

WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 27

THE ABIDING LIFE

“I can do all things through Him [Christ] who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). Then Jesus Himself says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

[Question 13] “I can do **all** things through **Him/Christ** who **strengthens** me.” Jesus Himself said, “...apart from Me you can do **nothing**.”

We talked earlier in our study about the concept of abiding in Christ. *[Question 14]* What that means is that we live in conscious dependence upon **Him**. It is in **His** life, **His** power, **His** wisdom, **His** resources, **His** strength and **His** ability that we can live according to **His** will.

It’s all about Him! It’s not about us. It’s about our dependence upon Him. It is interesting that we celebrate Independence Day. As Christians, however we are NOT independent, are we? We are dependent completely on the Lord Jesus. What a revolutionary concept!

In John 15:5, which we just read, *[Question 15]*, Jesus referred to Himself as the **vine** and to us Christians as the **branches**. These are analogies that the people in Jesus’s day would have clearly understood.

Jesus said, “Every branch in Me [Jesus] that does not bear fruit He [God the Father] takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2).

The concept of this total dependence upon Him as the source of life is what we referred to earlier as “abiding in Christ.” What

happens if you cut a branch off a tree and then come back a few days later. What does that branch look like? Dead! It is all withered up and dried. The branch cannot survive apart from the tree. The branches of a tree or a vine are dependent on their main lifeline.

In the same way, if we are going to accomplish anything for God's kingdom we must stay connected to our lifeline, Jesus - be firmly rooted in Him and in His Word.

In the vine and branch motif of John Chapter 15 there is another concept that you gardeners know something about...

[Question 16] In order that we may be more productive Christians, what does Jesus say that He does something to us to help us to bear more fruit. From the passage we just read, what does He do? **He prunes us**. He has to do something to us. This "pruning" process could come in the form of discipline for our disobedience. We covered this matter earlier in our study in Hebrews Chapter 12. But pruning could also take on the form of trials and testing in general. Paul discusses this in Romans Chapter 5. The pruning process is not pleasant. But it must be done for our own good, to help us to grow and be more productive Christians.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:7-11).

[Question 17] Based on v 8 how can we glorify God the Father? We **bear** much fruit. He repeats this later in v 16. Based on v 9 Christ commands us to do what? To **abide** (continue) in His

love. Based on v 10 how are we to continue in Christ's love? We **obey** God. Based on V 11 why did Jesus teach us these things? That we might **possess** Christ's joy. He wants us to have joy. Jesus doesn't want us to be sad and unproductive Christians. He wants us to have victory.

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

[Question 18] How great should the love of Christ in us be for our friends? We should **love them enough to die for them**. What did Christ do for us who are His friends? He died for us. He took our place on the cross. That is amazing love, isn't it?

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you" (John 15:16).

[Question 19] How is it that I became a Christian? I find this as a great source of comfort... **Jesus chose me**. I am so thankful that He did. We were adopted in God's family by HIS choice. That's why it is called "grace." I didn't deserve it. You didn't either. And yet, He saved us!

Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). So then, how can we do what Christ wants us to do? It gets back to the picture of the vine and branches - by staying connected to Jesus.

Every day we have the opportunity to receive fresh new grace from Heaven through fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not obtained simply by a quick prayer before meals or by reading a few verses from the Bible. We must spend quality time with

Him. We must deliberately, intentionally come into His presence; spend time with Him in worship and praise, expressing our weaknesses, needs, concerns, confessing our sin and waiting patiently upon God.

It's a lifelong daily process. This, my dear friends, is a spiritual discipline that we must learn to do. Each of you will have your own way of doing that - your own method of Bible study and prayer time. Whatever is comfortable and convenient for you. But it must be a regular part of your life.

Spend quality time with Him reading some verses and spend time with Him in prayer. Here is my advice: READ His word and then pray. Yes, you can pray before you read asking the Spirit to teach you. But pray after you read as you reflect back on what He has shown you.