that He will likewise "**abide**" in them.

Further Instruction on Abiding (15:9-17)

9 Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete. 12 My commandment is this—to love one another just as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this—that one lays down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. 17 This I command you—to love one another.

A good teacher employs repetition to clarify and to emphasize his content. In verses 9-17, Jesus reiterates and further explains what He has just said concerning abiding in Him in verses 1-8. He now gives us some specifics as to *how* we are to abide in Him. He also spells out some of the benefits of abiding in Him. Let me summarize our Lord's teaching by setting down several principles.

PRINCIPLE ONE: WHEN WE ABIDE IN CHRIST, WE ABIDE IN HIS LOVE. You will remember that John introduces the Upper Room Discourse in chapter 13 with a reference to our Lord's love for His disciples:

Just before the Passover feast, Jesus knew that his time had come to depart from this world to the Father. He had loved his own who were in the world, and now he loved them to the very end (John 13:1).

Jesus now speaks of abiding in Him as abiding in His *love*. Our Lord's love for His disciples is like the Father's love for Him. As our Lord speaks, He is virtually standing in the shadow of the cross. How can He speak of the Father's love for Him at a time like this? Usually, we tend to emphasize the Father's love for us, and that this love prompted Him to send His Son to the cross (see Ephesians 2:4). I believe we must also recognize that the Father sent the Son to Calvary *out of His love for the Son*, as well as out of His love for lost sinners. How can this be? Dying on the cross of Calvary was indeed an act of humility on our Lord's part (see Philippians 2:5-8).

PRINCIPLE TWO: WHEN WE ABIDE IN CHRIST, WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. How, then, do we abide in His love? Jesus is very clear on this matter. We abide in His love when we *keep His commandments*. We are to keep His commandments just as He has kept His Father's commandments, thus abiding in His love (verse 10). Just what commandments would these be that our Lord has kept? John certainly indicates what some of these are:

Then Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak just what the Father taught me" (John 8:28).

17 "This is why the Father loves me—because I lay down my life, so that I may take it back again. 18 No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of my own free will. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it back again. This is the commandment I received from my Father" (John 10:17-18).

PRINCIPLE THREE: WHEN WE ABIDE IN CHRIST, WE LOVE THE BRETHREN. While the words of our Lord make it clear that we are to keep all of His commandments (verse 9), at this moment Jesus gives His disciples but one commandment: they must love one another, just as He has loved them (verse 12). In some ways, this one command encompasses all other commands in that if one acts in love toward others, he will keep the commandments. This command has already been given by our Lord:

34 "I give you a new commandment—to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

In chapter 13 and in our text in chapter 15, Jesus is commanding His disciples to love each other. The command does not appear to encompass the world at large, but their relationships with one another as His disciples. As the world witnesses this love, they will see that its origin is divine, and that these men really are the disciples of Jesus. Very shortly, Jesus is going to reveal to His disciples that the world will hate them because they love Him. No wonder it is vital for these men to love one another. It is apparent that these men have not always been of one mind. This very night these men were arguing with one another over which of them was considered the greatest (see Luke 22:24). In our Lord's absence, the potential for division was increased. The Holy Spirit would give them a supernatural unity in Christ, but they must strive to maintain this unity by living in love.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: WHEN WE ABIDE IN CHRIST, WE HAVE GREAT JOY (verse 11). Leon Morris calls our attention to the fact that the word "**joy**" occurs only once before the Upper Room Discourse, but it will now occur seven times.⁵⁴ Obviously, "**joy**" is a prominent theme in our text, at a time when we might not expect it. Hearts were heavy that evening, for Jesus had told them some very distressing things, which troubled them greatly (13:22; 14:1, 27; 16:6, 22). If His disciples would abide in Him, their sorrows would be dispelled, and they would be replaced by great joy. Not only would His joy be in them, but their joy would be full. Their hearts would overflow with joy. When we read through the Book of Acts, we find joyful believers, very often in the midst of adversity (see Acts 2:28; 8:5-8; 13:52; 15:3; 20:24).

What is it that will give the disciples—and us—great joy? The first thing I would say is that the "joy" one experiences as an unbeliever is very different from the "**joy**" of the Christian. In fact, the "**joy**" we experience as Christians is almost the opposite of the joy we once experienced apart from Christ. Unfortunately, Jonah illustrates the wrong kind of joy. He could rejoice in his own personal comfort, thanks to the vine that afforded him some shade (4:6), but he was greatly distressed by the salvation of the people of Nineveh (Jonah 4:1-4).

PRINCIPLE FIVE: WHEN WE ABIDE IN CHRIST, WE ARE HIS FRIENDS. Jesus tells His disciples that He no longer calls them slaves, but rather friends. Nevertheless, in the Epistles, the apostles call themselves "**slaves**" of Christ (see Romans 1:1; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 4:12; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1). They also urge others to think of themselves in this way (Ephesians 6:6; 1 Peter 2:16).

Nevertheless, Jesus speaks of a change which is about to take place in His relationship with His disciples. He will no longer deal with them as His slaves but rather as His intimate friends. A slave is expected to do what his master instructs him to do, whether or not he likes it, and whether or not he understands why he is commanded to do it. The best analogy today would be found in the armed forces. The change would be from the status of a

“private” in the army to a “pal” of the sergeant. When new recruits are sent to boot camp, it is to train them to be “slaves.” That is, it is to train these men to obey orders, instantly, and without question. If the sergeant orders a private to dig a hole four feet square, the private is to do it. If the sergeant then orders the private to fill the hole back in again, he is to obey without hesitation. The “private” is virtually the “sergeant’s” slave (at least that’s how it used to be). The private would never think of expecting the sergeant to explain his reasons for giving any order.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/abiding-christ-john-151-17>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Remaining, obeying, and loving, these are the central elements of discipleship. The love of Jesus exemplifies all of these. He remains with the Father in a relationship so intimate, it is beyond our understanding. He always obeys the Father. And his great love for the Father overflows to his chosen disciples. In this we understand what biblical love is all about. It is conditioned by a lasting, faithful relationship and expressed by obedience. It is unselfish love, given without condition or expectation of return. In the Gospel of John, the last supper finds Jesus teaching about these things. The arrest, trials, and crucifixion find him acting out these things. The resurrection shows the Father approving of these things for Jesus: his teachings and his actions. Thereby the disciples of Jesus have been motivated ever since to follow him unselfishly with the purposes of being obedient disciples themselves and of producing new disciples in every generation.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

A Vine and Branch Connection - Jesus taught His disciples about abiding in Him, and He used the illustration of a vine and its branches to help them understand their ongoing relationship with Him. The word "abide" (John 15:4, KJV) meant for them to stay connected with Him relationally in a real, vital, joyful, loving, and life-giving fellowship. Jesus also used this example to explain the development of Christlike character. Jesus made it clear that without this type of connection to God, it's impossible for us, the branches, to produce fruit. Fruit can be when someone believes in Christ after our faithful witnessing, or it can be a person's righteous actions, or it can refer to the fruit of the Spirit. Imagine a branch that's fallen and is no longer a part of the tree. It's no good. In the same way, Jesus exhorts His followers to abide in Him, and He will abide in us, and together the work of the Kingdom will be accomplished.

A Loving Relationship - This relationship between Jesus and Christians should be seen as something precious and valuable, not a duty or an obligation. This bond encourages honest, open communication. One who loves the Lord yearns to know His Word and follow His instructions. As this connection becomes stronger, the heart desires of God's children will increasingly match the heart desires of Jesus; they will long for and pray for God's will to be done.

Sacrificial Love - Jesus referred to His disciples as His "friends" (15:14). Jesus told them they had been chosen by God to bear fruit in His name. The Father has commissioned Christians to manifest the love of God in the world. God's compassion was shown through Christ's death on the Cross. Therefore, Christ's followers receive this love, and as it overflows, it spills out toward others.