

## **How to Christian: Bear Much Fruit The 6 Marks of the Disciple John 15:1-8 Week of April 2**

We have been gathering together for a few weeks now to study the 6 marks of a disciple that Jesus said should identify his followers. The identifiable marks of a Christian are: a Christian follows Jesus; denies themselves; holds to Jesus' teachings; loves others, bears fruit in keeping with who they are in Christ, and makes disciples. These are the indelible marks that reflect Christ to a watching world.

And that is what we are supposed to do as Christians, to reflect Christ. A mirror can only reflect what is placed before it. It cannot reinterpret what we want others to see, a mirror can only give a snapshot of what is in front of it at any given time.

One of my kids, when they were little, woke up on their birthday and went to the bathroom and looked in the mirror and they were shocked when it didn't look like they had turned 4. They had expected an overnight change from a three year old to a four year old but from what they could see there was no discernable difference. But put that teenager in front of a mirror today and there would be a significantly different reflection than the one given on that 4 year old's birthday.

The same is true as we grow and mature with Jesus. As we choose to remain with Jesus in our minutes and hours which turn into days and months and years, our reflection will change to look more like Jesus and those marks that we leave behind will reflect who Jesus is to others around us.

And that is why what we are doing together today is so important as we grow together in Christ. We do not have enough power, strength, will, grace or love within ourselves to accomplish this maturity. But the Spirit does and when we invite Him and allow Him to do the work, He changes us on the inside and reorders our desires to align with God's desires.

*As you enter with me into prayer now, take a moment to settle your mind. Put aside your concerns and what needs to get done today, or what didn't get done today. Take a slow, deep breath. Center yourself in His Peace. He is the Alpha and Omega. The Beginning and End. You are found in Him.*

*Be Still.*

### **Pause and Pray.**

*Jesus, thank you for this time we have together. I am inviting you in to do the work you desire to see inside of me. Help me to put aside my own agenda and see what you want me to become more aware of. Quiet the competing voices so I can hear what you want to say to me. Give me your eyes and ears as I focus on your Word. Amen.*

Our reading today is from John 15:1-8.

*"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. <sup>3</sup> You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.*

*<sup>5</sup> "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. <sup>7</sup> But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! <sup>8</sup> When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.*

#### **REFLECT.**

I'm not much of a gardener really. I dabble in gardening but would rather spend my time doing something else. But, even I, as a novice gardener know that an apple branch cannot grow off of a grape vine. Only grape branches can grow from a grape vine. Makes sense, doesn't it? I cannot plant and water and nurture a peony bush and expect roses to bloom.

The same is true for us here as Jesus is telling us – you, as a follower of mine, are an extension of me. Your hands should look like my hands. Your feet should look like my feet. Your mouth should speak like my mouth. And your heart should express itself like my heart. If you are like me, already you have thought of ways your hands, feet, mouth and/or heart have not looked like Jesus. Let us take a moment to confess and seek forgiveness...

#### **PAUSE AND PRAY**

*Jesus, hear our confessions and forgive us for not staying connected with you as we should. Give us the desire and courage to stay connected with you, our vine. Amen.*

So how do we stay connected? By remaining. Jesus uses this verb remain 7 times in this passage alone. He said, and I'm paraphrasing here "I remain in the Father, the Father remains in me – you need to remain in me and I will remain in you," To put it back in plant language - Remaining allows Jesus to give us the water we need to survive. Remaining allows Jesus to send us the nutrients we need to care for the deepest parts of our souls. Remaining allows Jesus to share his DNA with us so we look more and more like him on the inside and on the outside.

So let us focus on our remaining in Jesus. To remain is simply to stay. We are off to a great start already because that is what you and I are doing together now – we are remaining. Now how can we stay the rest of the day. Let's imagine together...

What would it look like if you let Him walk beside you everywhere you go today and tomorrow?

### **PAUSE & PRAY**

*Lord, help me remember to invite you into each of my steps today and tomorrow. I want to go where you want to take me. Give me the strength to take the difficult steps and the courage to go a different direction when you are calling me to do so.*

What would it look like if you focused your thoughts or meditated on His Word all day long? It could just be a verse or a phrase from Scripture like Jesus is the vine and I am one of His branches.

### **PAUSE & PRAY**

*Jesus, you are the vine and I am a branch. That means you are in control and I am not. You are the vine and I am a branch. You will take care of everything I need, you will care for me and provide for me, I do not have to be afraid. You are the vine and I am a branch. You are doing the work of reshaping me from the inside out. You are the vine and I am a branch.*

What would it look like if you trusted or even expected Jesus to carry you throughout your day?

### **PAUSE & PRAY**

*Lord, I want to trust you more. I want to expect your goodness, kindness, grace and love are always surrounding me. You are always remaining in and around me, it is I who doesn't always remain in you. Forgive me and help me in my unbelief. Give me eyes to see how you are pouring out your grace around me all of the time and help me to be grateful. Give me the confidence of knowing your Spirit is always with me, guiding me and helping me become more like you.*

### **YIELD**

We return to John 15:1-8.

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*anything you want, and it will be granted! <sup>8</sup> When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.*

**CLOSE IN PRAYER**

*Lord, we long to bring you great glory. Give us the strength to do what you have asked of us, to remain, to stay. Help us to leave all of the watering, nurturing and transforming with you and give us the courage to trust that you long for us to bud and flower and produce more fruit than even we can imagine. You are so good Father, good to us and good to your church. Thank you Jesus that you are the vine and I am a branch. You, Jesus, are the vine and I am a branch. Amen.*