

# The Most Excellent Way

## Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

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### “The Divine Flow of Life”

#### HEART ATTITUDE: Devoted to God

The grapevine is a prolific plant. A single vine bears many grapes. In the Old Testament, grapes symbolize Israel’s fruitfulness in doing God’s work on the earth. In the New Testament, Jesus is the vine, and God is the husbandman (gardener, farmer). The branches are all who claim to be followers of Christ. The fruitful branches are true believers who, by their living union with Christ, produce much fruit. Those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment will be separated from the vine. Unproductive followers are as good as dead and will be cut off and cast aside.

#### JOHN 15:1-17 (NIV)

*Jesus said: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener.*

*<sup>2</sup>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.*

*<sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.*

*<sup>4</sup>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.*

*<sup>5</sup>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.*

*<sup>6</sup>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.*

*<sup>7</sup>If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*

*<sup>8</sup>This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.*

*<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love.*

*<sup>10</sup>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.*

*<sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

*<sup>12</sup>My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*

*<sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*

*<sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command.*

*<sup>15</sup>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.*

*<sup>16</sup>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.*

*<sup>17</sup>This is My command: Love each other.*

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#### • FOCUSING

1. What are the marks of a true friendship?

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2. What do you do to maintain your friendships?

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• **STUDYING GOD’S WORD**

3. How are Jesus and the Father related? (15:1)

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4. What is Jesus and who is the Father? (15:1)

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5. How does the gardener tend to the branches that bear fruit and the branches that do not? (15:2)

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Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning: (1) separating and (2) cutting back branches. Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith. But branches that don’t bear fruit are cut off at the trunk, because not only are they worthless, they often infect the rest of the tree. Those who won’t bear fruit for God or who try to block the efforts of God’s followers will be cut off from the divine flow of life.

6. What did Jesus say the branches must do in order to bear fruit? (15:4)

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7. Who are the branches? (15:5)

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Fruit is not limited to soul-winning. Jesus says that answered prayer, joy and love are fruit later (15:7, 11-12). (See “Jesus Teaches About Spiritual Fruit,” Sermon on the Mount Study No. 21.) Additional fruit, qualities of the Christian’s character, are described in Galatians 5:22-24 and I Peter 1:5-8.

8. What did Jesus say would happen to the branches that did not remain in Him? (15:6)

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Remaining (abiding) in Christ means:

- (1) Believing He is God’s Son: *“If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God” (1 John 4:15, NIV).*
- (2) Receiving Him as Savior and Lord: *“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—” (John 1:12, NIV).*
- (3) Doing what God says: *“Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us” (1 John 3:24, NIV).*
- (4) Continuing in faith: *“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father” (1 John 2:24, NIV).*
- (5) Relating to the community of believers, Christ’s body (15:12).

9. What privilege was given to the branches that remained in the vine? (15:7)

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10. What would be demonstrated by the disciples' bearing much fruit? (15:8)

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When a vine bears much fruit, God is glorified, for daily He sends the sunshine and rain to make the crops grow, and He constantly nurtures each tiny plant and prepares it to blossom. What a moment of glory for the Lord of the harvest when the harvest is brought into the barns, safe and ready for use! He made it all happen! This farming analogy shows how God is glorified when people come into a right relationship with Him and begin to bear much fruit in their lives.

Many people try to do go, be honest, and do what is right. But Jesus says the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to Him, like a branch attached to the Vine. Apart from Him our efforts are unfruitful. Are you receiving the nourishment and life offered by Christ, the Vine? If not, you are missing a special gift He has for you.

11. What did Jesus urge His disciples to do? (15:9)

12. How were Jesus' disciples to remain in His love? (15:10)

13. Why did Jesus talk with His disciples about vines and branches? (15:11)

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When things are going well, we feel contented. When hardships come, we sink into depression. But real joy transcends these waves of circumstances. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. When our lives are intertwined with His, He will help us walk through adversity without sinking into debilitating lows and manage prosperity without moving into deceptive highs — without using substances to relieve the emotional pain or intensify the emotional highs. The joy of living with Jesus daily keeps us levelheaded no matter how high or low our circumstances.

14. What command did Jesus give His disciples? (15:12)

15. What is the greatest manifestation of love? (15:13)

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We are to love one another as Jesus loved us, and He loved us enough to give His life for us. He may not have died for someone, but there are many other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, giving . . . Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.

16. Who did Jesus say were His friends? (15:14)

17. Why did Jesus call His disciples' friends? (15:15)

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Because Jesus is Lord and Master, He should call us slaves. Instead He calls us friends. How comforting and reassuring to be chosen as His friends. Because He is Lord and Master, our obedience should be unqualified and blind, but Jesus asks us to obey Him because we love Him.

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18. Why did Jesus choose His disciples? (15:16)

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Jesus made the first choice: to love and to die for us, to offer us eternal life.  
We make the next choice: to accept or reject His offer.  
Without His choice, we would have no choice.

19. What was Jesus' command? (15:17)

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Christians will get plenty of hatred from the world; from each other we need love, acceptance and support. Jesus commands that we love our brothers and sisters. The saddest thing to her in Christianity is that Christians cannot be trusted. Are you trustworthy?

• **UNDERSTANDING**

20. How are we to remain in Jesus? Why?

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21. What does it mean to bear fruit as a Christian?

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22. How are we to bear fruit?

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23. When is it difficult to develop and maintain a personal relationship with Jesus?

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24. In what way has God been removing "dead" or useless pieces from your character?

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25. In what way is your joy complete?

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26. When do you struggle with loving others the way Jesus has loved you?

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27. What kind of friend are you to Jesus?

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28. Why is it hard to be Jesus' friend?

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• **DOING THE WORD**

29. What steps will you take to develop a more intimate relationship with Jesus?

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30. How will you be a better friend to Jesus beginning today?

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31. How will you be a better friend to fellow Christians?

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*May the Lord richly bless you as you seek to enrich your relationship with Him!*