



# FRUITFUL



A 6 WEEK BIBLE STUDY  
THAT EXPLORES THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF  
FRUITFULNESS IN OUR LIVES.

*By Lesley Ryden*

“It is to my Father’s glory  
that you bear much fruit,  
showing yourselves  
to be my disciples.”

JOHN 15:8



## WELCOME

Welcome to Fruitful, a 6 Week Bible Study, in which we will be exploring the Biblical principles of fruitfulness in our lives. We will discuss the entire growing process through every season, from soil to seed to harvest. My hope and prayer for our time together can be found in Jesus' simple, powerful words in John 15:8 "It is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." That is what we are after in these weeks and for a lifetime afterwards... abundantly fruitful lives that bring our Father glory, and show the world we belong to Him.

I grew up in Central Florida where my mother and grandmother had perennially green thumbs, (but the Sunshine State makes growing beautiful things look easy). They not only knew every plant at the nursery but could name every flora and fauna growing along the side of the road as well. Bougainvillea and Spathiphyllum were everyday words as well as items on the weekend's to do lists. But I fell in love with the idea of growing things not only for beauty's sake, but for nourishment as well in a garden in Chattanooga, Tennessee. My Granddaddy, had a vegetable garden that seemed magical to me on those summer visits. My brothers and I spent hours "working" and playing in it until the fireflies came out at night. Granddaddy would give us prizes for the biggest potato dug up, the tiniest, and the ugliest. We picked the okra to be fried for dinner and fresh blueberries for the pie. We shucked corn and stringed beans. Gardening planted a seed in my heart right there among muddy shoes and sticky fingers.

Like God so often does, He has used my interest in growing good things in my physical life to point me to so many truths in my Faith Walk as well. I have loved studying these lessons over the last year and I couldn't be more excited about sharing them with all of you. I pray our time together is filled with unearthing Truths that will practically influence our lives, root us deeply in the discipline of studying the Word, and bring about a harvest of the sweetest thing of all- our Heavenly Father's presence

**Bible Study saved my life.** It saved my marriage, my legacy, my mind. Well, Jesus did all of that but He did it like He has been doing it for centuries- through His Word. More on that later, but I want to encourage you before we even get going- this matters. There is no more important work than this. It deserves your time, your focus, your sowing. Stick with it. Stick with me. Most importantly, stick with the Lord and trust Him for the harvest.

I now have my own vegetable garden on my little Ranchito in West Texas. It has taught me it's own lessons, not the least of which is that it is much easier to grow good things in Central Florida or Chattanooga, Tennessee. I will contend with wind, drought, heat, critters, and tumbleweeds to eke out a tomato or two, all the while thankful that it is not to my Father's glory that I bear any actual fruit (or veggies). That is never certain. What is certain is that He has a plan for your life and mine, and no matter where it takes us, it is **ALWAYS** to His glory that it be abundantly fruitful. So, grab your gloves and enjoy the fresh air as we explore Fruitfulness together.





## How To Use This Study:

Fruitful is designed for both personal study and small group interaction. Each week is broken down into 5 days of homework to be completed before meeting together with your small group. The personal application questions are highlighted and provide an opportunity to reflect more deeply on what God is doing in your life. These are also the questions that will provide the most discussion in your group time. Obviously, sharing is optional but the more you put into this aspect of the study, the more growth you will see.

Each week is concluded with a journaling page which encourages you to choose one “truth” God is calling you to plant deeply in your life. This can be an idea, a point from the study, or a personal revelation. Also, you will be encouraged to write out the most fruitful scripture as well as a focus point for the week. The hope is that these pages will provide a clear summary of your journey through the entire study.



WEEK ONE

**A CALL TO  
FRUITFULNESS**



# DAY 1

## “IT IS TO MY FATHER’S GLORY...”

Fruitful... what is the first thing that comes to your mind, maybe your imagination when you read that word? A bowl of something sweet on the counter? A tree heavy laden with apples or pears? A bush full of strawberries? A pie? I wish you could sit next to me on a peeling turquoise rocker on my front porch and tell me. Maybe we could even enjoy a piece of that pie together.

But, we will do even better than pie. We will feast on all that the Word of God has to say about the concepts of Fruitfulness over the next 6 weeks. The lessons are rich theologically, but best of all, they are so practical. God’s word is always transformative, renewing our minds and shaping our spirits to be more like Christ. But some lessons work their way into our marrow, our words, our relationships, the work our hands find to do during our lives.

We walk this earth. We put one very physical foot in front of the other. We feed our physical bodies and do our physical work. Jesus knew this. That is why He exchanged Spirit for flesh and blood and came down to be our Immanuel, God with us. He worked and ate and walked and wept too. And He taught us so many lessons about His Spiritual Realm, our spirits as well, by using the stuff of this world. These are those very lessons.

Let’s not let one more moment go by without opening the Word of God together. Please read John 15:1-11 for the context of our theme verse. Now highlight verse 8 in your Bible and write it in the space provided below. (If you have access to several translations of the Bible, write its various versions):

So, put the pie or the strawberries down for a moment and think about Spiritual Fruitfulness, Biblical Fruitfulness, the kind that John 15:8 says will bring our Heavenly Father glory. What do those terms mean to you?



Perhaps you have no idea. It is Week One, Day One after all! That's okay. We'll get there together. Maybe you listed the Fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5, making your Sunday school teacher of yesteryear so proud. Absolutely! There are universal truths about Fruitfulness and there are some beautiful individual freedoms to be found as well, all of which we will have the chance to explore. But right here at the beginning I want us to root ourselves in two important concepts:

1. What Fruitfulness is NOT
2. Why Fruitfulness MATTERS.

First of all, let's discuss what Biblical Fruitfulness is NOT. Fruitfulness, or living a Fruitful life is not working in an attempt to win God's favor and love for salvation. WE cannot produce salvation for ourselves. As Christians, we believe that the salvation of our souls and eternal life in heaven is only received through the work that Jesus did on the cross. This is the gospel message that our faith is built on. It is what makes our God, the one True God, distinct from the gods of all other religions. He came to us. He did the sacrificing and the work so that we could be with Him forever. We could never be good enough, do good enough, or work hard enough to cross the chasm to holiness. It is only by grace, that we are saved.

**Let's look up the following verses to remind ourselves of this breathtaking reality. Note how each Scripture says we are saved and in turn how we are not (stated or inferred):**

☐ Ephesians 2:8-9

☐ Galatians 2:15-16

☐ Acts 15:11



☐ Romans 11:6

☐ John 14:6

☐ Romans 10:9-10



Fruitfulness is NOT the works by which we are saved because there are no works by which we are saved! It is by grace we are saved alone, not by any fruit that we bear so that no one can boast. Is that truth strongly planted in your own theology (or belief system)? Do you know it in your heart as well as your head? Has it worked its way down deeply into your life? Take a moment below to express where you are with this truth. Do you live as one set free by grace or one who is constantly trying to earn something that has been given to you already?

Remember when we are looking into the Scriptures, we are looking at the God-breathed, infallible, absolute Truth. I believe that self-awareness and self-discovery is vital in our relationship with Jesus and our journey to all He has for our lives. That is why asking ourselves where we are with certain Truths and how we feel about them is important. The answers provide signposts along the way. But no matter what WE think, what WE feel, or how well WE are appropriating those Truths in our lives, it doesn't change the fact that IT IS TRUTH.





So, if Fruitfulness has nothing to do with our salvation, then why does it matter? Why spend 6 whole weeks studying it? Is it really all that important in the life of a Christian? You see, salvation is just the beginning just as a wedding is just the beginning of a marriage, the birth is just the beginning of a life, adoption is just the beginning of belonging to a family. We were never meant as Christ followers to get saved and wait for heaven. There is Kingdom work to be done! There is a harvest to partake in and we are invited!

I am afraid that as a Church we have had an unfortunate over correction to the legalism of the Puritan age of religion from hundreds of years ago. (You know, the stuff *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* and *The Scarlet Letter* were made of). We are so afraid of pushing a works-based faith, or works over grace, that we have abandoned the call to fruitfulness in our lives, in our walks, and in our work. And we are malnourished as a result. The work itself produces a blessing, just like gardening. Getting outside, breathing fresh air, shoveling some dirt does a body and spirit good before the first fruit or vegetable is ever produced.

The mandate to work was given in the Garden of Eden **before** the fall. If it was not meant as punishment, then God must have intended it to be a blessing. In fact, Genesis 1:28 opens with, “God blessed them and said to them...”. You fill in the rest:

**God called Adam and Eve to Fruitfulness in the very beginning. And He is calling us to the same. Let's look at a few more verses to root ourselves deeply into the the truth that Fruitfulness in our lives matters. Read the following verses and note their connection to/call to Fruitfulness or Kingdom work:**

☐ Philippians 2:12

☐ James 2:14-17



☐ Ephesians 2:10

☐ Matthew 7:16-20

☐ John 15:8 (right back to our theme verse)

We see just from these few verses that Fruitfulness, or bearing good fruit, matters because we are called to work out our free salvation with fear and trembling, faith that is not accompanied with deeds is dead, God has good works planned for each of us to accomplish, we will be known by the fruit we produce, and our fruitfulness brings God glory. Yeah, I'd say it matters!

In a video session for her study Entrusted, Beth Moore issued a couple of haunting challenges I can't get over. And since no one likes to be haunted alone, I'm bringing you in. She warned, "*Don't call your faithlessness humility.*" In other words, don't back down from the call to bear much fruit in your life to your Father's glory because you are afraid, because you are distracted, because you are burdened by sin, because of your own faithlessness, and hide behind a false humility. Fruitfulness and humility do not cancel each other out. **We can be humbly fruitful, but we cannot be faithlessly fruitful.** Secondly Beth asked, "Do you have the guts to ask God to make you extraordinarily fruitful?" Do you? Do I? If it is indeed to our Father's glory that we bear MUCH fruit, that seems like a prayer He would be eager to answer. Use the remaining space to write a prayer telling God where you are in believing that He has work for you to do, and fruit for you to bear. And, if you have the guts, ask Him to make you extraordinarily fruitful, and rest in knowing that no matter what, He is extraordinarily faithful. See you tomorrow!



# DAY 2

## OUR FATHER FARMER

Every garden starts with a gardener. Every farm begins with a farmer. Even before the soil is touched, someone must have the desire to cultivate something useful, something beautiful. The gardener has the vision for the garden. **We are not the ultimate gardener in our lives.** That is God. He is our FATHER FARMER. He is the author or pioneer, and perfecter or finisher, of our faith, according to Hebrews 12:2. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, according to Revelation 1:8, 21:6, and 22:13. God is the creator of growing things and fruitfulness in the first place. It was His idea and it is still His plan.

Read Genesis 1:1, the very first verse in the Bible, and write it below:

Let's go ahead and read the rest of Genesis 1 and be reminded of the creation story. Below make note of or draw a picture of what God created each day:

DAY 1:

DAY 2:

DAY 3:

DAY 4:





DAY 5:

DAY 6:

DAY 7:

Now reread Genesis 1:11-12 and record what our Father Farmer created in these verses:

As is often the case, we see something very physical in the Old Testament be translated into something spiritual in the New Testament. In Genesis, God actually planted the physical Garden of Eden. He created plants and vegetation with the ability to reproduce themselves through seeds. In the New Testament we read Jesus' words in John 15:1, "I am the true vine and my Father is the \_\_\_\_\_."

I love to study out of several versions of the Bible at the same time. It is so interesting to compare words and often adds layers of wisdom onto my understanding and interpretation. The NIV, NLT and HCSV says that the Father is the GARDENER. The Message calls Him the FARMER, and the NKJ and ESV says He is the VINEDRESSER. Gardener and Farmer we are familiar with, but unless your family owns a vineyard, vinedresser is not a word you use much. A vinedresser is a person who prunes, trains, and cultivates vines. Simply put, He is the gardener or farmer of vines.

God is the creator of both *physical* and *spiritual* life, and He is the creator of both *physical* and *spiritual* fruitfulness. He is our Father Farmer and it all starts with Him, with His plan, His work, and His vision. Without a committed, patient, hard-working gardener, the garden will never thrive. Without our Father Farmer, fruitfulness in our lives will be impossible.



A good gardener starts planning and plotting the garden months before the soil will be ready to tend to, while snow may still be on the ground, or no piece of ground has even been designated yet. Every year I desperately want to be this kind of gardener. I have a beautiful "Gardening" Pinterest board full of diagrams of what should be planted where. I have charts on which kind of vegetables do "well" in my part of the world (peppers, really just peppers), which ones like to be planted next to each other (evidently veggies can make friends and enemies as well), and when each should go into the ground. I even subscribed to a garden planning newsletter. But none of that information has made it much further than my inbox or Pinterest board. I fall very short on planning very well for my garden. Oh, I have a vision, but strangely it involves the English countryside and arbors full of lush roses... not the West Texas heat and dirt. Planting day at the Ranchito is pretty chaotic and usually involves lots of children, and several dips in the pool. I've heard it said that when we fail to prepare (or plan), we should be prepared (or plan) to fail. Maybe that's part of the reason my little garden has been less than abundantly fruitful.

Thank goodness that is not our Father Farmer. Look up and write below Jeremiah 29:11:

Now highlight or circle the word PLANS in the verse.



God, your Father Farmer, has good plans for your life... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans for your hope and your future. That sounds like fruitfulness to me. So, the question right here at the beginning is, **do you believe it?** Do you believe that YOUR fruitfulness matters? That God had work planned in advance for YOU? That, according to Jeremiah 29:11, He has a plan for YOUR life? Write your honest thoughts below.



See, if you only believe these words in theory, if you only believe they are true for your really godly friend or a pastor on TV, then you won't do the work and you won't be blessed by the harvest.

Every garden begins with a gardener. Every farm starts with a farmer's vision and plan. That, my friends, was established before time began. Our Father Farmer has the plan covered. Our first step is to believe it. This is where fruitfulness begins.

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive  
glory and honor and power, for you created all  
things and by your will they were created and  
have their being.”

REVELATION 4:11





# DAY 3

## GOD'S FIELD

Fruitfulness, both physically and spiritually, all begins with our Father Farmer. He has a plan for each of us, according to Jeremiah 29:11. But our Father Farmer is not a cosmic puppeteer. He is not like Tinker Bell with her pixie dust, splashing His will and plan onto us and forcing us to fly to Neverland whether we like it or not. I believe one of the most staggering things about our God, our Father Farmer, is that He asks us to partner with Him in His Kingdom work and agenda for this world. He invites us in. He lets us choose. He created us in His own image, like we read yesterday, so that we could be in relationship with Him, both during our time on this earth, and eternally in heaven. Staggering.

So in our study of Fruitfulness, if we are not the gardener, what part do we play? What is our role? Please look up I Corinthians 3:9 and record it below.

In this verse, Paul tells us that we have 3 roles:

1. Co-workers (or co-laborers) in God's service
2. God's field
3. God's building

Go ahead and circle the one that fits in with all of our gardening and fruitfulness.

I hope you circled "God's field." That is us. We are God's field. We are the plot of land that the Father Farmer plans to grow good things on. We are his garden.

I don't know what the weather is like where you are today. I am writing from a picnic table in my front yard under trees that are lit year-round, while my 5 cow-dogs race back and forth to the gate. It is cool and breezy here and the sunshine is reflecting off of Fall's newly tinted leaves. Beautiful. Whatever the weather is wherever you are, I hope you can take a step outside for a moment and breathe in some fresh air. (Seriously, go do it!) I don't know if your eyes see open fields or concrete buildings but let your imagination, at least, find a fresh garden all tilled-rich and ready. Can you see it? Smell it? Feel it? Maybe just find an empty terra-cotta pot, whether in your mind or in your garage. Honestly, there are few things in the world I love more than an empty terra cotta pot just waiting to be filled with beauty. A freshly weeded flower bed in the early spring, perhaps just a blank notebook, or a



new canvas... It's all the same idea- a blank slate. Possibility. Promise. That is what your Father Farmer sees when He looks at you, His precious field, His garden.

But unlike an actual piece of land, or terra-cotta pot, or blank page, or empty canvas, which have no say in how they will be used, we get to choose. See, a physical field may be used for any number of things. It may be the sight of a little league field, a high-rise building, a beloved home, a landfill, or a fruitful garden in the hands of a master gardener. There is no moment of decision and then a thousand more to become one thing or another. We are God's field but for the Father Farmer to be able to produce abundant fruitfulness in us or out of us, we must first choose to give ourselves to Him. We position ourselves, our possibilities, our promise under His plan. We get to choose and it is the most important choice of our lives. Think again of that empty pot. If it is left on the shelf of the hardware store, will anyone ever be surprised when nothing grows out of it? Of course not. Even if someone with great intentions buys the pot but leaves it empty in the garage, will it ever produce beauty or fruitfulness? No. See, our lives, our fields and our fruitfulness will remain dormant if they remain on the shelf as well. We'll discuss some "shelves" on Day 5 but for now remember that we are just an empty pot, a dormant field, until we place ourselves in the hands of the Father Farmer.

**The first step in yielding your field, your life, up to God comes at the moment of salvation, at the decision to make Jesus Lord of your life. Please look up the following verses and note WHO can be saved and the WHAT they must do to be saved:**

☐ Romans 10:9-13

☐ John 3:16

☐ Acts 16:29-31

☐ John 14:6



We established firmly on Day 1 that salvation comes only by the grace of God and not by any works of our own. The Bible also points to the fact that even the faith to believe is a gift from God. Reflect on these scriptures:

John 6:44 "No one can come to me **unless the Father who sent me draws them.**"

John 6:65 "This is why I told you that no one can come to me **unless the Father has enabled them.**"

Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God.**"

However, at some point we must exercise this faith and choose to receive Christ's free gift of salvation. At that moment we essentially take our pot off the shelf and hand it to our Father Farmer. I believe this is a once and for all decision that secures our name in the book of life (Luke 10:10, Malachi 3:16) and, with it, eternity in heaven. I pray that you have made that decision and have no doubt about your salvation. Handing our field to our Father Farmer is our only hope for a fruitful life.

But unfortunately, as all of us that made the decision to follow Jesus long ago know, there are many days, many seasons, maybe even years, where we have taken our fields back from Him. Hopefully it was not in the form of renouncing our faith or walking completely away from our Father Farmer. No, it usually looks a bit more like refusing His hand working fruitfulness out in our lives through our sin, our control, our lack of faith in His good plan for our lives. We have let the weeds grow and have not come along side of our Father Farmer as the co-workers He has called us to be. While I believe salvation is a once and for all decision, yielding ourselves to God is a daily decision... often a moment by moment decision. I believe there are a lot of saved people walking around this earth that are not bearing the fruit their lives were meant to bear for the Kingdom because they have snatched their pot back from God, putting themselves back on the shelf.

Let's revisit John 15, the context for our theme verse. Below, circle every time the word **remain** appears in verses 4-8:

*"Remain in me as I also 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. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. **This is to my Father's glory that your bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**"* John 15:4-8



I found the word **REMAIN** 8 times in those four verses. The New King James Version uses the word **ABIDE**. The definition of Abide is this:

a·bide  
ə' bīd/verb

1. Accept or act in accordance with a rule, decision, or recommendation;  
synonyms: comply with, obey, observe, follow, keep to, hold to conform to, adhere to, stick to, stand by, act in accordance with, uphold, heed, accept
2. Continue without fading or being lost;  
synonyms: continue, remain, survive, last, persist, stay, live on

**The secret to our Fruitfulness is our abiding.** I hope that you caught that abiding is a verb. It's a choice, it's something that we actively do. You do not abide, remain, dwell, reside, or obey Jesus on accident. Abiding means daily handing your field back to God for Him to produce the good fruit he has planned for your life. It is showing up every day and participating as a co-laborer in His Kingdom work. It is choosing to not take your plot of ground back to erect your own plan upon.

We will be spending the remainder of this week on the ideas and truths surrounding abiding. For now, use the space to write where you are on the two steps of yielding the field of your life up to the Father Farmer:



Step 1: Salvation; Write a short testimony to remind yourself of the initial decision you made to receive Christ's free gift of salvation and to put your faith in His work on the cross. Maybe write a few details about the time, date, place, people you were with when you first handed your field over to the Father Farmer:



Step 2: Abiding; Where do you feel like you are today in abiding, or remaining in God's plan for your life and fruitfulness? Do you daily choose to yield your decisions, relationships, and plans to the Father Farmer and co-labor with Him in His work and your fruitfulness? What are the situations or feelings that tend to cause you to snatch your plot of ground back?

I think Andrew Murray, in his classic devotional entitled "Abiding in Christ," first published in 1895, sums up the journey from coming to Christ for salvation, to abiding in Christ for fruitfulness. Meditate on these words until tomorrow:

*"It is to you who have heard and responded to the call, 'Come to Me' [salvation] that this new invitation comes, 'Abide in Me.' The message comes from the same loving Savior. No doubt you have never regretted responding to His call and coming to Him. You experienced that His word was truth; all His promises He fulfilled; He made you a partaker of the blessings and the joy of His love. His welcome was heartfelt, His pardon full and free, His love most sweet and precious, was it not? You more than once, at your first coming to Him, had reason to say, 'The half was not told me.' And yet you have had some disappointment. As time went on, your expectations were not always realized. The blessings you once enjoyed were lost; the love and joy of your first meeting with our Savior, instead of deepening, have become faint and weak. And you have often wondered why, with such a mighty and loving Savior, your experience of salvation was not a fuller one. The answer is very simple. You wandered from Him. You either did not fully understand, or did not rightly remember, that the call meant 'Come to me and remain with Me.' The truth is, there is nothing that moved you to come that does not plead with even greater force: Abide in Him. You did well to come; you do better to abide. Who would be content after seeing the King's palace, to stand in the door, when he is invited in to dwell in the King's presence, and share with Him in all the glory of His royal life? Let us enter in and abide, and enjoy fully all the rich supply His wondrous love has prepared for us!"*

# DAY 4

## A PICTURE PERFECT ABIDING

Yesterday we established that abiding means “remaining, staying, dwelling, or continuing.” But this isn’t passive. Abiding is a verb. It is a choice. In fact it is a choice we must make day by day if we desire to be co-laborers with our Father Farmer in His Kingdom work and our own fruitfulness. Something I have observed by diving deeply into community with women over the years is that most of us fall on one side or the other in the tension of abiding. On one side we have the go-getters, the doers, the list checkers. If you need something done, call these girls because they will handle it in a flash. In the extreme they may be legalistic, checking all the boxes of religion. They may not rest well, they may tend towards judgement when they perceive “faith without works” (James 2:17) in others. On the other side we have women that may rest a little too well since all those doers are getting it done. They are usually high on compassion and grace, because after all “it IS by grace we have been saved” (Ephesians 2:8), but may be too lax in spiritual discipline and obedience. There are strengths and weaknesses on both ends but we all want to find that balance in the doing and the resting, the working and the receiving. Abiding is that balance.



Which extreme do you default to most of the time? Mark it on this continuum.



Finding the balance of abiding may not be easy, but it is simple. God gave us the perfect picture of what abiding or remaining in Him looks like in the picture of the Vine and the branch in John 15. Please reread verses 1-11 and then 16 and draw a picture (scratch, scrawl, doodle) of a vine, branch, and fruit below to reinforce how they are all connected.



Today I'd like to properly introduce you to an old friend- a very old friend. Andrew Murray was born in South Africa in 1828 and spent many years there as a pastor and missionary. He wrote several devotionals including "Abiding in Christ" which explores deeply the call to remain in Jesus.. Mr. Murray has much to say about abiding and his words and insights are just as timely today as they were when he published them in 1895. He will be with us sharing some of them today, because I couldn't say it better myself!

Andrew Murray says this of the abiding connection in his chapter entitled "As the Branch in the Vine:"

*"The connection between the vine and the branch is a living one. No external, temporary union is described here, and no work of man can make it happen. The branch, whether an original or an engrafted one, is the Creator's own work; the life, the sap, the fatness, and the fruitfulness of the branch are only possible because of its attachment to the vine. And so it is with the believer too. His union with his Lord is no work of human wisdom or human will, but an act of God, by which the closest and most complete life union possible is forged between the Son of God and the sinner."*

He goes on to say, *"The parable teaches us the completeness of the union. So close is the union between the vine and the branch, the each is nothing without that other, each is wholly and only for the other."*

Andrew Murray emphasizes these 5 points:

1. **Without the vine the branch can do nothing.** *"The believer can each day be pleasing to God only in that which he does through the power of Christ dwelling in him. The daily filling of the life-sap of the Holy Spirit is his only power to bring forth fruit. He lives in Him alone and is for each moment dependent on Him alone."*

Go back up to your picture of the vine, branch, and fruit and label it with what each part represents: Jesus, Us, Our Good Fruit. Remember that God is the Vinedresser or Father Farmer; you can draw a hand or figure above the vine and branch to represent Him. Now, right at the connection point of the vine and branch draw something to signify the "life-sap" of the Holy Spirit flowing from the vine to the branch to give it (us) power to bring forth fruit. John 6:63 says, *"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing."*

2. **Without the branch the vine can also do nothing.** *"A vine without branches can bear no fruit. No less indispensable than the vine to the branch is the branch to the vine. Such is the wonderful condescension of the grace of Jesus; just as His people are dependent on Him, He has made Himself dependent on them. Without His disciples He cannot dispense His blessing to the world. I know it seems incredible, but it is true! This is God's own doing,*



*giving such high honor to those He has called His redeemed ones, designing it so that as indispensable as He is to them in acquiring fruit and winning heaven, so indispensable are they to Him on earth, that through them His fruit may be found."*



Obviously we know and believe that Jesus and His heavenly Father are all-powerful, omnipotent, and can do whatever they choose in alignment with their perfect character. But what Andrew Murray is saying here is, this is what they chose to do, how they chose things to work here on earth. This is part of the commandment in Genesis 1 to "be fruitful," and to "rule over the land." We are the ones He uses to bring the Fruit of the Spirit of Galatians 5; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control to a needy world. Does this kind of responsibility make you feel overwhelmed or excited? Explain below.

3. **All the vine possesses belongs to the branches.** *"The vine does not gather from the soil its fatness and its sweetness for itself; all it has is at the disposal of the branches. All His [Jesus'] fullness and all His riches are for you, as His believer; for the vine does not live for itself, or keep anything for itself, but exists only for the branches. All that Jesus is in heaven, He is for us. He has no interest there separate from ours; as our representative He stands before the Father on our behalf."*

**Write the following verses to discover some of the things that our Vine Jesus gives to us, His branches:**

☐ John 17:22

☐ Matthew 28:18-19





Go back up to your drawing and put in some arrows from the vine to the branch to represent this point.

4. **All that the branch possess belongs to the vine.** *"The branch does not exist for itself, but to bear fruit that can proclaim the excellence of the vine; it has no reason to exist except to be of service to the vine. What a glorious image this is of the calling of the believer; the entirety of his consecration is only for service to his Lord. As Jesus gives himself so completely over to him, he feels himself urged to be wholly his Lord's."*

This is what Paul is talking about in Philippians 3:7-8. Fill in the blanks according to these verses:

*"But \_\_\_\_\_ were gains to me I now consider \_\_\_\_\_ for the sake of \_\_\_\_\_. What is more, I consider \_\_\_\_\_ a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing \_\_\_\_\_ my \_\_\_\_\_, for whose sake I have \_\_\_\_\_ I consider them \_\_\_\_\_, that I may gain \_\_\_\_\_ and be found in him."*

Now draw some arrows from the branch to the vine to show this exchange.

5. **The object of the union of the vine and the branch is fruit and fruit alone.** *"As the believer enters into his calling as a branch, he sees that he has to forget himself and to live entirely for others. To love them, to seek for them, and to save them, this is why Jesus came. For this purpose every branch on the Vine- as well as the Vine- must live. It is for fruit, much fruit, that the Father has made us one with Jesus."*

"He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit..." John 15:2

Return to your drawing and color in the fruit. Write point 5 next to it. Now, write the word ABIDE above your vine, branches, and fruit.

All of these important points that Andrew Murray makes brings us back to this simple fact: **our fruitfulness is completely tied to our abiding.** Choosing to remain, stay, continue in faithfulness, in co-laboring, in obedience, in pursuit of the Vine's presence and the Holy Spirit's "life-sap" and power is the only path to fruitfulness. We choose to yield the field of our lives up at the moment of salvation, and then again, day by day, as we choose to abide. Tomorrow we will look to our own hearts and try to discover some of the obstacle to our abiding. Good work today, and thank your Mr. Andrew Murray for all of your timeless wisdom!



# DAY 5

## SHELVING OUR FRUITFULNESS

As we wrap up this first week, let's review what we have learned about Fruitfulness so far. We know from John 15:8 that it is to our Father's glory that we bear much fruit, therefore we must believe that God has a good, fruitful plan for our lives. However, we are not saved by our fruit, and we know that we are not the ultimate gardener in our story. That is God. He is our Father Farmer, and according to I Corinthians 3:9 we are His field. Our lives are the very place He desires to grow good things out of in this world. It is our job to yield the field of our lives up to the Father Farmer to produce much fruit out of. We do this first at the moment that we accept and receive Jesus' free gift of salvation. But then we offer our lives up day by day, moment by moment by choosing to abide in the Father's presence and the Vine's plan. Our Fruitfulness will always be tied to our abiding.

So, today we are simply (and maybe not so simply) going to look at our lives, our thoughts, our hearts, our sin patterns to see what keeps us from abiding- remaining, staying, dwelling- in the Vine. Let me just confess my biggest obstacle to my abiding right here at the start:

### **MY BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO MY ABIDING IS MY AGENDA**

Anyone else? I never wake up and say to myself, "Today is the day I take control of my life back from my Father Farmer. I know best. I am withholding the field today, I'm putting the pot back on the shelf. I definitely do not desire to bear much fruit today." Of course not. But somewhere in there I switch I Corinthians 3:9 around in my mind and start to believe that God is **MY** co-worker in **MY** service, instead of the other way around. There is no way I can faithfully abide, remain, stay, dwell within His plan for me if I am miles down the road doing my own thing. See, I am definitely on the "box-checker" side of the continuum that we looked at yesterday. I'm a list maker, a planner, and a scheduler. I'm not sure if I was born this way, or if it is the result of running a household and the lives of 4 children. Either way, unfortunately, there is never a moment that my agenda, my to-do list is not on the forefront of my mind. And if I am not careful, intentional, and steeped deeply in the Word of God, it would leave no room, no space for abiding. Every day I have to choose which I will walk in; My Agenda or My Abiding.

What about you? What are the shelves you put your pot back on when you snatch it from the Father Farmer? Is it distraction in this crazy world? Do you just look up and realize it has been days, weeks, or months since you intentionally positioned yourself for Fruitfulness? Since you asked the Vine what fruit He has for you? Is it a specific sin pattern that keeps you shelved, that keeps your life from bearing much fruit and bringing your Father glory? Is it unbelief? Do you have a hard time really trusting that there is any fruit for you to bear? Do you doubt that your Father Farmer has a good plan for your life, a plan to prosper you and not to harm you, a plan for a hope and a future? Is it the shelf of a bad attitude? One of ingratitude or ungratefulness? Anger or selfishness? Control or unforgiveness?





This is all I have for you today, so take all the time you need to really search your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your “shelves” to you. Name them, confess them to the Lord, maybe even to a sister in Christ that can hold you accountable when she sees you shelving your fruitfulness in the future. Being self-aware and recognizing our junk is so important in moving forward to lives of abundant fruitfulness.

SHELF:

SHELF:

SHELF:

Jesus’ life on earth was a perfect picture of abiding in His Father’s will and plan. He simply listened to the Spirit and followed wherever it led; from place to place, from life to life, from fruitfulness to fruitfulness. In John 15:19 He says, “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”



I know, I know... You're not Jesus. Neither am I. But we can see what our Father Farmer is doing too. We see it in His Word, we hear it when we intentionally set our agenda aside and listen for His still small voice (I Kings 19:12). He promises, "Whether you turn to the right or left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it. (Isaiah 30:12) Take your pot off of the shelf and position yourself for a life of fruitfulness that will bring your Father much fruit!



**The Biggest Truth I Want to Plant  
FROM THIS WEEK IS...**

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**The Most Fruitful Scripture for Me  
FROM THIS WEEK IS...**

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