



## John 15:1-11

Sunday 13 November we had Steve Murphy as a guest speaker. Rather than doing the next passage from Ephesians, he spoke from John 15:1-11 about the need to abide in Christ. The main point is that without abiding in Christ, we can do nothing (15:6), so we need to keep abiding - that is, to maintain our relationship with him.

### Questions

1. Share what impacted you most from the sermon

*Icebreaker*

2. The vine is an OT image for Israel (e.g. Psalm 80) which Jesus now applies to himself. In what ways does he use the metaphor? Which one is striking to you?

*The passage is basically an extended metaphor*

- *The strong connection between vine and branch - like one whole*
- *The branch needs the connection to the vine to produce anything, it is dead by itself (v4)*
- *The goal of fruit, that is the whole point (v2 - as a commentator said, no one cultivates a vine for beauty!)*
- *Branches that don't produce fruit are removed (v2, 6)*

*It is very striking - maybe the closeness of the relationship, or the necessity of the connection, or the importance of fruit...*

3. Jesus says we can do nothing without Him. Yet we achieve so much throughout life. What does Jesus mean? How does this challenge us about our priorities?

*Jesus means we can do nothing spiritual, nothing lasting. No 'fruit'. He appointed us to bear fruit that will last (v16) but most things we do won't last. They will be lost when Jesus returns. Only the spiritual fruit in people's lives lasts, and we can't do any of that without him.*



*The challenge is that Jesus thinks most of what we do is nothing. All our money & achievements count for nothing as they won't last. So what do we prioritise with our time, things that will last or things that won't?*

4. What do you think it means for us to 'abide' in Christ in this passage? What images does it evoke? How would you explain it simply and practically?

*Abiding basically means remaining. It speaks of a fixed position where we rest amidst storms and temptations. It speaks of dependence and need. It speaks of connection. Some of this can be 'positional'. In some sense, if you're a Christian you are always connected to Christ, united to him by the Holy Spirit, and those cut off and burned are those who are not in Christ.*

*But the way the passage has a command to abide, and promises for those who do so, suggest a relational side to it. We abide by actively, consciously, depending on Jesus, relating to him. It is a relationship we maintain and that leads to fruitfulness.*

5. More specifically, what three ways does the passage suggest we can abide in Christ? (Things we need to do to abide?)

*The passage has three elements of abiding that stand out*

- **Through the Word** (v7) - *we need Jesus' words in us to abide*
- **Through Jesus' love** (v9) - *we rest in his unconditional, prior love*
- **Keeping Jesus' commandments** (v10) - *we cannot enjoy his love when we are disobedient to what he says*

*Arguably these are related. If we keep Jesus' commandments we abide in His love, though it seems to be more than that. And of course we know Jesus' commandments and His love through His words. But still, helpful to distinguish these three.*

6. What are the great promises here for those who abide in Christ? Think of what is going on in life - which of these speaks the most to you at this time?

*Pruning* (v2 - *not much detail on this*), *connection with Jesus* (v4 - *amazing He will remain in us*), *fruitfulness* (v5, 8), *answered prayer* (v7), *experiencing Jesus' love* (v9),



*joy (v11), etc. It speaks of a living, active, productive relationship, certainly more than just a static connection. Hopefully it speaks to different people in their situations. E.g. fruitfulness when life feels meaningless, joy when work is endlessly boring, etc*

7. Get into pairs/threes or TG's and share, or maybe meditate on your own: How is your abiding in Christ these days? Where do you see joy and answered prayer? Out of word, love and obedience, which is a struggle for you at the moment? What is in your heart that affects your relationship at this time?

*It's a challenging passage that calls on us to prioritise our relationship with Jesus so that we can be fruitful. So good to reflect explicitly on that, maybe alone, maybe in small groups. A time to be honest and pray.*

### **Ideas for prayer**

- Give thanks for Jesus' love in making us his branches and giving us this amazing relationship with him.
- Pray we would not rely on ourselves but only on Jesus as the one producing fruit. Pray God would show us where we are not centering our lives on him.
- Pray we would prioritise abiding in Jesus by reading his word, trusting his love and obeying his commandments, and stick with it in our busy lives.
- Pray our hearts would long to be fruitful more than successful in this world, and that Jesus would produce much and lasting fruit in our lives and ministry.