

# JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

## STUDY TEN

### Abiding in Christ

*John 15:1–11*

*Jesus' disciples came to Him, they followed Him, they believed in Him. Now they must learn to abide in Him.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**ITH arms outstretched, Jesus welcomed weary souls weighed down by the demands of their religious leaders. “Come to me,” He declared with a gentle voice and a promise of rest (Matthew 11:28). He offered eternal life to anyone who believed in Him (John 11:25), and He invited everyone to be His disciple. “Follow me,” He said (Matthew 16:24).

On the night before He went to the cross to be crucified, Jesus was celebrating a Jewish feast, called the Passover, with His closest disciples—those who had come to Him, believed in Him, and followed Him. Now, nearing the end of His time with them, Jesus offered a new, deeper dimension of discipleship, one that could be experienced even after He was no longer physically with them. “Abide in me” (John 15:4 ESV).

As Jesus’ followers, we still hear His invitation to abide in Him. What did Jesus mean? How can we experience this level of spiritual intimacy with Christ?



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**Abiding in Christ**

*John 15:1–11*



**PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Begin this study with a prayer to intensify, in a profound way, your closeness with Jesus.

*Father, open my mind to comprehend and my heart to be stirred by Jesus’ invitation. May I find a deeper walk with You as I experience new realms in my relationship with Your Son. In His name I pray, amen.*



**TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

The setting for Jesus’ comments was the upper room after the Passover meal was finished. Judas had already left the group to betray Jesus, and in a short while, Jesus and His disciples would go to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus would be arrested.

Knowing His final hours were quickly slipping away, Jesus filled these moments with lasting lessons.

- The Passover meal depicted *Jesus’ sacrifice* as the Lamb of God.
- Washing the disciples’ feet illustrated *Jesus’ call* to humble service (*John 13:1–17*).
- *Jesus’ promises* of heaven and the Holy Spirit would sustain them through the coming storm (*14:1–31*).

In John 15, Jesus turned to their relationships with Him (15:1–11), with each other (15:12–17), and with the world (15:18–27). The following chart shows how these subjects fit together.

Verses	Relationship	Key Term (NASB)	Emphasis
John 15:1–11	Believer with Christ	“Abide” (10 times in 11 verses)	Union
John 15:12–17	Believer with believer	“Love” (4 times in 6 verses)	Communion
John 15:18–27	Believer with the world	“Hate” (8 times in 10 verses)	Disunion

The single most important priority for disciples, according to Jesus, is our *union with Him*—our source of life and our wellspring of love, peace, joy, and hope.



## Abiding in Christ

*John 15:1–11*

Jesus offered the *abundant* life to His disciples in John 10:10, and now He offered the *abiding* life. In John 15:1–11, He used a vineyard metaphor to illustrate the link between the two. Just as branches must abide in a vine to produce fruit, so also we must abide in Christ to live abundantly as God intended. Let's look closer at Jesus' analogy to comprehend the many facets of Jesus' teaching.



### Observation: Vine, Branches, and Fruit-bearing

Read *John 15:1–11* in the New Living Translation and the English Standard Version, verse-by-verse, side-by-side, a few times. Note the different ways these Bible versions translate key words. Write down the key words you see.

We'll explore the meaning of these words in *interpretation*. For now, answer the following *observation* questions. Who was Jesus addressing, according to *15:3*? Put another way, who was Jesus' teaching meant for?



## Abiding in Christ

*John 15:1–11*

The word *abide* (or *remain* in the NLT) appears 10 times in this passage. Write down the phrases in which it appears. Who abides in whom? In what do we abide? Who is our model in how to abide?

In this passage, Jesus wasn't addressing how to become a Christian but how to be a fruitful disciple. Write down the progression you see in fruit-bearing in *John 15:2, 5, and 8* from no fruit to much fruit.

*When one abides in Christ, a union like none other you can experience is established.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Interpretation: What It Means to Abide in Christ

*Interpretation* weaves together our observations into truths we can apply. Three subjects emerge from Jesus' teaching for us to interpret: the vine, the vinedresser, and fruit-bearing.



## Abiding in Christ

*John 15:1–11*

### Abiding in the Vine—John 15:4–5; 7–11

Jesus identified the vine as Himself: “I am the true grapevine” (John 15:1). What did He mean by saying He was the *true* vine? What did Jesus mean when He said, “For apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5)?

List several principles that the vine-and-branches analogy conveys about the nature of our relationship with Jesus. For example: *Like a branch depends on the vine, we must constantly depend on Christ for everything we need.* Now you try.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

When we abide in Christ and His “words abide in [us]” (15:7 NASB), Jesus said, “You may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!” (15:7). What did Jesus mean?



## Abiding in Christ

*John 15:1–11*

What do you learn about abiding from Jesus' relationship with the Father, according to [15:9–11](#)?

*The most natural process in the world is when the vine bears fruit. Abiding in Christ is a wonderful way to live! You connect to the Vine and to His strength and direction, and then you trust Him for the fruit. This is what the Christian life is all about.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

### The Role of the Vinedresser—John 15:1–2

Jesus identified the vinedresser or “gardener” as the Father (John 15:1). In this role, the Father “takes away” the barren branch and “prunes” the fruit-bearing branch (15:2 NASB).

The Greek word for “takes away” is *airo*, which can also mean “to take up, lift, raise.” In this sense, the Father lifts up and restores the downtrodden disciple like a gardener picks a low-hanging branch out of the dirt, cleans it off, and supports it with the trellis.

What does “pruning” mean? What might the Father cut away? How does pruning help us be more spiritually productive?

*Fruit-bearing is the cultivation of character qualities that characterize the person of Jesus.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



## Abiding in Christ

*John 15:1–11*

### The Branches and the Fruit—John 15:3, 6

Notice, Jesus did not command His disciples to bear fruit but to abide. When we focus on abiding in the vine, fruit naturally follows as Christ reproduces His abundant life in the lives of His followers.

What “fruit” will Christ produce in us? Name some qualities of Christ that abiding in Him will make evident. Some examples are the fruit of the Spirit in *Galatians 5:22–23*.

A believer who doesn’t abide in Christ is still saved. He or she remains in Christ positionally but is not drawing upon Christ’s life *practically*. Just as a severed branch withers, a carnal believer operating on his or her own can’t exhibit the abundant life or any Christlike qualities.

Frankly, we can do many things in the flesh without depending on Christ. We can work hard, even in a ministry, but if Christ isn’t enabling us and at the center of all we do, there will be no fruit. Jesus said that this person is “thrown away like a useless branch” (15:6) by an act of divine discipline in which a believer may be removed from ministry or a position of influence.

Taking the consequence a step further, in the next section of the verse, Jesus shifted from singular to plural, from “he” to “them,” saying, “they gather *them* and throw *them* into the fire” (15:6 NASB, emphasis added).

If “he” refers to the *useless* branch, what is thrown into the fire? “Them” can refer to a carnal believer’s *worthless* deeds, which are burned up—not the believer. Let’s examine God’s judgment of believers’ works in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians.

*Christians are connected to Christ but must abide in the One to whom they are connected. We must live dependently on Christ. If we operate in our own strength, our own wisdom, our own scheming, then all our efforts will result in zilch because they aren’t coming from the vine. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Abiding in Christ

*John 15:1–11*



### Correlation: Purged by Fire

Paul used a building analogy instead of Jesus' vineyard analogy, but the main idea is the same.

*Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames. (1 Corinthians 3:12–15)*

How does Paul's metaphor correlate with Jesus' metaphor about worthless deeds being burned up?

*At the final judgment, our work before the Lord will be revealed with fire. The useless fruit, the fruit of carnality, will be burned up as empty, needless, and unrewarded works.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Application: The Good in Store for Those Who Abide

What blessings does abiding in Christ offer? Jesus taught four compelling benefits.

1. *Our prayers will be answered* (John 15:7). Abiding helps us pray like Jesus prayed, in the Father's will, and we experience the satisfaction of seeing His plan unfold through our intercessions.
2. *God will be glorified* (15:8). The fruit we bear reflects the Giver of all good things and points others to Him.
3. *Love will be stimulated* (15:9–10). Abiding surrounds us in Christ's love and the love of the Father. What a secure place in which to dwell . . . and to invite others into!
4. *Joy will reach the maximum* (15:11). The most delightful of all fruit is Jesus' joy overflowing our hearts.





## Abiding in Christ

*John 15:1–11*

Regardless of your circumstances, you can abide in Christ. While we may not have control over much in life, we can choose to abide by:

- Trusting in His control
- Depending on His guidance
- Receiving His provision
- Thinking His thoughts
- Speaking His words
- Relaxing in His grace
- Relying on His strength
- Adopting His purposes
- Dwelling in His love

In what area can you focus on abiding in Christ today?

Close this study by expressing your heartfelt desire for a deeper level of closeness with Your Savior. Come near and experience the blessings of seeing prayers answered, glorifying God, and finding Christ's love and joy.



**Abiding in Christ**

*John 15:1–11*



**A FINAL PRAYER**

Write your prayer here.

*Father,*

