

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The first series of 6 Bible studies is about 6 fundamental questions in life: “How do I respond to God’s Word?” “Where do I come from?” “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “Where am I going?” And “How do I bear fruit?” Today’s Bible study is: A DISCIPLE BEARS MUCH AND LASTING FRUIT. The fundamental question is “HOW DO I BEAR FRUIT?”

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John 15:1-17. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **(T)** 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. **(S)** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **(T)** 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. **(S)** 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. **(T)** 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. **(S)** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. **(T)** This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. **(S)** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **(T)** 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. **(S)** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **(T)** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **(S)** Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. **(T)** You are my friends if you do what I command. **(S)** 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. **(T)** 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. **(S)** This is my command: Love each other.”

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is John 15:5, which says, “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” I want to be a person who bears much fruit for God. This verse tells me, this will only be possible when I *remain in Jesus Christ* and he remains in me. As a matter of fact, without Jesus Christ, I can do nothing that will have everlasting significance. Sometimes this truth scares me, because I am a Christian who is very active. Now I am asking myself, will all my activities bear fruit for God in eternity? I can only continue to believe that my activities will bear fruit for God in eternity, as long as I remain in Christ and he remains in me. I do not want to discover one day that I have been very active for God, yet did not bear any lasting fruit for God.

(T) An important truth for me is John 15:8, which says, “This is to my Father’s glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” I want to glorify God in my life. The way to glorify God is to bear much fruit. However, the way to bear much fruit is to remain in Christ and that he remains in me. It is clear to me that the highest goal of a Christian is *to glorify God*. Therefore, two things are indispensable in my Christian life: I must have a continuing relationship with Jesus Christ and I must bear fruit.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question from verse 16. What is the nature of the “fruit” that we Christians should bear?

(T) The word “fruit” in the Bible has different meanings. Colossians 1:6 says that the fruit produced by those who preach the gospel is *new Christian converts*. John 15:16 says that “the lasting fruit” produced by those who help new Christians to grow to maturity in Christ and not to backslide into their old ways of life, is *disciples or mature Christians*. Galatians 5:22-23 says that “the fruit of the Spirit” is *Christian character*. Thus, the fruit

that Christ expects Christians to bear is first, Christian converts, which is the fruit of evangelism; second, mature Christians, which is the fruit of making disciples; and third, Christian character, which is the fruit of the Spirit.

2nd Question from verse 4. Who are the people who bear fruit?

(S) Verse 4 says, “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.” The people who bear fruit are those who come close to Jesus Christ, accept him into their hearts and lives and continue to relate with him every day. Because Christ remains in them, they are watchful, diligent and persevere to bear fruit.

3rd Question from verse 6. “Who are the people who do not bear fruit?”

(T) John 15:1-17 contains *an allegory*, which is *an extended comparison*. It does not say that Jesus is actually a vine with branches and grapes on it. It implies that the relationship between Jesus and people can be compared to a vine and its branches. However, we should not attempt to explain every characteristic of the symbol. The branches that bear fruit represent true believers. However, the branches that do not bear fruit do not represent people who were first believers and afterwards fell away from the faith. The allegory clearly teaches that the branches, which are cut off and thrown into the fire, represent people who never once bore fruit, not even when they were in a close relationship to Christ. Maybe they followed Christ because they were only interested in his miracles. They were never true believers. Their so-called “in-Christ-relationship”, although close, was merely an outward relationship. The conclusion is that this allegory does not teach that born-again believers could again lose their salvation. On the one hand it teaches that nominal-Christians will remain fruitless. On the other hand it teaches that born-again Christians will bear much and lasting fruit. Therefore, the people who do not bear fruit are those who come in close contact with Christ, but do not accept him. They only have an outward relationship with Christ. They may even participate in a Christian church and in Christian activities. But because Christ does not live in them, they cannot bear any fruit that has significance for eternity. Jesus Christ stresses the responsibility of each person who is brought into close contact with Christ: if he rejects the word of God and the light he received, there will come a time when God will stop all further work within him. The Holy Spirit will no more plead with him. His conscience will no more warn him. And his heart will become cold and hardened. Finally, he will be rejected and cast into hell.

4th Question from verse 5,8 and 16. What will be the degree of fruitfulness?

(S) First. According to verses 5 and 8, Christians are expected to bear “*much fruit*”. That is why according to verse 2, God prunes them. When God prunes the Christians, then he rebukes them, corrects them, disciplines them through hardships and trains them.

Second. According to verse 16, Christians are expected to bear “*lasting fruit*”. That is why God and other Christians keep on caring for the new Christian believers. They do not want them to backslide into unbelief.

Third. According to the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, some Christians bear *100 fold fruit, others 60 fold fruit and others 30 fold fruit*. The reasons why some Christians bear more fruit than other Christians can be the following: One. They are more penitent, trustful, loyal, diligent, courageous, meek, etc. in the way they respond to the word of God themselves. Two. They work harder and are more productive in their work of evangelism and disciple making than others. Three. They have been given different personalities, different spiritual gifts and different circumstances in life, of which God is the only Giver and the only Judge.

5th Question from verse 7. What does it mean to remain in Christ?

(T) Verse 7 says, “Remain in me and my words remain in you”. To remain in Christ is connected to his words remaining in the Christian. Verse 9-10 says, “Remain in my love, ... obey my commands.” To remain in Christ is connected to the Christian obeying the words of Christ. Although Christ is the first to speak his words to each Christian and he is the first to love the Christian, the Christian has a responsibility to respond to Christ’s love and Christ’s words. On the one hand, the Christian should make an effort to maintain a personal relationship with Christ and to love Christ with all his heart, mind and energy. On the other hand, the Christian must continually do what Christ teaches. Whenever, a person thinks that he is a Christian, but he does not love Christ or obey his words, then he is in danger of becoming like a dry branch that will be rejected and cast into the fire.

6th Question from verse 3 and 7. What does the word of Christ do in the believer?

(S) Verse 3 says that the word of Jesus Christ has cleansed the Christian from all his sins. This means that by faith in the gospel message, Christ has justified the Christian for 100%.

Verse 7 says that the Christian is responsible to let the words of Christ influence and control his thoughts and convictions, his motives and desires, his attitudes and feelings and his speaking and behaviour. The Christian not only has the responsibility to read and study the Bible, but also to let the Bible influence and change his life.

7th Question from verse 7. What relationship exists between prayer and the word?

(T) Verse 7 says, “If my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” When a Christian allows the words of Christ to influence and to control his life, then his prayers will be effective. Because the Christian will not ask for anything against the words of Christ, he will experience many answers to his prayers. This is a great promise about prayer!

8th Question from verse 16. What relationship exists between prayer and bearing fruit?

(S) Verse 16 says, “I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.” A true Christian will pray for fruit and he will bear fruit in answer to prayer. When Christ sends Christians to go and bear lasting fruit, we Christians realise that we can only do that in the power, wisdom and love of Christ. Therefore we Christians pray for courage and obedience to go to people. And therefore we Christians pray for his power, wisdom and love to help these people to become lasting fruit. Again Christ gives a wonderful promise about prayer. Because the Christians pray in Christ’s name for lasting fruit, Christ will answer them and give them the ability to bear much fruit and lasting fruit!

9th Question from verse 12. How can Christians love one another?

(T) John 15:1-11 says, “Remain in Christ and his love!” And John 15:12-17 says, “Love each other!” Therefore it is plain that Christians can only love one another when they remain in Christ and in Christ’s love. Only when Christians exert themselves to have a personal relationship with Christ and make a continual effort to obey Christ’s teachings, then Christ will give them the ability to love each other! In Mark 12:30 Christ gives Christians the command to love God and to love their neighbour as themselves. But in Romans 5:5 God pours out his love into the hearts of Christians through the Holy Spirit. When God gives Christians a command, he also gives them the ability to obey that command! He commands love and he gives love! Therefore the genuine Christian CAN love and he WILL love.

10th Question from verse 13. What is the meaning of “greater love”?

(S) In verse 12-13 we read, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” The greatest kind of love is the love that lays down its life for its friends. Jesus Christ loved us with this greatest love. He died on the cross for us. His love was an unselfish love, it was a self-sacrificing love, it was a love that saved us and made us become the best we could ever become! This is the greater love. And now Jesus Christ commands us Christians to love one another with this greater love. Christians should love one another with unselfish love, with self-sacrificing love and with love that will help the others become their very best for God and mankind. Of course, we cannot die on the cross for others. But we can live our lives for others in an unselfish and self-sacrificial way. This is the greater love!

11th Question from 10 and 14. What relationship exists between obedience and love?

(T) The practical way to remain in Christ, in Christ’s love and in Christ’s friendship is to obey his words! But our obedience did not come first. Christ loved us first and died for us. Then Christ sent someone to preach the gospel to us. When we believed, Christ poured his Holy Spirit and his love out into our hearts. With Christ’s love in our hearts, we can and do obey Christ’s words. But by obeying his words, he creates more love towards him in our hearts and in this way another and even better love cycle begins! Thus, Christ’s love creates love in our hearts. Our love leads to obedience. Our obedience causes Christ to create more love in our hearts. Our greater love leads to greater obedience. And so on.

(S) **STEP 4. APPLY**

After we have brainstormed and recorded a list of *possible applications* from John 15:1-17, consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a *personal application*.

I want to spend enough time every day to read and obey the Bible. I believe that obeying Christ’s words will lead to greater love for Christ and to greater fruitfulness.

(T) I want to remember that there are six important areas that make me a disciple of Jesus Christ. I must maintain a personal and intimate relationship with Christ. I must read and study the Bible. I must pray. I must meet with other Christians in a fellowship of love. I must bear fruit. And I must obey Christ’s teachings.

(S) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Do not forget to pray after you have completed this Bible study.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Prepare next week’s Bible study. The topic is “A disciple loves with Christ’s love”. The Bible passage is 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

Second. Prepare next week’s Bible study from 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.