

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 07/17/05
What it means to be initiated into the secret of the mystery. Part 19.
The mystery of the fruit of the vine.

Joh 15:1-11, *"I [Jesus Christ] am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch [believer] in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away [disciplines]; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it [suffering for blessing], that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean [saved] because of the doctrine [the gospel] which I have spoken to you. Abide in me [stay in fellowship], and I in you [a mandate for cognition of Bible doctrine]. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me [fellowship with God], and I in him [through residual doctrine], he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me [the believer out of fellowship], he is thrown away like a branch [the judgment of the dead works of a believer], and dries up; and they [angels] gather them, and cast them [dead works] into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My indoctrinated ones [students]. "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also 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 made full."*

The disciples did not understand what was to come, so TLJC, with great compassion, told them how to carry on without Him after He left the earth. The information that TLJC gave His men that night is also of prime importance for Christians today. One of the major truths TLJC revealed the last night He was with his men has to do with relationships, an area of great struggle for the Christian.

This chapter falls into 3 sections: the first section (verses 1-11) deals with the relationship of the believer with **Christ**, and that has been our subject. The key word here is *abide*; it appears ten times in the eleven verses. TLJC reveals that the secret of being related to Him is abiding in Him. Thus, the major emphasis is maintaining that living union with the living Lord, the most important information we could ever know or apply. The second part of the chapter (verses 12-17) talks about the relationship of believer with **other believers**, the key word here is *love*. It appears four times in six verses. Once we have established that vital union with our Lord and are maintaining it, we come in contact with other Christians, and we have communion with one another because we have union with our Lord. There is one other relationship that is continually a matter of struggle, that is the believer with **the world**; this is the subject of the last part of the chapter (verses 18-27). The key word here is *hate*, appearing eight times in ten verses. We would expect that from a world that is out of touch with God, and out of union with Christ, because there is no union between the believer and the world.

Verses 1-11 revolve around the symbols of the vine and the branch, symbols rich with meaning to the Jews. What the eagle means to Americans as a national emblem, the vine and the branch meant to the Israelites. The main subject is abiding, and that leads to fruit bearing. Let's see the identity of the vine, the vinedresser, and finally the branch.

First, we see the identity of the vine, Joh 15:1, *"I [Jesus Christ] am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."* The vine is Jesus Christ Himself, unquestionably, since He declares it. Next, the Lord says, *My Father is the vinedresser*. God the Father is the vinedresser, or the

gardener, the one who carries out the work of cultivating, pruning, and working with the vine; that's the Father's job. He is looking over the vineyard, working with the vine and the branches. The branches are found in Joh 15:5, *"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me [fellowship with God], and I in him [through residual doctrine], he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."* There again it is clear that the branch is the child of God, the Christian. In order to bring forth fruit from the branches, God our vinedresser gives us certain seasons that we might pause, look at our lives, and reflect on what direction we're going. It's important to reflect on what you believe and why you believe it, not for the purpose of doubt, but for the purpose of searching more in depth for God. Your future will be no different than your past unless there are some drastic changes. God speaks to the vine and through the vine, Joh 15:2, *"Every branch [believer] in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away [discipline]; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it [suffering for blessing], that it may bear more fruit."* Notice that TLJC says something regarding position ("in Me"), and then He says something regarding production ("bears fruit"), and they are two different things. One has to do with being in Christ; the other has to do with producing fruit.

This vine analogy was given back in the Old Testament, in Isa 5:1-7. Then, as now, the production of the vine was the life of God. God looked at His vineyard (Israel) and wanted to see **reproductions of His life** and didn't find it. God names two reproductions: justice and righteousness, and neither one was present. And that's what He is saying to us in Joh 15. It's remarkable how many people take Joh 15 to refer to evangelism. Evangelism is important, but that is not in Joh 15. Bearing fruit has to do with **reproducing the life of the vine in the fruit of the branch**. The Lord never once commands us to bear fruit. He does command us to abide in Him, and when we abide in Him, fruit comes, and it comes in abundance. The Lord's great concern is that there be a maximum production of fruit.

The idea of abiding in Christ is identical to being filled with the Spirit, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, living the dependent life, or as some have called it the exchanged life. It relates to dealing with sin that occurs in life. A branch that is down in the dirt will never produce good fruit, so the branch must be kept clean. When sin comes to our attention, we acknowledge it, recognize it, and claim His forgiveness. If we do not abide in Him, there will be no fruit. What is the fruit? The fruit is the life of Jesus Christ or His character, as found in Gal 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* This is the kind of fruit the vinedresser wants the vine to produce in the branches. In this passage, the nine words which denote the fruit of the Spirit represent superhuman qualities of character. There is absolutely no way that these qualities could be produced by human ability; they are divine characteristics. They are all considered to be *one* fruit of the Spirit! The Holy Spirit does not produce a few of these in one believer and more or less in another; it's *all* or nothing. If one is present, then all are present and these nine graces constitute the essential elements of Christian character.

Unfortunately, today many Christian leaders try to convince believers that Christian character is a thing to be built by self-effort and self-discipline. This leads to a dependence upon self and human works as the basis for acceptance with God and producing fruit. Remember that there is a curse placed upon the man who trusts in himself and his own ability. It's not the fruit of the believer or the fruit of the ministry; it is the fruit of the Spirit! The nine-fold fruit of the Spirit presents a spiritual portrait of Christ. This character is possible because of the believer's vital union to Christ (Joh 15:5; 1Co 12:12-13), and is produced in those believers who have learned to rely on the indwelling power of God the Holy Spirit.

Let's note a few principles concerning Gal 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Attention should be given to each of these nine words in their order, and we should understand their divine character as well as the desirability of all that they represent. We begin with the word

for *fruit*, the Greek word *karpos* meaning production, and it is in the singular, revealing the fact that God the Holy Spirit has to develop in us fruit with all nine of the characteristics which are then mentioned. The phrase “*of the Spirit*” is *tou* plus *pneumatōs* referring to God the Holy Spirit. This is in the ablative of source, which describes the source who produces the nine-fold fruit! The Greek word *estin* means that *it keeps on being*.

Then the first part of the fruit is mentioned by the Greek word *agape*, translated *love*, impersonal and unconditional. Since the Holy Spirit declares that *agape love* is the greatest virtue of all (1Co 13:13), it is reasonable that it should be first on the list of the fruit of the Spirit. *Agape love* is a relaxed mental attitude love. Relaxation is the first thing that must appear when we are abiding in Christ and learning His word. This means that our mental attitude must be cleansed from mental attitude sins which cause us not to concentrate and keep us from PMA of Bible doctrine. *Agape love* is a mental attitude love which manifests itself through thoughtfulness of others, good manners, being relaxed around others, and avoiding the sins of the tongue. Rom 5:5 says that this love of God is poured out in us by means of the Holy Spirit and doctrine in the soul. Doctrine gives integrity, concentration, the Royal Family honor code, spirituality, and stability, which all in effect add up to genuine love. *Agape love* is also unconditional, meaning you will accept and tolerate people **as you find them**. *Agape love* contains built-in virtue and therefore has capacity for true love in friendship, romance, marriage, and all other human interaction. You know that God the Holy Spirit has produced this love in you when you can handle being the victim of others' mental attitude sins. The love that God the Holy Spirit produces in our life is based entirely in our spiritual integrity, which rests upon consistent perception and metabolization of Bible doctrine. This is one of the great concepts of Christianity, although it is hardly understood. It is the type of love that TLJC told us to operate in concerning our enemies! Mat 5:44, “*But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.*”

Here are some doctrinal principles to enrich your understanding of *agape love*: 1) *Agape love* is that problem-solving device of Christianity which is defined as unconditional love toward all mankind. 2) Being impersonal, *agape love* emphasizes the virtue of the subject rather than attraction to an object or rapport with an object. 3) *Agape love* toward all mankind is the ultimate expression of virtue. It is also the ultimate expression of humility. Without enforced and genuine humility, people are disoriented to life. 4) *Agape love* for all mankind is therefore the ultimate expression of virtue, humility, and objectivity. It is the basis for being receptive to Bible doctrine, which is the basis for growing in grace and knowledge!

So this standard of love which TLJC commands all believers to have is supernatural and totally divine in character. In Joh 13:34-35, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” In 1Jo 3:14-18, “*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his fellow believer is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding or alive in him. We know *agape love* by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*”

In verse 16, John indicates the divine compassion for the lost which led to the sacrifice on the cross. Then in verse 17, the Apostle John indicates also the lack of love in the one who makes no sacrifice for others.

Here are some Biblical expressions of true love: Pro 17:9, “*He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.*” True love does not gossip and malign and repeat things about others. True and godly love covers transgressions. True and godly love operates with impersonal unconditional love even toward enemies, and it prays for those who are persecuting them, Luk 6:27, “*But I say to you who hear, love Your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*” True and godly love does not pass out evil reports about others! True and

godly love is manifested by keeping with doctrine, not putting aside your doctrinal differences! Joh 14:21, "*He who has My doctrines and keeps them, he it is who loves Me;* Believers who truly love God and have the love of God are those who have doctrine resident in their soul. Joh 14:24, *He who does not love Me does not keep My doctrines;* True and godly love also must be according to knowledge of doctrine, and can only come from thinking doctrine, Phi 1:9, *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in epignosis doctrine and all discernment,* 1Pe 4:8, *Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.* Real love covers a multitude of sins; it does not repeat the failures of others! The love found in the Bible is love that can only be developed from doctrine. 1Jo 4:20, *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.* True and godly love has respect for the Royal Family; it does not try to destroy the Royal Family for selfish gain, 1Jo 5:2. All of these principles are related to virtue love which is produced by God the Holy Spirit.

Gal 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* Next we have the second part of the fruit; it is the Greek word *chara*, translated joy, this is inner happiness and contentment. Joy is simply sharing and experiencing the happiness of God. God's happiness is a relaxed mental attitude and an opponent to pride and arrogance. It expresses itself magnificently in the friendship and conversation between true friends. True happiness or joy is the monopoly from the Lord, a treasure in the soul, and therefore should be guarded carefully. This is a happiness based on capacity, and not in the things of this world. Satan's myth of arrogance is that people and pleasant circumstances in life can make you happy. Satan's propaganda is that money, success, pleasure, social life, sexual life, public approbation, fame, material things, travel, health, and pleasant circumstances in life can make you happy. This may be true under certain circumstances and with certain limitations; however, it doesn't last. These things may be pleasurable, but they don't carry you in times of suffering. The rich man in our Lord's parable (Luke 12:16-21) discovered to his shock and dismay that money and pleasure give a happiness that is temporary, while God offers us a happiness that is permanent.

True happiness comes from spiritual wealth, not material wealth; it comes from giving, not getting. If we bring happiness to others, we cannot stop it from coming to us. What God has provided for us in sharing His happiness is a **permanent factor** and, like agape love, is also a problem-solving device. Anything that is worthwhile is worthwhile in adversity as well as in prosperity. If you are dependent on any person or set of circumstances for happiness, you are weak and you do not have happiness. But if, as a believer in Jesus Christ, you have been faithful in the P.M.A. of Bible doctrine and have advanced to any stage of spiritual adulthood; you are not only a strong person, but you have that great inner happiness. God's happiness is not dependent on environment, associations, or circumstances of prosperity or adversity. As the ruler of this world, Satan rules and controls through a policy called arrogance (in contrast to God's policy of grace). Satan's administration of pseudo-happiness to any believer or unbeliever can only exist when that person is involved in the cosmic system; primarily in cosmic one, where through arrogance, any capacity for happiness is destroyed. The presence of arrogance in your soul is a guarantee of unhappiness. Arrogance includes jealousy; you cannot be jealous and be happy. It includes self-pity, a guilt complex, implacability, vindictiveness, hatred, and revenge (motivation and function). You cannot have these and be happy. The arrogance complex deceives mankind into false notions about what constitutes happiness. Pseudo-happiness can be stimulation, fun, entertainment, or something that is enjoyable, but it isn't permanent; it is momentary. This is called pseudo-happiness because, beyond that moment of a good time, there are bad times, routine times, or dull times. When you are bored or facing a serious problem, that past temporary happiness does not sustain you. People are not carried by good times, Job 20:5, *The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the happiness of the godless momentary?*

Perfect happiness is not only a problem-solving device, but it is a basis for capacity for life. Once you have capacity for happiness in your soul, then you can be happy with whatever life has to offer. The principle of happiness must be related to the PPOG for your life.

Let's get some principles down about happiness as it relates to abiding in Christ and honoring His word: 1) You cannot build your happiness on the details of life: money, success, pleasure, social life, friends, relatives, health, sex, or status symbols. 2) You cannot build your happiness on pleasant or improved environment. This is one of the reasons why people travel and take vacations because they think a change of environment makes them happy. 3) You cannot build your happiness on people, romance, marriage, friendship, children, or social activity. 4) You cannot build your happiness by changing the Devil's world through reform crusades, social engineering, violence, civil disobedience, or revolution. 5) You cannot build your happiness on someone else's unhappiness.

This is what you cannot do and be happy.

Finally, here is what God offers you: 1) The perfect happiness of God is based on rejection of human viewpoint and acceptance of divine viewpoint (Psa 1:1). 2) The perfect happiness of God depends on respect for the Lord and Bible doctrine (Psa 112:1). 3) The perfect happiness of God can only be attained when the believer seeks God with all his right lobe (Psa 119:2). 4) The perfect happiness of God depends upon the execution of the PPOG in the believer's life (Psa 128:1). 5) The perfect happiness of God is related to the daily intake of Bible Doctrine (Pro 8:34). 6) The perfect happiness of God lives in your doctrinal convictions (Rom 14:22). 7) The perfect happiness of God is related to metabolization of doctrine, Jer 15:16, *Your words were found and I ate them, and Your doctrines became happiness for me and the delight of my heart*; 8) The perfect happiness of God is related to understanding His grace policy, Psa 31:7, *I will rejoice and be happy in the provision of Your grace*.

Again Gal 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law*. The fruit is the life of God in the souls of man, and it is produced by staying rightly related to the vine. So, the first manifestation of fruit produced by the branch that abides in the vine is *agape love* or *virtue-love* which is impersonal and unconditional. The second part of the fruit is that inner happiness and contentment.