

## Abiding in the Vine

*John 17:3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

We have been learning about the eternal life that we received from the Lord when we believed in Christ as our Savior. We have seen that we can live in eternal life, now, in this life.

/We can take hold of eternal life. And we can reap eternal life.\

But what about in between?

/What is designed to happen in between the sowing of the seed and the reaping of the harvest? Between taking hold of this new life, and bearing the fruit of it?\

That's our subject today. This is the question we address today.

There are a lot of good answers to this question in the New Testament. After all, our entire spiritual life lies between taking hold of eternal life and reaping it.

But today we are going to approach this with utter simplicity. When we get to the heart of the matter, what do we find?

Jesus answered this question for us in chapter 15 of the gospel of John. He reduced things to utter simplicity.

He drew a picture. He put Himself in that picture. Then He put us in that picture. He spoke about the vine and its branches.

*John 15:1-14*

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "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. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

/The branches on a vine have one purpose: to bear fruit.\

Our life in Christ is very simple too, actually. Our purpose is also to bear fruit.

*John 15:4 "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. 5 "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.*

We are in Christ. He is the life. We are in a deep deep connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. As deep as a branch is in a vine. Look at a vine with its branches. You can't tell where the vine leaves off and the branch begins. It's all one.

/But in order for a branch to bear fruit, it must remain on the vine.\

Jesus the Vine produces the fruit by having His life pour through us.

There it is in its utter simplicity.

/Abide in Me, and I in You. Do this and you will bear much fruit.\

He is the Vine. We are the branches. The branches share the life of the Vine. No vine, no life. No vine, no fruit. Apart from Christ, we can do nothing.

*John 15: 6 "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."*

Remember our question: what needs to happen after we take hold of eternal life in order for us to reap eternal life?

/The simple answer to our question is one word: abide.\

At this point, you may be wondering: What does Jesus mean when He says “abide in Me”? And what does it mean for Him to abide in us?

What does Jesus mean by “abide”?

/The Greek word means to remain, to dwell, to take up residence.\

It's a daily thing. All a branch can do is abide on the vine. If the branch remains on the vine, eventually it will bear fruit. The same thing is true about us.

/We are to dwell in Him. And we are to allow Him to dwell in us.\

Ok that helps, but we need more. We can understand this about the branch. But what does mean for our lives as branches in Christ, our Vine? How do we "do" this?

Let's continue. Jesus will give us the answer, and His answer is simple.

/Our lives can get very complicated. \ We can become entangled in the things of the world. We can fall into the trap of sowing to our flesh. We can fall victim to lies and deceit. We can be consumed by pain or guilt or fear.

/We need to come back to the simplicity of devotion to Christ, again and again.\

We need our hearts and minds to be purified, renewed, refreshed.

/We need simple answers. Clear instructions.\

So let's listen to more from Jesus.

*John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*

Here are the answers - and they are simple answers. The kind of answers we can easily keep at the ready on the tassels of our heart.

/First, how do we let Jesus abide in us?\

It all has to do with His words!

/We let His words abide in us.\

Paul put it like this in the book of Colossians chapter 3:

*Col 3:16*

*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

This is what Jesus was saying when He said, “let Me abide in you”.

/Let My word dwell richly in your heart.\

This is a day by day, season by season, year by year thing. This is about our growing on the vine, maturing on the vine, bearing fruit finally.

It starts with letting His word dwell richly in our hearts.

/His word is life itself!\ Jesus is life. He has the words of eternal life. The words that He speaks are spirit and they ARE life.

*John 6:63*

*63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

/When His words pour through us, life pours through us: eternal life.\

Abide in Me, and I in you.

So we let Him abide in us by continuing to let His word dwell deeply within us.

/What does He mean when He says “abide in Me”?\

*John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*

What does He mean by abiding in Him?

/Keep on abiding in His love.\

As the Father has – LOVED – loved Me, I have also LOVED you.



And oh how He loved His disciples. Oh how He loves us. He loved us first.  
He is the Vine of love.

So abiding in His love first involves drinking in His love for us.

/We are the branches. We love because He first loved us.\

This is a day in and day out thing.

But of course the love Christ has for us goes way beyond this.

/ He loved us so much that He died for us.\

We were under the wrath of His Father, and He bore our sins in His body, and that meant He bore the wrath of God for sin for those awful three hours on the cross.

That's how much He loved us.

/And He asks us to love one another as He has loved us. \

He laid down His life for us. We are to lay down our lives for the brethren.

/His love flows through us when we love one another.\

It pours through us when we lay down our lives for one another. It slows to a trickle, however, when we close our hearts to one another.

*1 John 3:14-18*

*14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

/So we are to let the word of Christ dwell richly in our hearts. And we are to abide in Christ's love.\

And Jesus gives us more guidance about how we are to abide in His love.

*John 15:10 "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 so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

/We are to keep His commandments. That's how we abide in His love. \  
We take in His love for us, and we pass His love on by keeping His commandments.

If you wish to reap eternal life, keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

*John 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends if you do what I command you.*

And there it is: he appointed us so we would go and bear fruit, and that our fruit would remain.

/What is God's will for us in between the planting of eternal life and the reaping of eternal life?\

/He wants us to abide in the love of Christ by keeping His commandments, and let the word of Christ dwell deeply in us.\

And there you have it in its utter simplicity.

Paul asked for this in his soaring prayer for the church that ends Ephesians 3:

*Eph 3:14-19*

*14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*

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Here is what living in eternal life looks like:

*Col 1:9-12*

*9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual*

*wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

*11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.*

I want to end this study with a passage I think will inspire you to serve one another without getting weary:

*Eph 3:14-21*

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*

*20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

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Next up: John 17:6-19

In Christ was life, and the life was the Light of men.

That they may know You,

Knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. This IS eternal life.

TO know Him is to be living this new, eternal life.

*Col 1:9-12*

*9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might,*



*for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.*

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And yet it is extremely practical.

In fact, Jesus describes several of its characteristics in His prayer in chapter 17.

*John 17:13*

*13 "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.*

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One characteristic of eternal life is complete joy.

*John 17:19*

*19 "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.*

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Another characteristic of eternal life is pure truth.

*John 17:20-21*

*"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

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Perfect unity is a quality of eternal life.

*John 17:22-26*

*22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*

The love of God is another aspect of eternal life.

Seeing Christ in His glory is the ultimate expression of eternal life.

*24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

*25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*

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To know Him fully is the same thing as being glorified with Him.

He desires us to be with Him where He is so that we might see His glory.

*Col 3:1-4*

*3 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is*

*hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

That is our destiny. That is our future.

So what?

Eternal life is like a secret garden. We possess it, but that is not the same as living in it.

For far too many Christians, eternal life remains a secret. They don't even know that they have it.

Consider the alternative to eternal life.

What life do people live who cannot live this eternal life because they do not know the one true God, since they have no relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ?

An alienated life.

A meaningless existence.

A life of slavery.

A life of fear.

A life of corruption.