

Lesson 7

Chapter 5 - *The Big "If"*

Note: I should specify before we begin this lesson that the concepts given herein apply to prayer as it is addressed in this passage. Because prayer is like a many faceted diamond, there are many Scriptures addressing other aspects from different perspectives. I would be remiss to infer that Scripture memorization is a prerequisite for the Lord's responding to our prayers. However, from this passage and from personal testimonies of many who memorize Scripture in its full context it is evident that our prayer life is significantly enhanced as we permit God's Word to permeate our thinking and our life, as we memorize His very Words and pray them back to Him.

Expounding on this passage Andrew Murray stated it this way: *"We must have (God's) words in us, taken up into our will and life, reproduced in our disposition and conduct. . . It is as the words of Christ enter our very heart, become our life and influence it, that our words will enter His heart and influence Him."* (from *With Christ in the School of Prayer*)

Now read Chapter 5 and let's examine the wonderfully exciting promise given to us in John 15.

1. a) Read John 15:1-8. What do you see as the theme of this passage?

Theme: Fruit-bearing Vines or maybe Fruit-bearing Branches. How Fruit is Borne! Or something similar. Almost any theme that has the word or idea of *fruit* and vines or branches in it would apply.

b) What words or derivatives thereof are repeated many times in these 8 verses?

The emphasis of the passage is on *fruit* in that is repeated 6 or 7 times (in most translations); *branch or branches* is used 5 or 6 times.

2. The word translated "remain" in the NIV and "live" in the Phillips Translation is the Greek word *meno*. What other translations can be applied to this word as mentioned in paragraph 5 on page 57 of *The Sword*? Read John 15:1-8 through several times applying a different synonym each time for a broader grasp.

to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy) to abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand . . .

3. What is your understanding of the phrase to "remain" or "live" in Jesus? Why do you think this would be required in order to claim the promise of verse 7?

4 a) In verses 1-6, Jesus focuses on the concept of our "remaining in Him". What is the condition in verse 7 that is added before He gives a very profound and wonderful promise to His disciples?

If you remain in me and my words remain in you . . .

b) Why do you think this condition would be important?

As noted above, Andrew Murray stated it this way: *"We must have (God's) words in us, taken up into our will and life, reproduced in our disposition and conduct. . . It is as the words of Christ enter our very heart, become our life and influence it, that our words will enter His heart and influence Him."* (from *With Christ in the School of Prayer*)

Not only are we to remain in Jesus, in order to claim the promise, His Words must remain in us. As life-giving sap flowing through its branches sustains the vine, God's Word *remaining* and *living* in a heart and mind of a believer sustains his soul.

Our Lord Jesus here makes explicit reference to specific, literal text. "My words", says Jesus. If "My Words remain in you...." It might be easy for Christians today to assume that this can be accomplished by just "reading" the Bible. But could this second stipulation be met by mere reading?

*Of course it can't be denied that reading the Word is an essential part of the Christian life. But could it be said that the actual words of Scripture remain **in** one's heart and mind as a permanent resource with merely a reading or even a study of the Word? Some folk with photographic memories grasp precise wording readily, but most of us retain very little of literal text from just reading. Consequently, what we retain may be mostly our own impressions of what we think Scripture is saying or someone else's interpretation of it. Jesus doesn't refer to **our interpretation** of His Word, or **our opinion** about what we've read. The stipulation made by Him is well defined, leaving no leeway for the insertion of our own ideas. According to this verse, in order for us to comply with the terms of this contract, we must have a literal grasp of truth.*

*In other chapters we have discussed the difference between "reading" the Word and "memorizing" it. Only by memorization can the "words" of Scripture in context be transferred from the page of the "Book" into our hearts, minds and souls where it can remain **in** us. Not "with" us as we might carry our Bible "with" us, but **in** us, a viable part of our life. Only by memorizing verbatim can we fulfill this second condition of the contract. (Page 59, Par 5 through Page 60, Par 2)*

In order to claim this specific promise, it is required not only that we live in Jesus but that Jesus' **words** live in us. This must have been stipulated to stress the importance of praying in God's perfect will. In order to do this we must know what His will is for us. If we do not know the specific words of Scripture we would find ourselves praying *our* own ideas or opinion about what the Scriptures say or someone else's conception, interpretation or opinion, not **His words**.

The condition of the promise is that Jesus' pure, genuine, unadulterated, undiluted, unpadding words, as He has given them to us, live in us.

It is interesting that this passage in John 15 is focused on "remaining in Jesus" and "bearing fruit". Verse 5 is the first verse to mention "much" fruit. "Much fruit" is again emphasized in verse 7 after the added condition and promise. Perhaps the added condition, "Jesus' words living in us," is the key to the added assurance of bearing "much" fruit for the Father's glory versus just bearing "fruit".

5. "Ask for anything you want and I'll give it to you!" If you were to give this promise to your children, what conditions would you put on it?

6. Explain the relationship that exists between the *written* Word and Jesus, the *living* Word (John 1:1).

The *written* Word is God breathed (II Timothy 3:16). Jesus, the *living* Word is God breathing.

The *written* Word is God's truth introduced into our soul and spirit through hearing/reading/memorizing words. Jesus, the *living* Word is God's words revealed to us in a living, visible form.

The *written* Word foretold the *living* Word. The *written* word portrays the *living* Word. The *living* Word is the *written* Word personified.

The *written* Word communicates God's truth and love to us as He spoke through godly men. Jesus is that incarnate Truth. He is the personification of God's truth and love in a walking, talking version.

The *written* Word tells us how to live. Jesus, the *living* Word not only served as an example, He gives us the desire and new life to live as the *written* Word commands. And he even *lives* in us to promote this end.

(In the vernacular of our day we might say, the *written* Word is the audio; Jesus is the video in living color.)

7. According to John 15:8 what is the ultimate purpose of our prayers?

Verse 8: *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

The purpose of Jesus giving us this marvelous promise is that we, as God's children might *bear much fruit* for the Father's glory. Not just *fruit*, ***much*** fruit.

The whole purpose of our life and prayers is that the Father be glorified and that we bear (much) "***fruit***" for His glory. This also being evidence that we are a disciple of Christ.

We were created for the Lord's pleasure. How exactly do we give Him pleasure? Jesus said: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit...." The branch doesn't work to create fruit—fruit is an automatic product of the branch's relationship with the vine. As the vine provides the nourishment—the branch bears fruit. All the branch does is to "stay put". The vine does the rest. And the Father is glorified.

The promise is not given that we might fulfill *selfish desires; not to accommodate human reasoning, but that (we) in your own little, personal world may bear much fruit for the Father's glory.*

You may wish to display a picture or drawing of a fruit laden grape vine and lead the class into further discussion into the allegory that is given.

Where is the fruit in relation to the vine?

How is fruit produced?

By its own efforts?

What does the branch do?

What is the branch's relationship to the vine?

In the allegory that Jesus gives, who is the vine and who are the branches?

8. List the *fruit* mentioned in the Scriptures given below. (Include other Scripture passages with which you are familiar that might shed additional light.)

Romans 6:22 - *fruit of being made righteous, while at the end of the road there is life for evermore.*

Galatians 5:22 - *The Spirit... produces fruits such as these: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, tolerance and self-control...*

Ephesians 5:8-9 - *the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth*

Hebrews 12:11 - *chastening . . . quietly produce(s) the fruit of real goodness in the characters of those who have accepted it in the right spirit.*

9. In our goal-driven culture where production, accumulation of wealth, profit and image are everything, what is the good news of John 15:7, 8? What is God's measure of success in our lives?

The beautiful message that is spoken forth in these verses is that fruit for the Father's glory is not borne by struggling, by accomplishment or by success according to man's standards. The branch merely rests, remains, abides, lives in Jesus, the vine, the Living Word. Then as we memorize His *written* words they remain in our life and in our mind to guide our thinking and our prayers. And as His living Word flows through our being, as nourishing sap flows through the vine to the branches, fruit for the Father's glory is the natural result.

Thus, as we remain in Him and His words abide in us to meditate on and enrich our daily life and our prayer life, God's fruit is produced in our life. This apparently is His measure of success.

Optional Review:

For an optional class review you may list on a display board all the specifics you can find in verses 1-6 and 9-11. (I got 15) (Verses 7-8 have been already dealt with rather thoroughly.)

1. Jesus is the true vine; God the Father is the gardener.
2. The Father cuts off every branch that bears no fruit.
3. He prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it will be even more fruitful.
4. Jesus' disciples were clean because of the word He had spoken to them.
5. We are commanded to remain in Jesus and He will remain in us.
6. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.
7. We cannot bear fruit unless we remain in Jesus.
8. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches.
9. If a man remains in Jesus, and He in him, he will bear much fruit.
10. Apart from Jesus we can do nothing.
11. If anyone does not remain in Jesus he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers.
12. Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. (Unproductive and useless.)
13. As the Father loved Jesus, Jesus loves us.
14. If we obey Jesus' commands, we will remain in His love, just as He obeyed His Father's commands and remains in His love
15. Jesus has told us this so that His joy may be in us and our joy may be complete