

# Lessons from the Gospel of John (17): Life's Indwelling for the Building of God's Habitation (2) —The Son's Vine

### Bible reading

*You may find it helpful to also read the entire case found in John 15:1-17.*

#### **John 15:1, 4-5, 8, 16**

**1** I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.

**4** Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

**5** I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

**8** In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so you will become My disciples.

**16** You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.

### Introduction

John chapter 15 is a continuation and full development of the previous chapter. The indwelling of Christ in the believers as life issues in the Father's house, a mutual dwelling place of God and man for the Father's rest and satisfaction. In this chapter we see the corporate building from another angle and with a different function. The vine tree here is for the Father's glorification and spreading through the release and dispensing of His rich life expressed in fruit-bearing. In this chapter we also see a full revelation of the vine and the branches as a living organism of the Triune God in the divine dispensing. This universal vine provides a clear picture of the focus of God's economy, which is to dispense all the riches of His life into us, to grow in us, and to be fully expressed through us, the branches, as the propagation and multiplication of life.

### Bible study reading

*Please prayerfully read through the following portions of ministry related to this lesson.*

In 15:1-11 we see that the vine and the branches are an organism to glorify the Father by expressing the riches of the divine life...The church, the Body of Christ, is not an organization but an organism. What is the difference between an organization and an organism? A table, for example, is an organization, for many pieces of wood are assembled to form one entity. Why is a table an organization and not an organism? Because in the table as a unit there is not one organ. There are no organs in a table because there is no life in a table...In John 15 this organism is likened to a vine tree. The grapevine is used as a figure of this wonderful organism. Within this vine tree we have the tree itself and all of its branches. The Lord Jesus said that the vine tree is just Himself (v. 1). He is the tree, and we are the branches of this tree. By this clear picture we can see that we are the branching out of the tree, for the branches are the branching out of the vine tree...This is not an organization; it is an organism that has life with many organic elements, organs, and organic systems growing in it. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 33, section 2)

The husbandman is God the Father. The Father as the husbandman is the source, the author, the planner, the planter, the life, the substance, the soil, the water, the air, the sunshine, and everything to the vine. As we have already pointed out, whatever God the Father is, has, and can do has all been embodied in the vine tree. The Son as the vine is the center of God's economy and the embodiment of all the riches of the Father. The Father, by cultivating the Son, works Himself with all of His riches into this vine, and eventually the vine expresses the Father through its branches in a corporate way. This is the Father's economy in the universe. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 33, section 4)

The vine and the branches are an organism to glorify the Father. What is the meaning of the word *glorify* here? It means to have the intent, the content, the inner life, and the inner riches released from within and expressed. The vine and the branches are an organism to glorify the Father, to have the intent, the content, the inner life, and the inner riches released and expressed from within. As an organism to glorify the Father, the vine and the branches express the riches of the divine life. When the vine tree bears clusters of grapes, that is the time when the riches of the divine life are expressed. This expression is the glorification of the Father because the Father is the divine life. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 33, section 2)

No plant other than the vine tree can illustrate adequately the living relationship between us and the Lord. We are the branches of the vine. What kind of relationship does this suggest to you? The branches are good for nothing except to express the vine. All that the vine is and has is expressed through the branches. Individually, the branches are the regenerated ones. Corporately, they are the church, the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). The branches, the believers in the Son, are for the expression of the Son with the Father through the fruit-bearing. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 33, section 5)

## Going deeper

*Please read or listen to these materials for an in-depth study of this lesson.*

### Further reading:

[\*Life-study of John\*, msg. 33](#)

### Radio broadcast link:

Broadcast 37, [\*The Organism of the Triune God in the Divine Dispensation \(1\)\*](#)

### Footnotes from Recovery Version of the New Testament:

John 15:1, footnote 2

John 15:8, footnote 1

John 15:16, footnotes 1 and 2

1 Corinthians 6:17, footnote 1

### Questions for personal or corporate study:

*References in brackets indicate readings or broadcasts that may be helpful in answering the questions.*

- Explain how the vine tree is an organism in the divine dispensing and portrays the focus of God's eternal purpose. (*Life-study of John*, Message 33, sections 1 and 3)
- From your own experience, consider how we can practically abide as branches in Christ as the vine tree.
- What is fruit-bearing according to John 15? How does this differ from our natural, traditional concepts of how to preach the gospel? (Broadcast 37)

## Next week

### Life's Indwelling for the Building of God's Habitation (3)—The Spirit's Work

The vine tree is the best plant to show both our relationship with the Lord and the propagation and multiplication of life. We have become joined as one with Christ in an organic union (1 Cor. 6:17) to become members of His Body and parts of Christ. Furthermore, a vine is known not for its blossoming or materials but for its expressing of the riches of life. Today our crucial need is to abide in Christ so that He can abide in us to be mingled with us to the fullest extent that He would practically be everything to us in our experience. Next week we will see the work of the Spirit that consummates the mingling of divinity with humanity in John 16. The mingling of divinity with humanity is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world and to glorify the Son by transmitting all that the Father and the Son have to the believers.

### Works Cited

Lee, Witness. *Life-study of John*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985. [www.ministrybooks.org](http://www.ministrybooks.org)

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Bower House, Orange Tree Hill, Romford, Essex, RM4 1PB