

Week 3 Suffering to Hope Spiritual Practices: Abiding in Him Yields Refining and Illumination of our Characters

John 15: 1-12 (ESV) “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ 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. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 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. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. ¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Each day, meditate on the words of John 15:1-12. Then spend time praying into the verses to focus on for that particular day. Respond to the questions in your mind/heart (perhaps journaling), and pray into these questions and your answers. Feel free to skip questions and/or consider your own as you reflect on the verse(s).

1. Monday – John 15:1-3 Jesus is the true vine, God is the gardener who tends and prunes it (pruning → suffering)

- *Jesus is the true vine. What are the untrue vines that we (you, our church, our culture) have remained in, and how has that led to being fruitless?*
- *What does it mean that not only branches that don't bear fruit, but even ones that DO will be pruned? Where do you see that in your circumstances? What branches within you are being pruned in this challenging season?*
- *What branches within our church body, and within our culture, are being pruned in this challenging season?*
- *Meditate on Jesus as the true vine. Pray for the pruning process you, we as a church, and our culture are going through, that God would help us to receive it and remain in Him.*

2. Tuesday – John 15:4 Abiding/remaining in Jesus in suffering

- *Reflect on yourself – all of who you are – where have you remained in Jesus. What has remaining looked like? What fruit have been borne?*
- *Where do you see that have not remained in Jesus and/or have attempted to bear fruit apart from Him?*
- *Meditate on abiding. Ask God for strength to abide, especially in any suffering or challenges. Ask God to show you specifically how, e.g., in your daily practices, to be abiding in Jesus through this time.*

3. Wednesday – John 15:5 Spiritual fruit through abiding in Jesus in suffering

- *We need to abide/remain in Jesus to bear much fruit. How do you see how remaining in Jesus, particularly in suffering, is or will in the future be producing spiritual fruit? Consider what those fruit are and/or creatively consider what those fruit might be in the future.*
- *Pray into your circumstances and for the strength to abide, even in suffering. Pray into and ask the Lord Jesus for abundant spiritual fruit to come through your life, and even through suffering.*

4. Thursday – John 15:6-8 The Lord commands us to wish for and ask for fruit from our lives, in suffering

- *Our Lord asks us to, as we abide in Jesus and have his word abide in us, to ask for whatever we wish. As you abide in Jesus, and as you reflect on His Word, how does this shape “whatever you wish”?*
- *How have your wishes been transformed by Jesus and by His Word, perhaps especially in your suffering?*
- *Pray that your wishes, your hopes, your dreams would be transformed by Jesus to become more and more the wishes of Jesus’ heart. Ask God for your heart’s wish(es) for fruit and that this would come to fruition in the name of Jesus, according to His perfect will.*

5. Friday – John 15:9-10 Experiencing Jesus’ intimacy and love in abiding in suffering

- *Abiding in Jesus means being in His love. How have you experienced the love of Jesus even as you have suffered? Even if hard to see, consider ways Jesus is present with and near to you in this difficult time.*
- *Abiding in love means keeping God’s commandments – which is most important? Mark 12:29-31: Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Consider how you can love God with all of who you are, and love others, even in suffering.*
- *Meditate on God’s amazing love, pray for greater love to pour into your heart to love Jesus and others*

6. Saturday – John 15:11-12 Abiding in Jesus’ love, we are to love one other, willing to suffer on behalf of others’

- *Jesus calls us to love each other, as He loves us. He calls us to lay ourselves down for others. Consider how you might lay your own needs down to love someone today. Pray for your heart to overflow with love as you lay yourself down for them.*