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Melak Tsegaw

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Abundant and Abiding Fruit Bearing

Melak Alemayehu

Melak Alemayehu is currently pursuing his PhD in biblical studies, with an emphasis in Old Testament, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines

In His upper-room discourse (John 15), Jesus uses the image of a vine to teach the secrets of fruit bearing. He talks about the possibility of bearing abundant (v. 5) and abiding fruit (v. 16), in which the former pinpoints the quantity of fruit and the latter its quality.

In this discourse, what is Jesus saying to us about bearing abundant and abiding fruit, and why is it important?

Essential, but not optional

Fruit bearing has to do primarily with fulfilling the mission of Christ through carrying out His work of redemption in our words and deeds. Bruce Milne cautions us on “the danger of detaching” this fascinating imagery of a fruit-bearing Vine from its larger context and our tendency to interpret it by concentrating “solely on our inward relationship with the Lord.” However, “[i]ts real thrust is the renewal of the mission of Israel through Jesus the Messiah and the disciple community.”

Fruit bearing is essential, not optional. This can be seen throughout this passage in Jesus’ emphasis on fruit bearing (vv. 2, 4, 5, 8, 16). Furthermore, Jesus depicts the fatality of fruitlessness when He warns, “‘He [the Father] cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit’” (v. 2). As Andrew Murray succinctly puts it, “Just as entirely as Christ became the True Vine with the one object, you have been made a Branch too, with the one object of bearing fruit for the salvation of men. The Vine
and the Branch are equally under the unchangeable law of fruitbearing as the one reason of their being. Christ and the believer, the Heavenly Vine and the Branch, have equally their place in the world exclusively for one purpose, to carry God's saving love to men.\textsuperscript{3}

Hence, this work of sharing God's saving love should not be relegated to just pastors or renowned evangelists. As ministers, we need to refocus and redirect our efforts to impress our members with the importance of this truth. Though fruitlessness may not be an offense that requires being removed from the church books, it will certainly lead to losing the salvation of our souls. "The branch can maintain its connection with the living vine only on condition that it bear fruit."\textsuperscript{4}

Here is the first truth: fruit bearing is essential, not optional. Only when we all understand how crucial it is that we carry out God's purpose of reaching the lost world will we start bearing the requisite fruit.

**Focusing on the glory of God**

Glorifying God comprises the ultimate goal of fruit bearing. Jesus declares, "'This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit' " (v. 8). Here is the second vital truth: fruit bearing is not about us but about God, His mission, and His glory. It is not our invention but His mission, and its completion should bring glory to Him and Him alone. Failing to recognize this leads to disappointment. In fact, could it be because we fail to give glory to God for the results in our evangelistic efforts that our fruits are not as abundant and abiding as they should be? Do we often scrutinize our motives as we engage in the work of saving others?

Leonard Ravenhill, in his classic work *Why Revival Tarries*, identified stealing the glory that belongs to God as one of the reasons why revival tarries. "Away with all fleshly backslapping and platform flattery! Away with this exalting of 'My radio program,' 'My church,' 'My books!' Oh, the sickening parade of flesh in our pulpits: 'We are greatly privileged, etc.' Speakers (who are there really by grace alone) accept all this, nay—even expect it! The fact is that when we have listened to most of these men, we would not have known they were great if they had not been announced so!"\textsuperscript{5}

However, when we fix our eyes on the glory of God and share the spirit of Jesus, who says, "'I do not accept praise from men,' " we will put ourselves in the right position to experience a life of abundant and abiding fruit bearing (John 5:41 (http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%205.41)).

**Abiding in Jesus**

Fruit bearing is an outgrowth of abiding in Jesus. This is the third key truth from this teaching of Jesus about the Vine and the branches. The word *abide*, as it refers to our relationship with the True Vine, Jesus, is mentioned seven times in John 15:1–16 (http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2015.1%E2%80%9316).\textsuperscript{6} This affirms the fact that *abiding* is the watchword capping all the secrets for successful fruit bearing. "'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing' " (v. 5, NKJV). Thus, one may have either a life of much fruit or no fruit at all. And the distinguishing factor between the two is the abiding. So, what is this abiding? To get a clearer understanding of this crucial concept, let us investigate its foundation, enhancement, maintenance, evidence, and privilege.

*Its foundation.* The imagery of the Vine that portrays a close connection with its branch depicts the believer's relationship with Jesus. In particular, when we note how Jesus paralleled abiding in Him with abiding in His love (v. 10), we realize that divine love is the foundation and the essence of this abiding. Jesus declares, "'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you' " (v. 9). Ellen White comments on this verse: "He keeps us in connection with Him as he is in connection with the Father. What possibilities, what strength, there are in that promise! Why do we not believe it? If there are hindrances in our way, and if we meet with difficulties, let us not give up in despair, but keep fast hold of the promises."\textsuperscript{7} Moreover, He is the
Initiator of this relationship, for He says, “‘You did not choose me, but I chose you’” (v. 16). And the greatness of His love was revealed through the offer He made, laying down His life, giving it out to be possessed by His friends (vv. 13–15). This is what abiding is all about; abiding is responding to His love.

**Its enhancement.** Like other relationships, abiding in Jesus also has room for growing deeper. Jesus says, “‘[E]very branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful’” (v. 2). Notice also that God’s primary means of pruning is His Word (v. 3). As we keep on listening to His words, we will receive illumination and direction on how to avoid any distractions, even if they are for good causes. Consequently, we will deepen our abiding, which in turn causes fruit to abound. Ellen White observes, “Many misunderstand the object for which they were created. They do not realize that they were placed here to bless humanity and glorify God, rather than to enjoy and glorify self. God is constantly pruning his people, cutting off profuse, spreading branches, that they may bear fruit to his glory, and not produce leaves only.”

**Its maintenance.** “‘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’” (v. 10, NKJV). A spirit of disobedience creates discord, and ultimately destroys any relationship. Thus, though God is the Initiator and Enhancer of this abiding in Jesus, its maintenance requires a life of obedience motivated by love. Early Christians manifested this obedience and proclaimed boldly, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” ([Rom. 8:35](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%208.35)). “For Christ’s love compels us. . . . Those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” ([2 Cor. 5:14](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor.%205.14), 15 ([http://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%205.15](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%205.15))).

**Its evidence.** Abiding in Christ, which is equated with abiding in His love, manifests itself in loving one another with the same love He demonstrated. Jesus plainly states, “‘My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you’” ([John 15:12](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2015.12)). When we abide in Christ as a branch abides in the vine, He will pour out “his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” ([Rom. 5:5](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%205.5)). In defining this love, Ellen White writes, “Love is not simply an impulse, a transitory emotion, dependent upon circumstances; it is a living principle, a permanent power. The soul is fed by the streams of pure love that flow from the heart of Christ, as a wellspring that never fails.” Love is the ultimate fulfillment of all God’s commandments, including the mission He has given us. When this love is demonstrated in the lives of the believers, abundant and abiding fruit will surface and the world will know that they are the disciples of Jesus ([John 13:35](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2013.35)). Thus, “Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. . . . When we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts.”

**Its privilege.** “‘If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you’” ([John 15:7](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2015.7)). Abiding has this tremendous privilege of giving access to the heavenly storehouse and securing whatever is needed for fruit bearing. Notice that the promise is posed with a prior condition. The promise is binding only if we abide in Him. And the reason why the branch abides in the Vine is to bear fruit. Therefore, this privilege of asking and getting from heaven should be understood in the context of fulfilling the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With this clear understanding of the promise, believers should be encouraged to engage in earnest intercessory prayer, and this prayer should be done with a loving heart for perishing souls. In explaining the connection between the love that we need to have for the lost and the claiming of this promise, Murray writes, “[W]e cannot appropriate the promise without a life given up for men. Many try to take the promise, and then look round for what they can ask. This is not the way; but the very opposite. Get the heart burdened with the need of souls, and the command to save them, and the power will come to claim the promise.”
Scripture says that we should recognize the necessity of praying to God to send more workers to carry out the mission of saving souls (Matt. 9:35–38). We can also learn from Paul’s prayer requests that we need to pray to be given words so that we proclaim the message “clearly” (Col. 4:3), “fearlessly” (Eph. 6:19), and “rapidly” (2 Thess. 3:1). Thus, abundant and abiding fruit bearing is unattainable without prevailing in a persistent intercessory prayer. “In the work of mission, the church advances on its knees.”

Conclusion

Bearing abundant and abiding fruit is not wishful thinking but a possibility because the Vine, Jesus Christ, and the Gardener, His Father, have provided everything. A true disciple of Jesus is only a branch who can do nothing apart from Him. Hence, as a branch rests on the vine before it bears any fruit, we also need to rest on our all-sufficient Lord.

References:


2 All Scripture passages, unless otherwise stated, are from the New International Version.


6 Abide occurs two times in vv. 4 and 10 and once in vv. 5–7.


8 White, “Christ the True Vine,” *Sign of the Times*, March 10, 1887.


Abiding, Fruit-Bearing and Zappos. February 2, 2011 by Mark Altrogge. Every genuine Christian desires to be fruitful. God places that desire in our hearts when we’re born again. We want to be productive for God’s glory. Once we were selfish, pleasure-seeking rebels living futile lives. Then Jesus saved us. What’s the secret to bearing fruit for God? It’s not to get up and get cracking or to put our hand to the plow and dig in. Jesus tells us the secret in Jn 15:7-8: 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. God begins to answer our prayers from the moment we’re born again. The bearing of fruit, the fruit of the Spirit, can only come forth by abiding in Jesus and walking in the Spirit. To abide in Jesus is a very active lifestyle! It means to live in such a way that I am always found to be in Him, to walk hand in hand with Him, to live according to His Word. It is clear that abiding in Jesus has to do with His words abiding in (i.e. dwelling in, having power in) my heart and mind. When the words of Jesus abide and have power in my heart and mind such that I obey them by the power of the Spirit, then the fruit of the fruit-bearing and abundant are semantically related. In some cases you can use “Fruit-bearing” instead an adjective “Abundant”. Nearby Words: abundance, abundantly. Synonyms for Abundant. Fruit-bearing. Definitions of Fruit-bearing not found. Abundant and fruit-bearing are semantically related. You can use “Abundant” instead an adjective phrase “Fruit-bearing”. Synonyms for Fruit-bearing. Abundant & Fruit-bearing. Abundant and Abiding Fruit Bearing. What is Jesus saying to us about bearing abundant and abiding fruit and why is it important? Does God Believe in Restoration? Part 3. Read the 11 guidelines for a pastor’s restoration. Growing in Grace: The Transforming Power of Sabbath School. Dynamic, growing Sabbath School classes provide instruction, inclusion, investment, and inspiration. Read how this can happen.