

ESF, Lord's day service message
1/26/2025

How To Live a Fruitful Life (Part II)

Remaining in the Vine

John 15:4-10

⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples ⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Herbert Jackson was a new missionary and was assigned a car. The car wouldn't start without a push. He always needed some people to push the car whenever he had to start the car. He went to the school near his home. He got permission to take some children out of class and had them push start his car. Two years later, he got sick. He had to leave the mission station. A new missionary came to that station. When Jackson transferred the car to the new missionary, he explained to the new missionary how to make the car started. However, while he was explaining, the new missionary lifted the hood and looked at the motor, then said, "Why, Herbert, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable." He reattached the cable, entered the car, turned the ignition, and the engine instantly started! For two years missionary Jackson struggled with starting the car because he didn't know that the cable was not connected. The power had been there all the time. The problem was a

loose connection between the ignition and the power source.

A key to making our lives fruitful is to connect our lives to Jesus. In these 7 verses, Jesus uses the phrase “remain in me or remain in my love” 9 times. If you want to live a fruitful life, you must remain in Jesus. Because Jesus is the source of life. Then what does it mean to remain in Jesus and how can we remain in Jesus?

Keep depending on the source of life in Jesus

Branches in a vine do not have any power or energy to sustain their lives by themselves. They must remain in the main trunk of a vine to sustain their lives, to grow and to produce fruit. So, a gardener in a vineyard makes sure that all branches remain connected to a vine trunk.

We do not have the source of life in ourselves. We cannot bear any fruit by our own effort. Jesus says, “*apart from me you can do nothing.*” To live a productive life, we have to depend upon the God’s life source which is in Christ Jesus.

John 1:3-4 says, “*Through him (Christ) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him (Christ) was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.*”

Depending on Christ as the source of life should be constantly done day by day. Total dependency on Christ should be our daily life pattern and habit. As branches must constantly depend on the vine trunk to receive their source of life, we must constantly depend on Christ who is the source of our lives.

To depend on Jesus, we must acknowledge that we have no power to produce fruit by our own effort. We must acknowledge that we have no power to overcome the devil’s temptation and attack. It is acknowledging that we need His power, His provision, His wisdom and His protection moment by moment and we should completely depend on

Christ by constant prayer.

When God wants to make our lives fruitful, He disciplines us to constantly depend on Christ. God trains His children to depend on Him day by day.

To make the Israelites live a fruitful life, God trained them to completely depend on Him in the desert. In the desert where there was nothing but sand and wind, God trained them to depend on Him for their daily needs-food, clothing, shoes, safety, and guidance. God trained them to depend on Him every day for 40 years. When total dependency on God became their pattern of life, God led them to the land of promise and blessed their lives.

That was what the Lord did when He trained Elijah to bear lots of fruit. The Lord told him to go to a remote place and to indefinitely stay there. In that place there was nothing Elijah could do to supply his daily needs. He had to totally depend on God's provision every day. After Elijah passed the training, God used him in a mighty way.

When Lincoln was president a visitor stayed at the White House for three weeks as his guest. One night, soon after the Battle of Bull Run, this visitor could not sleep.

Suddenly he heard a low voice proceeding from the room where the president slept. He got up and walked toward the door, which was partly open. Then he saw the president kneeling before an open Bible.

The light was turned low, and the president's back was to the door; he did not know that he was being overheard. In piteous and solemn tones the president was praying: "*Thou God that heard Solomon in the night when he prayed and cried for wisdom, hear me!*

I cannot lead this people. I cannot guide the affairs of this nation without Thy help. I am poor and weak...O God, Thou didst hear Solomon when he cried for wisdom--hear me and save this nation."

Lincoln acknowledged before God that he did not have any resource, wisdom or power to lead the nation in the crisis of the civil war. He sought God's wisdom and guidance by completely depending on Him by prayer. And God helped him lead the nation through its crisis.

If God loves you as His child and wants to make your life fruitful, He will discipline you to depend on Him daily. He will not give you a lot of things at once but will provide you with just what you need day by day. When you are ready to completely depend on Him, He will make your life fruitful.

Keep having a personal connection with Jesus

To remain in Jesus means to have a personal connection with Jesus. It means to connect ourselves not to Jesus' miracles, not to His visible blessings but to Himself. Our maturity and strength depend on how well we have a personal connection with Jesus. To become more mature and stronger, knowing Jesus and having Jesus Himself should be everything in our lives.

In Philippians 3:8 Paul says, "*...I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.*"

In the book of John chapter 6, many people followed Jesus when He performed the miracles of the loaves of bread or the healing of the sick. But when Jesus stopped performing miracles for them and encouraged them to have a personal connection with Him, most of them left Him. They were following Jesus not to seek Jesus, but for the things they could get from Jesus.

After most of those people left Jesus, He asked His disciples: *You do not want to leave too, do you?* Then Peter answered: *Lord, to whom shall we*

go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God. They were following Jesus not because they wanted to get something from Him but because they believed Jesus as the source of their eternal life. They were following Jesus because of their personal connection with Him.

Such a personal connection with Jesus strengthened their faith.

Having a personal connection with Jesus is obeying His word: *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. (verses 9-10).*

The Lord will listen to your prayers and make your life fruitful through your prayers if you maintain a personal connection with Jesus by continually obeying Jesus’s word: *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you (verse 7).*

The key to obeying His word is to love God and to love our neighbors. Jesus says, *“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)*

For over 40 years East Berlin was controlled by the communists. West Berlin was free. One day some people who lived in East Berlin took a truck-load of garbage and dumped it on the West Berlin side. The people of West Berlin could have retaliated by doing the same thing. But instead, they took a truckload of canned goods, bread, and milk and neatly stacked it on the East Berlin side. On top of this stack of food they placed the sign: “Each gives what he has.” Such a loving act broke

the hardened heart of the communists which could not be broken by anything else.

If we love God more than anything else, and love our neighbors, including our enemies, we will remain in Jesus. Jesus will reveal the power of His love through us. This love is more powerful than hatred. This love is more powerful than the power of death. This love combined with prayer is more powerful than any weapon. It will demolish the stronghold of the devil. This power of love will bear fruit. It will break the hardened heart of our enemies. It will bear fruit of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Keep trusting in Jesus' grace

To remain in Jesus is to keep trusting in His grace in times of trials.

When there is no wind or a lite wind against a vine, you do not know which branches are dead or alive, and which branches are detached from the vine or attached to the vine. But when there is a strong wind, you can clearly distinguish one from another. Also tree branches become stronger by hard wind blowing.

Jesus uses trials and hardships like a strong wind to test our faith and to make us stronger and more productive. James 1:2-4 says, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

Once Paul was suffering severely from a thorn in his flesh. He earnestly prayed to the Lord to take the thorn away from him. But the Lord said to Paul, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul’s faith became stronger by trusting in the Lord’s sufficient grace and was able to overcome the trial.

When we face any kind of trial, we have to take the trial as an opportunity to pray and to trust in the Lord's sufficient grace.

If we trust in the Lord's sufficient grace in trials and hardships, He will mold us to be stronger and more mature so that we can produce good fruit, fruit which we would have never been able to produce by ourselves.

In 1989 an earthquake flattened Armenia, killing 30,000 people in less than 4 minutes. After the earthquake stopped, a father ran to the elementary school where his son attended. The building was little more than a pile of rubble, but he remembered what he had promised his son, "No matter what happens, I'll always be there for you." And driven by that promise he found the area closest to his son's room and began pulling rocks away. Other parents came and sobbingly said, "It's too late. They're all dead." But the father refused to give up. For 8 hours, 16 hours, 36 hours he dug. His hands were raw, and his energy gone, but he refused to quit. And finally, as he pulled back a large boulder, he heard his son's cry, "Dad, it's me." The boy was with a small group of children who were alive, trapped beneath the rubble. He had told the others that his dad was going to save him because he had promised to always to be there and that when he saved him, he would save them too (Max Lucado, *WHEN CHRIST COMES*, Nashville; Word, 1999, PP. 21-22).

We must endure in all circumstances with faith that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us in all circumstances, and that He will surely deliver us.

To remain in Him, we do not need to be perfect or sinless. Jesus is always merciful. Even if we sin, Jesus always provides us a way to be forgiven and gives us a second chance.

Peter was a very unstable man. He made serious mistakes while he was following Jesus. But he still was able to live a very fruitful life. Later, in Jerusalem, thousands of unbelievers came to the salvation of Christ through his preaching. Could he do that because he was a good or noble person? No! He was able to do it only by Christ's grace and mercy. Although he made lots of mistakes, even sinned, the Lord graciously forgave him and encouraged him to trust in His grace. And Jesus gave him the power to produce lots of fruit. The secret of his fruitful life was remaining in Christ's grace. With that experience, Peter encourages all of us to keep trusting in the mercy of the Lord: "*Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy*" (1 Peter 2:10).

When you are downed and depressed by your sins or mistakes, don't give up. Trust in His grace, His forgiveness, and His unconditional love. And He will make your life fruitful again.