

The Good Disciple
The Good Disciple Abides in Christ
John 15:1-11

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HDBC

76-year-old **Bill Baker** married **Edna Harvey**. She happened to be his granddaughter's husband's mother. That's where the confusion began, according to Baker's granddaughter, Lynn. Ray Steven's wrote *I'm My Own Grandpa*. But this is real!

My mother-in-law is now my step-grandmother. My grandfather is now my stepfather-in-law. My mom is my sister-in-law and my brother is my nephew. But even crazier is that I'm now married to my uncle and my own children are my cousins.

And you think some of the relationships you have are confusing. Relationships can indeed be complicated, but they are essential parts of the human experience. We come into the world with certain relationships that are automatic. We don't choose them. Mom and dad. Brothers and sisters. Aunts and uncles.

Others we choose. Romantic relationships, friendships, working relationships. Relationships are a critical part of our lives. How we manage them will affect how successful we are in life, our level of happiness, and our sense of contentment.

Relationships are particularly important when it comes to our effectiveness as disciples of Christ. Starting a new three-part series this morning called **The Good Disciple**. The good disciple is a follower of Christ who understands the importance of three critical relationships.

Relationship to Christ. Relationship to other disciples. Relationship to the world.

Jesus spoke of those three relationships while teaching his disciples just before his arrest and crucifixion. **It is the night before Calvary**. Prelude to the most important event in human history. In a matter of hours Jesus will be on a cross with the sins of the world compacted into his body paying the penalty for our sins.

And now, with only hours left, he spends time with his disciples. During these last moments Jesus speaks with his friends about their changing relationship with Him. In doing so, He once more taps into their understanding of the world around them and uses an **illustration from nature** to reveal divine truth.

Starts with **relationship with Christ. John 15:1-11**. Read text.

1. **The Players (1-2)** 3 key players to note.

A. **The True Vine**

Vine had been symbol for Israel for generations. They understood the picture. **Vine is the base** of the plant. Like the trunk of the tree. It reaches into the earth carrying life-giving sap to the branches. Israel was to be that for the world, but failed. **Jesus would not**. He would bring life to the world. **He is the true vine**.

B. **The Vinedresser**

God, the Father. Oversees the entire operation. Watchful eye. Might call him the farmer. Main thing he is looking for is healthy fruit.

C. **The Branches**

Branches attached to the vine. Through that attachment they receive life. Tender, fragile, totally dependent. Cut off branch and it will die, but vine will live. Life is in the vine. **Believers**.

So, God is the farmer. Jesus is the vine which is like the trunk of the tree. We are the branches. We are attached to the vine (Jesus) and the farmer (God) is looking at us to see what kind of fruit we are bearing.

2. **The Purpose** 5 results are mentioned by Jesus.

A. **Bear Fruit (2-6)**

Not talking about apples, oranges. Something much more important.

New Testament has much to say about fruit. Fruit is reflection of the plant. Good fruit reflects positively on the plant. Bad, the opposite.

Listen to some other verses.

Romans 7:4 - Therefore my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might **bear fruit** for God.

Col. 1:10 . . .so that you may 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. What is the fruit? 2 examples.

1) Life of Christ in me (Romans 8:29)

His life is reproduced in me. That's what happens in plant. **Life of the plant is reproduced in the fruit.** When you were saved, the Holy Spirit came to live in you. He began a process of changing you, maturing you. His goal is to make you look and act and be more and more like Jesus. When people you it will point them to Jesus.

Galatians 5:22-23 offers a clear picture of this.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

2) Making disciples of others (John 4:35)

the fields, that they are white for harvest.

B. Pray Effectively (7)

The effectiveness of our praying will be greatly dependent upon our relationship with Christ. That just makes sense. You are more effective in getting what you need from someone you have an intimate relationship with than with a stranger.

C. Glorify God (8)

My chief purpose in life is not to be happy. Not to live a fulfilled life. It is to honor and glorify the one who made me. This sounds strange and prideful to unbelievers. But it is a precious reminder that we did not create ourselves. We are the product of a master designer who created us for his glory and pleasure.

D. Prove our Discipleship (8)

This makes sense. Branch of a grape vine proves it is a grape branch by bearing grapes. The fruit proves the nature of the branch. Same is true of discipleship. If we produce godly fruit it will prove we are godly.

E. Produce Joy (11)

Our joy comes from a right relationship with Christ.

3. The Plan Each player has a responsibility in the plan

A. Responsibility of the Branch – Us 2 things

1) Abide

Remain, sojourn, tarry. In this picture it refers to the branch staying in close, intimate contact with the vine.

Jesus used other illustrations to describe his relationship to his disciples, but none so intimate as this one. He referred to himself as the **shepherd and us as his sheep**. True that sheep are dependent on shepherd. It is close, but sheep and shepherds are different.

The relationship between the vine and the branches is much closer. Share same nature. Hard to tell where one ends and the other begins. The branch is dependent on the vine for it's very life. A branch without the vine can do only one thing and that is die.

Constantly being aware of His presence. Dependence on Him.

2) Obey (8)

Jesus said we abide in his love **by obeying Him**. Am I doing His will? Obeying His word? This will determine if I am abiding in Him. Not some mystical thing. Get up on morning and acknowledge His presence and purpose to listen to His voice

General Montgomery, hero in North African military campaign once said concerning obedience, *Orders no longer form the basis for discussion, but action.*

B. Responsibility of the Vine - Jesus

Vine produces fruit. Branch can only bear it. Jesus is the only one who can produce fruit in my life. My job is to abide and obey!

C. Responsibility of the Vinedresser - God

He has the responsibility for dealing with the branches. Doesn't deal with them all in the same way. One thing determines it. FRUIT!!

1) Branches that Bear Fruit (2)

He prunes them. Opposite of what I would have written. I would prune the ones that bear no fruit. Talking about cutting them back. Cutting off of those things that hinder productivity. When you begin to bear fruit for God, you can expect some pruning. It hurts.

Keep in mind, "where He prunes now, He will produce fruit later."

2) Branches that Bear No Fruit (2,6)

They are not allowed to remain in the vineyard. They are taken out and thrown away. Why does he do it? Not bearing fruit. Why not bearing fruit? Not abiding in vine. I shudder at the thought that God might one day set me on a shelf to wither and die due to my lack of faithfulness in abiding in Christ. I would hate to face Him that way.

The relationship that you have with Christ is the most important relationship in your life. None can compare with this one. Before any other, you should make sure that it is good.

There is a story of a famous violinist who announced that he would give a concert using a very expensive violin. He came onto the stage and mesmerized the audience with the music. He stood up, and flung the violin to the floor, crushing it. He then walked off the stage. The audience was stunned.

The announcer came onto the stage and explained that the violin which was destroyed was a \$20 violin. The performer would now return and play on the advertised violin. None in the audience could tell the difference. **It is not the violin**, but the violinist which makes the difference. Most of us are \$20 violins. But in the hands of the master, we can be useful in ways unimaginable.