

A Productive Relationship, Part 3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 October 2025

Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

- [0:00] John chapter 15 verses 1 through 8. Once again, Jesus speaking. I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. Every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.
- That's his preamble. That's his overarching statement. Now the particulars. Abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine.
- Neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he is that bears much fruit.
- For apart from me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.
- [1:03] 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.
- The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of the Lord remains forever. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Thank you. You know, I always smile when I pass our little community garden.
- I'm sure all of you have seen our community garden behind the building here. We're at Crawford from the church office. That's a nifty little garden. It is productive.
- I mean, I watch people stop their cars. I mean, I'm walking to the parking lot or I'm looking out my window and I see people stopping their cars to go and shop in our community garden.
- They bring the little bags and everything. It's cute. That's what it's there for. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. And, but, but, but it doesn't happen by accident, right?
- [2:24] That garden's productivity is not accidental. It's not happening automatically. It's not magic. There are people in this church and in other churches who come and tend that garden.
- There are the invisible hands we don't see that are over there weeding and tilling the soil, planting seeds and propping up things with sticks.
- I'm not much of a gardener so I don't know anything about this stuff. You know, I mean, holding things up and, and, and you never see them but they're there. And they're, and they're caring for the garden year after year.
- It's a productive relationship between them and this garden. Listen, God is determined to get glory in your life.
- If you are a Christian, if you are a disciple of Jesus, he is determined to get great glory in your life by producing his life in you.
- [3:34] By you, by you bearing fruit, to use image in our passage, by you bearing fruit, the Spirit of God moving, creating in you good works in character and witness for the glory of his Son.

He's so determined that he will have it. If you are his, he will have it. He will have his glory because his Son deserves it. But just as he is determined, you see, unlike plants, you have to cooperate.

You see, you're not a plant. You are the image of God. You are recreated in the image of Christ. You who are believers by the work of the Spirit of God. You must cooperate with his ministrations, with his care, with his weeding and pruning and propping up and tilling soil in your heart, in your life.

You have to cooperate. So what fruit is the Spirit of God producing in you right now? If you were to step back or maybe ask somebody who knows and loves you, what would they say God is doing in you right now or through you right now?

Last time we focused on what our Lord meant by abiding, meaning to remain or stay or live in him. A total dependence, that is, of life.

[5 : 17] We talked about manifesting his character and, again, his works in our lives. Because that is the great project the Father is committed to. He is committed to making you like his Son.

That's the great fruit. Romans 8, 29. For those he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

In order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. God is determined that his Son will have siblings. Hello, siblings.

And so that's just, he is molding and shaping and pruning, like I said, to make you more like Christ. And this happens as we are ongoingly abiding in divine who is Jesus.

So let's continue with the thought. Well, what does this abiding entail? Well, verse 6. The Spirit, and we're talking about the work of the Spirit.

[6 : 24] So that's why all things are talking about the Spirit. So I'm going to use the word Spirit constantly. The Spirit critiques our abiding and our fruit in Christ.

You see, verse 6. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

You see, the Father doesn't just hope for fruit to happen. He's there, like I said, always tending you. He's in your life. He's always, his fingerprints are all over you.

He's always there, propping you up, doing things in you, working on character, whispering in your ear. Sometimes, you know, shaking you to say, hey, listen.

He's always there, caring for you. In every life situation, if you belong to Jesus, the great vine dresser is always there because he loves you and he's caring for you, always.

[7 : 29] So fruit is not an accident. It's not his casual hobby. He's committed. He always tends his vineyard.

You receive his round-the-clock expert care. He knows the vine. He knows the branches down to every molecule.

So nothing escapes his sharp eye. But our Lord also says, there are two kinds of branches.

Those that bear fruit and those that do not. In viticulture, which is the science of cultivating grapes, unproductive branches hurt the vine.

They hurt the vine by wasting energy, increasing risk of disease, and negatively impacting fruit quality and yield. So this is a warning.

[8 : 37] Now, spiritually speaking, we can't hurt Jesus. Okay? Just know that. Don't go too far with the images that God gives us in his word.

They're made to make a point. Don't go too far. You got to hold yourself back a little bit. We can't hurt the great vine no matter what we do. Or don't do.

Okay? But unproductive Christians can hurt the life and witness of the church, keeping it from biblically fulfilling its purpose.

No matter how old you are. I don't care. I don't care how old you are. If the life of Christ is in your soul, you are meant to be productive in some way.

We don't have a bench. In this game, there is no bench. You're in it.

[9:43] Now, we can be scrubs, or we can be good at what we're doing. But you're in the game. You're in the game. Prayer warriors, discipling others, encouraging others.

No matter how old you are, these are things we can all do. We are part of the vine. If you are a true branch, this means painful pruning. We've solved this.

But our Lord also promises judgment to professing disciples who do not abide in him and still not bear fruit for his glory. It's graphic, isn't it?

He says, such branches are thrown away because of unproductivity. They wither, and they're thrown into the fire.

This image comes from Ezekiel as God speaks of Israel as his vine. In Ezekiel 15, he says, Behold, it is given to the fire for fuel. When the fire has consumed both ends of it and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything?

[10:48] Behold, when it is whole, it was used for nothing. How much less when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything?

Our Lord Jesus is borrowing from Ezekiel this image of the vine and how God's judgment comes in the form of burning.

This is scary a bit. So it's a picture here that should make us all go, wow. God is holy.

And some would think, and I grew up this way, early church, early Christianity. We were taught that this meant that a true Christian could lose his salvation.

We were taught this meant that if you're a Christian and if you're not doing enough for God, then you will be cast off. You will be burned. You're going to perish. Well, if that's true, then our Lord Jesus would be contradicting himself radically.

[11:55] Because he just said in John chapter 10, a few chapters back, John chapter 10, 27 and 30, different metaphor. He says, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life, not the potential for eternal life, not sometime eternal life. I give them eternal life, life never ending, and they will never perish.

And no one can snatch them, will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

I and the Father are one. Now listen, if John 15 is telling us that true Christians can lose their salvation, then Jesus' statement here is a lie.

John 10 has to be a lie. And you know Jesus doesn't lie. So what's he saying here? So we know he's not talking about believers losing the gift of eternal life, which by definition is eternal and you can't lose.

[13:02] What's this? Eternal. Hmm. And then we got this double grip, like the divine kung fu grip, the Father and the Son holding on to you.

I don't know. I don't know what can get through that. You let me know. You find something that can get through that, you tell me. And then I'll give you some medication after that. Once Christ joins you to himself by the work of the Spirit, you can't be separated.

Because the flow of the Spirit's sap may be obstructed. Listen. Listen. It may be obstructed in you because of your disobedience, but it cannot be stopped.

It's like old pipes. I got old pipes in my house. Oh boy. I got old pipes. And I've had guys come over and work on it and they pull a section off and say, look at this, Kevin.

And inside of these old pipes, they're pipes about that big. But when you look inside, the hole is about that big. Sediment has gotten into my pipes.

[14:07] And so the water is still flowing. Okay. Thank you. Hey, praise the Lord for that. Water's still flowing. But the water pressure sometimes isn't as good as I would have liked.

See, that's what's happening. Sometimes the flow of sap, because of our disobedience to the Lord and we're just doing our own thing for a minute, we lost our minds for a second, something's happened in our lives, we're hurt, we're confused.

All kinds of things can happen in the life of a Christian. Okay. Sinful things. But you're still a believer. And so the water of the spirit is still flowing, but the power, the effect in you is not as strong as it could be because of that.

Because you've narrowed the opening, but the life is still there. So just keep that in mind. That's a great, I love that image.

It works for me. I hope it works for you. Sometimes we just feel like we want to be independent of God. We want to do our own thing. We just want to, you know, I don't, Jesus, I can handle this.

[15:17] You know, you ever get like, you ever do that? You just kind of let, God's word says this, but you got a plan. God's word says this, but you know, you don't feel like doing it that way.

And you, and that happens to all of us, but over time, yeah, the flow gets, it can't be stopped.

But man, it's slowing down a bit. Listen, I love saying this all the time. In the kingdom of heaven, when God files his income tax, he puts all you down as dependents.

Now, we can try to file head of household if you want, but it won't work because you're dependent. The spiritual heavenly IRS department will kick back your return.

You see, I've been here before. Anyway, we're permanently connected to divine. Can I, I'm going to, oh boy, I want to give, I got an example.

[16:29] I got an example I'm going to toss off at you that I think helps me, hoping to help you. In Acts chapter 27, in that chapter, Paul is about to be, he gets shipwrecked.

All right. What, what, what we got on the screen? Um, did I, did I give you 22, Acts 27, 22? Did I give you that? Okay, then we'll hold that thought. I'll set the context.

The ship is in a storm and the sailors are getting scared. And they're, they think we're going, we're going to drown. Let's kill the prisoners and make sure they don't escape.

All right. Well, the captain had made, Paul had made friends with the captain of the ship. God will give you favor. Amen. And, and, and, but, but more than that, God has spoken to Paul.

He says, for this very night, there still be formerly an angel of God to whom I belong and whom I worship. Look at that witness. An angel of God to whom I belong and to whom I worship.

[17:29] He's witnessing to this guy. And the angel said to him, do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar. Behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.

Isn't that, isn't that, because of the believer who was present on the ship, even though the ship was in trouble, the believer, God was working with the believer. And, and because of the believer present, God was going to bless everybody else.

What if he still does that? So, so Paul says to the captain, okay, listen, you, you all got to stay.

For verse 27 down, I mean, verse 31 down at the bottom. He says this. I think that you had that one. Yeah. Unless these men stay slash abide in the ship, you cannot be saved.

Now, what was happening was some soldiers were trying to escape. They said, oh, we're going to, we're going to clean up over here, captain. We're going to clean up. And they decided to cut.

[18:33] They were going to take the lifeboats and leave everybody behind and jump out of the ship. They weren't going to abide, as it were. They were going to get out of the ship and go. But Paul says this until the captain says, I see you over there.

And so the lifeboats were cut away and let, let go into the sea. Because you have to stay on the boat. You got to abide.

You got to remain. Because that's the only way you're going to be saved. Now, abiding in the ship demonstrated faith in what Paul had said.

But there was a group who decided they were not going to abide. They were going overboard because they were terrified.

They did not believe the word of the Lord. He said, but Pastor Kevin, in your analogy, they actually got, they were forced to stay.

[19:42] Yeah. Here's the question. Were they saved? Here's my question. Who cut the ropes? Now, those guys who were jumping, trying to jump ship, if they cut the ropes, that shows something.

But if the ropes were cut for them, they were just in the boat. But they were not really abiding. They were not trusting the word of God, but they were in the boat.

They were lost, even though they were in the boat. They did not believe the word of the Lord. You see, Jesus is talking about people who are in his church.

They hear, but they're not abiding. They're present, but their heart doesn't belong to him. They're in the congregation doing work for God, but the life of God is not flowing through them.

So, Jesus is talking about people who are not saved to begin with. There's no faith. There's no real faith. They look like branches.

[20:58] But there's no life. And at the end, and eventually, it becomes evident. There's no life. And they're thrown away.

And face the judgment of God. Man, that's hard. It makes me tremble. It doesn't mean it's not true.

But it makes me tremble. Because it reminds me of Matthew 7. Do you know Matthew 7? It's a wonderful chapter. The end of the Sermon on the Mount. But in Matthew 7, Jesus, toward the end of this sermon, in verse 17 to 23, he begins talking about fruit.

Verse 16, you will recognize them by their fruits. He's talking specifically about false prophets. But listen to what he says. Every healthy tree bears good fruit.

But the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit. Nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

[22:10] Same imagery. Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits. And then he goes further and says, I think the most scary words in all the Bible. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day, the day of judgment, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name?

And then will I declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

The vine, the life is not there. I never knew you. There's no life. You weren't drawing life from me.

You weren't full. My spirit was not in you to create my life in you. You were religious. You were a religious person. But listen, that's not enough.

[23 : 15] Religion won't save you. You have to have life. And that life, praise God, is the gift of God.

If you're not sure, ask him for life. Hello. If you're not sure, that's okay. Ask Jesus for life. Don't settle for doing religious things.

Like attending worship and being in a small group. Those are all religious things. And they're good things. But Jesus warns us that you can have unhealthy fruit or no fruit.

Both will receive the judgment of God. Rick Phillips says it this way. According to Jesus here and throughout the Gospels, the true mark of those who belong to him and are saved is the bearing of good fruit.

We are not saved by good fruit or any of the work of our own, but only by faith in Christ alone. The good fruit, however, is the only proof that our profession of faith is true and saving.

[24 : 28] Is there fruit in your life that looks like Jesus? The Spirit also causes our abiding to bear fruit in prayer.

Our Lord repeats a promise in verse 7, a promise that our prayers will bear fruit by abiding in him. We can ask whatever we wish.

He said it in chapter 14, verse 4. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. Now he's repeating it again, but he's attaching it to abiding in him.

As we saw, once again, asking in Jesus' name means according to his character. We must pray in keeping with his will and according to his character.

We must pray like Jesus would pray, as it were. We must pray for his glory and not for our greeds. So in verse 7, he makes it clear now that this prayer answering will come as his word abides in us.

[25 : 40] Abide in me, remain in me, live your life dependent on me, and allow my word to abide in you. You abide in me, my word abide in you.

Then you can pray. Now again, the abiding part we got. Now the word abiding in us is simply meaning that one, we know it.

Got to start there. And we're growing in our knowledge. We all got to start somewhere. I mean, you're not going to come to Christ and know the Bible, you know. You're going to have to grow up a little bit.

We're always growing. We're always learning. But that word remaining in you means that word is not something you just read. It's something you are actively involved with.

You're making decisions according to the word of God. You're changing your practice according to the word of God. You are allowing his word to speak to every nook and cranny of your life.

[26 : 45] Remember, the life of the vine flows throughout the branches. So every part of your branch life is receiving the word of the Lord as well as the spirit of God.

The word is going. In other words, you don't have a closet where you say, You can't get in here, Lord. Lord, no, every door is open.

Now, here's the thing. That's growing too. Because there are doors you have closed you don't even know about. And as you abide in the vine and walk with Jesus, he will say, Hold it, Lenard.

That door over there. That one's closed. Let's go look at that. He'll say, Billy. Billy. Now, listen, Billy. We've been hanging out together for 40 years now.

And I noticed over here, you have a no trespassing sign on that closet. Now, we don't have to talk about that.

[27 : 52] There are things you don't know about you that as you abide in the Lord and his word abides in you, that he will reveal to you. And sometimes he'll do it through other people.

Nothing like the body of Christ. To help us know where there's a no trespassing or no fishing sign. The body of Christ.

That's why we need each other. So that that word that's abiding can be massaged. My wife just went to, for her birthday, we got her a massage envy gift thing.

And the gold limp, whatever. And she had Olga. Olga came in. You got knots.

We get knots out. Ha, ha, ha. The word will do that to you.

[29 : 05] God will use, come on, BB. God will use the word to massage. God. You'll be, you'll be, oh, oh, okay.

Lord, back. Now, don't move. Don't get off the table. Don't get off the, don't get off the altar. Live in sacrifice. Don't get off the altar. Stay there and let him continue to.

I'm going to help you with these knots and, oh, you're so tight. You know. It's a beautiful thing. Because when you get up. Woo.

Sandy came home glowing. I was like, I'm going to get me one another. I was, that's what the word does.

And see, it's abiding in you. It's Colossians 3. Let the word of Christ draw in you richly. Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

[30 : 05] With thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do. In word or deed. Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Giving thanks to God the Father. Through him. That's the word. Abiding in you. It affects your singing.

It affects your praying. It affects your living. It's the work of the spirit. But you cooperate. By sitting under the word.

By reading the word. By studying the word. By hearing it preached. And taught. And not saying. When you hear God say something.

But better yet. Lord, I don't know how you're going to do it. But help me. I'm trapped.

[31 : 02] That area. That door. You opened that door, Lord. Oh God. Help me. Have mercy. I don't know what I'm going to do. That's all right. Sit under the word. Call upon the spirit of God.

Get the body. Get your brothers and sisters in Christ. Who are going to help massage the word into your life. Around you. It's how it works, y'all. It's not rocket science. But it does take cooperation.

And then you can pray. He fills you with his word. So you pray his will. You ever pray the word to God? If you don't do that.

Get in the habit of doing that. Pray the word back to God. Pray through the Lord's Prayer. The angels used to pray through the Lord's Prayer. The Psalms.

And the Ten Commandments. I remember doing that sometime. Pray through the Ten Commandments. Pray through the Psalms. Pray through the Lord's Prayer. Make it yours. Make it yours.

[32 : 09] Get in the habit of praying the word back to God. Because the word is what he will keep. Well, I have so much to say.

But I'm going to wrap it up here. Jesus says all of this is for the glory of his father. Verse 8. This is my father glorified that you bear much fruit.

And so prove to be my disciples. That's where it's at. Where is Jesus going? What's the chief end of God? To glorify himself.

And enjoy himself. Remember, the Trinity didn't need us. The Trinity were already in fellowship way before we were ever created. God didn't need to create anything else.

He didn't need to create us. He wasn't lonely. He wasn't desperate for worship. The angels were doing that already. You know, so.

[33 : 10] He is committed to his own glory. And when he brings you in as his child, you get into the family business. And the family business is the exaltation and the glorification of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And that's the best thing that can ever happen to you. The best thing that ever happens to us is that we begin to live what we were created for in the beginning.

To image God for his glory. And now in Christ, you see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

And he says, this exalts my Father. He came that his Father, the cross, is first and foremost about the Son and the Father.

Because without the Father's holy justice, there would be no need for the cross. But because the Father is holy, the Son comes to bear sacrifice.

[34 : 18] Be your sacrifice that you might be led into the glory. That you might behold the face of God. That you might be set free and saved. And that even the whole universe would be touched by the sacrifice of Christ for the glory of the God of heaven.

Hallelujah. So Jesus says, that's what I'm here for. And that's what's going to happen. You will prove yourself to be my disciples. If you abide in me, you will demonstrate you are my disciples.

That my Father might be glorified. We're going to talk more about glory in chapter 17. We'll get there soon. So hang in there. But, I mean, one thing about, you ever wash dishes by hand anymore?

I don't use my dishwasher. Sandy, I don't like using it. I like washing it by, I got it, it gets done. And I'm over, I'm gone. But there's sometimes, Sandy will make, she makes that mac and cheese.

And she makes it with cheese on, but when you let it sit, you get it out and you got to clean that pan. But if you don't clean it right away, you got to soak it.

[35 : 31] I take that pan, I get some dishwashing liquid, some hot water, and I sit in that. I just let that stuff sit in there. Because it's hard to clean it unless you soak it.

When you abide in Christ, you're soaking. And God cleans up our lives bit by bit as we soak in the Spirit of God, in the vine of Christ, letting His Word abiding us.

Because God is just soaking you. And stuff begins to fall off. Sometimes He has to scrape. Pruning, I'll call that pruning.

But it's all right, because He's cleaning you. But abide. Don't run from God's discipline.

Don't run from the Word of God. And don't run from Jesus. Because even when you mess up, family, run to Jesus. The safest place for a sinner is with Jesus.

[36 : 44] If you mess up, don't run away. Go soak it in the vine. Go abide. Draw near. And He'll do the work of cleaning you up. Father in Heaven, thank You for this passage.

And I know, Lord, I wish I could have a better job for You in this. But I know, Lord, You will take what is preached and use it for Your glory and bless Your people and glorify Your name.

So, Father, I commit this message to You and to Your people. To You that You might do Your holy work in all of us. For we all need to remain in the vine and to soak in that wonderful, glorious Spirit of God that lives in Jesus.

So, clean us up. Mold and shape us as You see fit. For Your glory. Amen. Amen.