



Secrets Of The Abundant Life



**Outlines Based Upon Jesus' Discourse In John 15
And Related Passages Pertaining To The Abundant Life**

MARK A. COPELAND

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The outlines were developed in the course of my ministry as a preacher of the gospel. Feel free to use them as they are, or adapt them to suit your own personal style. To God be the glory!

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MarkCopeland@aol.com

Secrets Of The Abundant Life

The Secret Of Living Is Bearing Fruit

INTRODUCTION

1. Suppose I could offer you a life that is guaranteed to give you...
 - a. A “**joy**” that is greater than any other
 - b. A “**blessedness**” that is happiness in its fullest measure
 - c. An “**assurance**” of entering the everlasting kingdom of our Lord
 - d. A “**peace**” that surpasses understanding-- Would you be interested?
2. Of course, I myself cannot offer such a life; but Jesus can and does! As He stated in **Jn 10:10**...

“...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

3. Jesus offers this “abundant life” not only by His sacrificial death on the cross, but also by His teachings recorded by His apostles; notice **Jn 15:11**...

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

4. Through His teachings, then, we can learn the “**Secrets Of The Abundant Life**”...
 - a. Many of which are found in this very chapter (**Jn 15**)
 - b. Where Jesus pictures Himself as the Vine and His disciples as the branches - cf. **Jn 15:1-5**
5. As branches we are to bear fruit, and this leads us to the first secret of abundant living: “**The Secret Of Living Is Bearing Fruit**”

[To appreciate how this is true, consider...]

I. DIFFERENT KINDS OF FRUIT WE ARE TO BEAR

A. WINNING SOULS TO CHRIST AND HELPING THEM GROW...

1. Paul speaks of this kind of “fruit” in **Ro 1:13**
2. One characteristic of a branch bearing fruit is that it produces a product identical to itself
3. Therefore, one way a disciple bears fruit is by producing another disciple!

B. SHARING WITH THOSE IN NEED...

1. Paul speaks of contributing to the poor as a “fruit” in **Ro 15:25-28**
2. In His own way, Jesus certainly did this - cf. **2 Co 8:9**
3. So if the Vine did this, we should expect His branches to do the same - cf. **1 Jn 3:16-18**

C. DEVELOPING CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER...

1. Notice that “the fruit of the Spirit” is the development of certain graces - **Ga 5:22-23**
2. One who abounds in such qualities is growing in the “knowledge of Jesus Christ” - **2 Pe 1:5-8**
3. Indeed, he is being “renewed...according to the image of Him who created him” - cf. **Co 3:9-11**

D. PRAISING GOD AND GIVING THANKS...

1. The author of Hebrews describes such activities as a sort of “fruit” - **He 13:15**
2. Again, the Vine was known for such behavior - cf. **Lk 10:21; Jn 11:41**
3. Should His branches do any less?

[These are different kinds of “fruits” we can bear as “branches” of the “Vine.” But how does bearing such fruit make for the “abundant life” which Jesus promised? Consider...]

II. THE BENEFITS OF BEARING SUCH FRUIT

A. THERE IS GREAT “JOY” FOR THOSE WHO WIN SOULS...

1. John says that there is “no greater joy” - **3 Jn 3-4**
2. Paul’s converts at Thessalonica were his “pride and joy” - cf. **1 Th 2:19-20**
3. So those involved in the winning and confirming of souls for Christ find great joy as they see the fruits of their labors

B. THERE IS GREAT “HAPPINESS” FOR THOSE WHO SHARE THEIR POSSESSIONS...

1. They learn by experience the truthfulness of Jesus’ teachings...
2. Who said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” - **Ac 20:35**
3. The word “blessed” can be translated “O how very happy”, so there is greater happiness in giving than in receiving

C. THERE IS GREAT “ASSURANCE” FOR THOSE WHO DEVELOP CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER...

1. Those in whom “the fruit of the Spirit” is produced are free from any condemnation of law - cf. **Ga 5:23b; Ro 8:1**
2. Those who abound in the “knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (i.e., develop the graces described) have the assurance of an “abundant entrance” into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord - **2 Pe 1:8-11**
3. For example, those who love in deed and truth have an assurance of their salvation - **1 Jn 3:18-19**

D. THERE IS GREAT “PEACE” FOR THOSE GIVEN TO THANKSGIVING...

1. For those with the “attitude of gratitude”, there is the “peace of God” - cf. **Ph 4:6-7**
2. A peace which...
 - a. “Surpasses all understanding”!
 - b. “Will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”!

CONCLUSION

1. A life filled with...
 - a. **Joy**
 - b. **Happiness**
 - c. **Assurance**
 - d. **Peace**...surely that is the “abundant life”!
2. Thus “**The Secret Of Living Is Bearing Fruit**”, and this “abundant life” is available to only those who will “bear fruit” as “branches” of the “True Vine” (Jesus Christ)!
3. But is there a secret to bearing fruit? Indeed there is, and our next lesson will seek to discern from **Jn 15** what that secret is

For the time being, if you have not yet become a “branch” of the “True Vine”, have you given serious consideration to becoming one...?

Secrets Of The Abundant Life

The Secret Of Bearing Fruit Is Abiding

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous lesson we saw that **“The Secret Of Living Is Bearing Fruit”**...
 - a. As disciples of Jesus, we are to Him as branches are to the vine
 - b. Bearing fruit is our primary responsibility as branches
 - c. In the very act of bearing fruit, we experience the **“abundant life”** that Jesus offers:
 - 1) **Joy** for those who win souls to Christ
 - 2) **Happiness** for those who share with the less fortunate
 - 3) **Assurance** for those developing Christ-like qualities
 - 4) **Peace** for those offering the fruit of prayer and praise
2. In contrast, those “branches” that do not bear fruit are in danger of becoming cut off from the vine...
 - a. **“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;” - Jn 15:2a**
 - b. In other words, those disciples who do not bear fruit will be “cut off” from Jesus by the Father!
- Jn 15:1-2a
 - c. How then can we be sure to be fruitful as branches of the vine?

[We have seen that the secret to living is bearing fruit...what is the secret of bearing fruit?]

I. DISCERNING THE SECRET OF BEARING FRUIT

A. NOTICE HOW OFTEN JESUS USES THE WORD “ABIDE”...

1. In ten verses, he uses the word ten times! - **Jn 15:4 (3 times), 5, 6, 7 (2 times), 9, 10 (2 times)**
2. Why is this word mentioned over and over again? Because...

B. THE SECRET OF BEARING FRUIT IS ABIDING...!

1. A branch does not bear fruit by struggling, but by abiding in the vine...
 - a. When you walk through a vineyard, do you detect tension and struggle among the branches as they bear fruit?
 - b. No! Instead there is a calm & confident resting - an abiding - as branches draw their life from the vine in order to bear fruit
2. In the Christian life, we experience first a “union”, then a “communion”...
 - a. When we become Christians, there is first a “union” with Christ
 - 1) Paul describes this union as taking place in baptism - cf. **Ga 3:27; Ro 6:3-5**
 - 2) Having “put on Christ” and being “united together” with Him, our union with Him is like that of a branch to a vine - **Jn 15:5a**
 - b. As we “abide” in this union, we have “communion” or fellowship with Christ in a very close and personal way - **Jn 15:4a**
3. This “communion” or mutual abiding with the vine (Christ) enables the branches (disciples) to bear fruit!

- a. The branch receives from the vine the strength necessary to bear fruit; so the Christian receives from Christ strength to do what he could not do on his own - **Jn 15:4-5**
- b. Of the strength or power available to those in Christ, Paul often wrote...
 - 1) In his own life, and in the lives of others - **Ph 4:13,19; Co 1:29**
 - 2) He wanted others to know of the great power available to them - **Ep 1:18-20; 3:20**
 - 3) He often gave examples of how this power could transform people
 - a) E.g., the Corinthians - **1 Co 6:9-11**
 - b) Even himself - **1 Ti 1:12-16; 1 Co 15:9-10**

[So the secret of bearing fruit is abiding in Christ and He in us. Through such communion and fellowship, we benefit from Christ's strength so that we may be able to bear fruit and in turn experience the "abundant life."

Are we abiding in Christ, and He in us? We need not wonder, for there are several things that will be manifest in our lives when we are abiding in Christ...]

II. EVIDENCES OF ABIDING IN CHRIST

A. BEARING MUCH FRUIT... - Jn 15:5b

1. This is the most obvious sign
2. When one is consistently bearing the sort of fruit described in the previous lesson, that is certainly good evidence of a close relationship with Christ!
3. Whereas the lack of fruit can be an indication of one of three things...
 - a. Either there never was a "union" to begin with
 - b. Or there was a union, but "communion" is not taking place, leaving one in jeopardy of being "cut off"
 - c. Or there was a union but the branch has already been cut off!

B. THE FATHER'S PRUNING... - Jn 15:2b

1. We should expect to see evidence of the Father's work in our lives, in which...
 - a. Things that would hinder us are being "cut away"
 - b. We are ever being developed so as to be more "fruitful"
2. One way that the Father does this is through the Word...
 - a. Notice **Jn 15:3** - "clean" (katharos) is closely related to "prune" (kathairo)
 - b. The Word of God can be a very powerful instrument in the hands of the Lord - cf. **He 4:12-13; Ep 6:17**
 - c. As we read or hear it, it can expose us for what we really are, and when received properly, help us make great changes - cf. **Ja 1:22-25**
3. So if we are not constantly growing through the influence of the Word of God, clearly we are not abiding in Christ!

C. A GROWING SENSE OF DEPENDENCE... - Jn 15:5c

1. We will come to realize that apart from Christ we can do nothing (of real, lasting value)
2. But those who abide in Christ will become like Paul, who realized the true source of his strength: his union with Christ! - cf. **2 Co 3:5; Ga 2:20; Ph 4:15**

D. OUR PRAYERS BEING ANSWERED... - Jn 15:7, 16

1. As we abide in Christ, we will find our prayers being answered
2. Of course, such answered prayers will depend upon several factors:
 - a. That we keep His commandments and do the things that please Him - **1 Jn 3:22**
 - b. That our requests be according to God's will - **1 Jn 5:14**
 - c. That our requests not be for selfish gain - **Ja 4:3**
3. But one who abides in Christ should be able to look back and see evidence of answered prayers (though not always answered in the way we expected)

E. LOVE FOR CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE... - Jn 15:9,12

1. Since God is love (**1 Jn 4:8**) and Christ is God (**Jn 1:1**), those who abide in Christ will abide in love - **1 Jn 4:7-8**
2. Indeed, Christ commands us to love one another - **Jn 15:17**
3. And those who do not love the children of God, have not known God - **1 Jn 3:14; 4:8, 20-21**

F. AN INNER JOY... - Jn 15:11

1. Not the absence of trial or trouble, but a joy borne of the assurance that Christ has overcome the world, and that we can also through Him - **Jn 16:33; cf. Ph 4:4**
2. Indeed, one of the first visible signs of backsliding (of not abiding in Christ) is the loss of joy, especially about things spiritual! - cf. **Ps 32:3; 51:12**

CONCLUSION

1. These, then, are just a few of the evidences that we are abiding in Christ...
 - a. Bearing much fruit
 - b. The Father's pruning
 - c. A growing sense of dependence
 - d. Our prayers being answered
 - e. Love for Christ and His people
 - f. An inner joy
2. To be sure, not every believer who abides in Christ will have **all** these blessings in the **same degree** at the **same time**...
 - a. But they will be present in some measure, and they will be strong enough to be evident (to ourselves at least, if not always to others)
 - b. And they should always be **increasing!** - **Jn 15:2; cf. 2 Pe 1:8**
3. It is good for us as branches to examine ourselves regularly to see if we are truly abiding in Christ - cf. **2 Co 13:5**
 - a. For the secret of the abundant life is bearing fruit
 - b. And the secret of bearing fruit is abiding in Christ
 - c. And so if we are not abiding in Christ, we cannot enjoy the abundant life!

But what's the secret of abiding in Christ? Our next lesson will examine **that** secret...

Secrets Of The Abundant Life

The Secret Of Abiding Is Obeying

INTRODUCTION

1. In our examination of the “**Secrets Of The Abundant Life,**” we have seen thus far...
 - a. **The secret to living is bearing fruit**, for in the very act of bearing fruit we experience the joy, happiness, assurance and peace which constitutes the “abundant life”
 - b. **The secret to bearing fruit is abiding**, for as we “abide in Christ” (**Jn 15:5**) He provides the strength which enables us to bear fruit - cf. **Ph 4:13**
2. But what is the secret to abiding in Christ? How can we be sure to have access to the strength that Jesus provides?

[Again we turn to Jesus’ discourse on the vine and the branches as recorded in **John 15...**]

I. THE SECRET OF ABIDING

A. THE SECRET OF ABIDING IS OBEYING - OBEYING THE COMMANDS OF JESUS...

1. As stated by Jesus...
 - a. By keeping His commands we abide in His love - **Jn 15:10a**
 - b. By keeping His commands we will be His friends - **Jn 15:14**
2. And restated by His beloved disciple, John - **1 Jn 3:24a**

B. THE PRINCIPLE OF ABIDING THROUGH OBEYING...

1. Governed Jesus’ relationship with His Father while on earth
 - a. He kept His Father’s commandments, and so abided in His love - **Jn 15:10b**
 - b. Passages which illustrate Jesus’ desire to keep His Father’s Will - **Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38**
2. And should govern our conduct as Christians as well
 - a. We abide in Christ by keeping His commandments - **1 Jn 2:3-6**
 - b. Otherwise we prove ourselves to be liars if we profess to know Him and do not keep His word!

[And so “**the secret to abiding is obeying.**” This may surprise some, but the importance of obedience is stressed throughout the Word of God...]

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE

A. AS STRESSED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT...

1. With the nation of Israel
 - a. At their beginning as a nation - **Deu 10:12,13**
 - b. Later, as the prophets tried to turn them from their apostasy - **Isa 1:18-20**
2. With the example of King Saul - **1 Sam 15:22-23**

3. As concluded by Solomon in his search for meaning - **Ecc 12:13**

B. AS STRESSED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT...

1. By Jesus, on several occasions
 - a. During the sermon on the mount - **Mt 7:21-23, 24-27; Lk 6:46**
 - b. In describing His true family - **Mk 3:31-35**
 - c. In giving the "Great Commission" - **Mt 28:18-20**
2. By the apostles in their preaching and teaching
 - a. E.g., the apostle Peter - **Ac 10:34,35,48**
 - b. E.g., the apostle Paul - **Ac 17:30; Ro 6:17-18**

CONCLUSION

1. One cannot read much of God's Word without realizing that obedience to God's **commands** are essential if we are going to enjoy God's **blessings** !
2. One verse that expresses this well is **He 5:9**, where speaking of Jesus it is said...

"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,"

3. Have you obeyed the commands of Christ and His apostles? Consider just a few commands that you must obey if you are going to abide in Christ, and He in you...
 - a. Believe on the name of Jesus Christ - **1 Jn 3:23**
 - b. Repent of our sins - **Ac 17:30**
 - c. Be baptized - **Mt 28:18-19**
 - d. Grow in the knowledge of Christ - **2 Pe 3:18**
 - e. Do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together - **He 10:24-25**
 - f. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly - **Co 3:16**
 - g. Devote yourself to prayer - **Co 4:2**
4. To those who faithfully obey Jesus, to them are given the comforting words of **Re 22:14**...

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city."

The secret to living is bearing fruit;
The secret to bearing fruit is abiding;
The secret to abiding is obeying;

Have you obeyed Jesus?

Secrets Of The Abundant Life

The Secret Of Obeying Is Loving

INTRODUCTION

1. In previous lessons I have endeavored to stress “**Secrets Of The Abundant Life**” which Jesus offers to His disciples, based upon His discourse in **John 15** and related passages...
 - a. The secret of living is bearing fruit
 - b. The secret of bearing fruit is abiding
 - c. The secret of abiding is obeying
2. But what is the secret of obeying? The subtitle makes it clear: “**The Secret Of Obeying Is Loving**”

[To appreciate this truth more fully, let's consider the different...]

I. LEVELS OF OBEDIENCE

A. THE LEVEL OF “FEAR”...

1. Where we obey because we know what will happen if we don't - cf. **Ep 5:5-7**
2. Now, there is certainly a place for a proper “fear of the Lord”
 - a. Which can motivate us to initially turn to God - cf. **Ac 10:1-2, 34-35**
 - b. Which can continue to motivate us in our service to the Lord - cf. **Ph 2:12**
 - c. And which should certainly motivate us to repent when we have disobeyed God - cf. **He 10:26-31**
3. But the Lord would have us progress beyond fear as the only motive for obedience
 - a. Jesus indicated that He desires our relationship to be much closer and loving - cf. **Jn 15:15**
 - 1) A “slave-master” relationship is based upon fear
 - 2) But a relationship based upon “friendship” is what Jesus wants
 - b. Fear, while proper in its place, can rob us of the real joy that God wants us to experience when as we obey Him
 - 1) Motivation based solely on fear buildings walls instead of bridges
 - 2) As John wrote: “he who fears has not been made perfect in love” - **1 Jn 4:18**

B. THE LEVEL OF “SELFISHNESS”...

1. We obey because of what we know we will get in return
2. This attitude was manifested by Peter on one occasion - cf. **Mt 19:27**
3. The difference between the level of “fear” and the level of “selfishness” can be easily demonstrated in our children...
 - a. Some children will obey parents to avoid discipline (the level of fear)
 - b. Other children will obey parents to incur favor (the level of selfishness)
4. The sad truth is that many Christians never rise above these two levels of obedience
 - a. Some obey God only because they fear the Judgment

- b. Others obey God only because of the promise of eternal reward
5. But there is yet a higher level of obedience...

C. THE LEVEL OF “LOVE”...

1. This is the highest level of obedience
2. This is where we obey God because we love Him, and will continue to obey Him no matter what the circumstances or outcomes will be
3. This is the level of obedience upon which Jesus wants us to do His will...
 - a. “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” - **Jn 14:15**
 - b. “If anyone loves, Me, he will keep My word...” - **Jn 14:23a**

[Not only is “obeying out of love” the highest level of obedience, it is also the secret to obeying...]

II. THE SECRET TO OBEYING IS LOVING

A. GOD HAS ALWAYS DESIRED THAT HIS PEOPLE OBEY HIM OUT OF LOVE...

1. So He wanted the nation of Israel to obey Him - **Deu 6:4-5; 7:9; 10:12-13; 11:1**
2. And so Jesus wants His disciples to obey Him - **Jn 14:15**

B. THE VALUE OF OBEEDIENCE OUT OF LOVE CAN BE EASILY SEEN...

1. While we may initially obey out of fear, or out of selfishness...
2. The key to **continued** and **successful** obedience requires that it be done out of love!
 - a. Suppose things are going so well for us that we are not mindful of God’s impending judgment? - We are not likely to be motivated by “fear”
 - b. Suppose things are going so well for us that we do not sense any need for things from God? - We are not likely to be motivated by “selfishness”
3. Only when we are motivated by “love” will we be faithful in our obedience in good times as well as in bad!

CONCLUSION

1. If we desire to truly enjoy the “abundant life” that Jesus offers, then let us learn to obey Jesus out of “love”...
 - a. For the more we **love** Him, the more we will **obey** Him
 - b. The more we **obey** Him, the more we will **abide** in Him
 - c. The more we **abide** in Him, the more we will **bear fruit**
 - d. And the more we **bear fruit**, the more we will truly experience the **abundant life**!
2. Our next lesson, the final one in this series, will examine the secret to loving

For the time being, though, can you say that you love Jesus enough to obey Him...? - **Jn 14:15**

Secrets Of The Abundant Life

The Secret Of Loving Is Knowing

INTRODUCTION

1. We come to the final lesson in this series concerning secrets of “**the abundant life**” (cf. **Jn 10:10**) that Jesus offers
2. In previous lessons we have examined four of these “secrets”:
 - a. The secret of living is **bearing fruit** - **Jn 15:8**
 - b. The secret of bearing fruit is **abiding** - **Jn 15:5**
 - c. The secret of abiding is **obeying** - **Jn 15:10**
 - d. The secret of obeying is **loving** - **Jn 14:15**
3. Of course, that leads us to next question: “**What is the secret of loving?**”

[Stated simply...]

I. THE SECRET OF LOVING IS KNOWING

A. THIS TRUTH DEMONSTRATED IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS...

1. True love between husband and wife is based upon knowledge and understanding of one another
2. Strong friendships are also based upon knowing each other well
3. Brethren who love one another are those who have made the effort to know each other

B. SO IT IS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD...

1. The more we come to know God and Jesus, the more we will love them!
2. Especially when we grow in our understanding of their love for us - cf. **Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 3:16**
3. Only those who have come to know God have learned to love both man and God - cf. **1 Jn 4:8**

[Knowing God, then, is the first major step in the process of living “**the abundant life**”:

- ♦ By **knowing** God, we come to **love** Him
- ♦ By **loving** Him, we will **obey** Him
- ♦ By **obeying** Him, we will **abide** in Him
- ♦ By **abiding** in Him, we will **bear fruit**
- ♦ By **bearing fruit**, we will **experience the joys of abundant living**

But before we conclude this series, one last question should be raised: ***“How can we come to know God in such a way as to produce this ‘chain-reaction’ that leads to the abundant life?”***

The answer is simple...]

II. THE KEY TO KNOWING GOD

A. WE COME TO KNOW GOD THROUGH COMMUNICATION...

1. Is this not true in our human relationships?
 - a. Where there is communication, knowledge of one another grows
 - b. Where there is little or none, relationships flounder-- And so it is with our relationship with God!
2. Communication with God is a two-street...
 - a. He speaks to us through the Bible, written by men inspired by the Spirit of God - cf. **2 Pe 1:21; Jn 16:12-13; 1 Co 14:37**
 - b. And we speak to God through prayer - cf. **Ph 4:6-7; 1 Th 5:17-18**
3. As simple as it may sound, reading **the Bible** and **praying** to God can be the **catalysts** starting the “chain-reaction” that will lead one to experience “the abundant life”
 - a. The value of God’s Word in bearing fruit is described in **Psa 1:1-3**
 - b. The value of prayer to receiving blessings from God was taught by Jesus in **Mt 7:7-11**

B. WE ALSO COME TO KNOW GOD THROUGH EXPERIENCE...

1. Sharing experiences with friends and loved ones certainly helps us to know them better
2. As we go through life, walking with God and Jesus, we will experience such things as:
 - a. Their love for us
 - b. Their strength that is imparted to us-- Both of which (love and strength), Paul prayed that the Ephesians would experience and comprehend - cf. **Ep 3:14-21**
3. Experiencing such blessings from God will not only help us to know God better, but to love Him more - e.g., **Psa 116:1-2**

CONCLUSION

1. What we find, then, is that “the abundant life” can become a self-perpetuating cycle!
 - a. For if we are willing to **“know God”** (by giving Him our minds as read His Word and pray)...
 - b. ...then we will **“love God”** (and give Him our hearts as we learn of His love for us)
 - c. Loving God we will then **“obey God”** (and in so doing, give Him our wills since we are motivated by love)
 - d. Obeying God, we will **“abide in Him”** (and thus benefit from His strength)
 - e. Abiding in Him and benefiting by His strength, we will **“bear fruit”** (and thereby enjoy the blessings found in the very act of doing so)-- And through the experience of bearing fruit and walking with God, our knowledge of Him will increase, and the cycle starts all over again!
2. Why not expose yourself to “the abundant life” that Jesus offers?
 - a. Give yourself a chance to know God by reading His Word

- b. Coming to know God is the most important thing you can do in life - cf. **Jer 9:23-24**
- 1) For to **know** God is to **love** Him
 - 2) To **love** God is to **obey** Him
 - 3) To **obey** Him is to **abide** in Him
 - 4) To **abide** in Him is to **bear fruit** for Him
 - 5) To **bear fruit** is to experience **the abundant life** the Vine offers to His branches

If you already know of His love for you, but have not yet obeyed His gospel (cf. **Mk 16:15-16; He 5:9**), why not do so today?