

Friends

Sowing Seeds, Growing Gardens

October 1, 2017

DAY 1: The Great Commission, and love

1. Jesus gave what we call the Great Commission to the all the disciples, collectively. Certainly, each of us bears responsibility to reach lost people and help them grow as disciples.

2. In our western culture, I wonder how often we immediately think of reaching out to our friends as a solely *individual* endeavor.

3. None of the “great commission” verses were given just to one disciple, but to the entire group.

Matthew 28:19-20 As you are going, make disciples of every nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.”

4. Why would it be important not just to think of outreach to lost people as an individual duty? What benefits could occur if we “teamed up” with some of our brothers and sisters in the Lord?

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

5. “Everybody” knows Jesus commanded us to love people. Even those who have never read a bible know this. But the command is not just for the sake of feeling good, or lifting the spirit of someone. It is also a powerful testimony to the reality of our faith!

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

6. Why would a Jesus-kind-of-love for one another be a powerful testimony to the reality of our faith in Jesus?

7. Can you imagine creating occasions where some of your lost friends were around a group of genuine Christians that shared that kind of love for one another? What ideas come to mind?

DAY 2: The branch bears fruit when it remains in the vine

1. One of most well-known analogies Jesus uses is the fruit and the vine in John 15. In this analogy are interwoven three vital components that are meant to be connected and reinforce one another:

- a. Our dependent relationship on God ...
- b. ...that results in a deeper relationship with Him, and growing in Christ-like character.
- c. ... coinciding and empowering us in God's pursuit of creating more fruit (lost people finding Christ)

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

⁴ Remain 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.

John 15:6 If 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.

⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

3. Underline every time the word “remain” is used.

4. The word “remain” in me is the word “abide” in me. The imagery of a branch “remaining” connected to the trunk of the vine is a good one.

a. What happens to you when you “go off on our own,” apart from being connected to Jesus?

b. What does Jesus promise will happen if we remain in Him? (vv. 4, 5, 7)

5. Sometimes the branches of our lives become unfruitful. Some of my rose bushes are healthy and produce spectacular blooms. But, over time, the blossom wilts. A good gardener “deadheads” the dying blooms. He cuts them off, not because the branch was “bad.” The branch was good—it produced blooms! But in order to produce more blooms pruning is necessary!

6. The principle Jesus points to is “remaining” connected to the vine. It is the same as living dependently on Jesus. The result is fruit.

7. Ask God to remind you of the necessity (and joy) of living dependently on Him, today.

DAY 3: The call to bear fruit

John 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

1. Every Christian wants to glorify God with his life. One of the ways that occurs is the fruit of our lives both in Christ-like character, and in the lives of other people.
2. When Jesus says, “showing yourselves to be my disciples,” He is saying, “That’s the proof that you really are my disciples!”

John 15:9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

3. In yesterday’s passage we saw that “remaining” in the vine was the same as remaining in Jesus. He is our sustenance and power for living.
4. In John 15:9-10, Jesus tells us to “remain” in something else. What is it?

5. What does it mean to “remain in my love?”

6. We usually think of obedience as something sterile, something we’re “supposed to do.” But obedience and “remaining” in his love does not end in a sterile place! Read John 15:11

John 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

7. What is one of the results of obeying Christ?

8. What does He say about joy?

John 15:12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

9. How does Jesus define love?

10. How is this kind of love to be demonstrated?

11. These concepts are all interconnected: bearing fruit, “remaining” in Him, His love, His love, obedience, and joy! What strikes you about the connection and interplay of these concepts?

DAY 4: Love, “friends” of Jesus, more than servants

1. As we seek to be involved with lost people, we are serving the Lord. But in our relationship with Jesus as servant, He adds something very powerful to the metaphor: “friend!”

John 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

2. As you think about “serving” the Lord, how does the identity of “friend” change the meaning of the metaphor? How does being His “friend” change your idea of serving the Lord?

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

3. While we use the metaphor of “serving the Lord,” as we should, Jesus AMPLIFIES the concept of serving Him by being His friend.

a. What does Jesus say is true and not true about being only a servant?

b. What differences are there in being His friend?

4. Everyone wants to feel like they are an “insider” in the mission, the organization, and with “the boss.” How does John 15:15 address each of these desires?

a. An insider in the mission?

b. An insider to the organization? (the church, other disciples)

c. An insider with the “boss?”

5. What kinds of attitudes should we have as we serve the Lord?

DAY 5: The call of God: to bear fruit

1. The call of Jesus to be central in the eternal purpose of God is staggering.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

2. What specifically does He call us to do? What is our purpose?

3. There should not be any confusion on this. Fruit-bearing is NOT just for the “super-spiritual,” nor pastors, nor leaders in the church, nor people “more spiritual than me!”

4. How does John 15:16 affect how you look at your:

a. Purpose?

b. Attitude?

c. The Father’s “bent” or attitude toward you?

John 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.

5. The call to bear fruit and the command to love one another are inextricably mixed. One flows into the other and vice versa.

6. As we finish up this study in John 15, what strikes you most?