

JOHN 15

Abide in Love

Like any good Jewish writer, John loves the number 7. In his Gospel, he provides us with 7 signs (culminating in the resurrection of Jesus) as well as 7 “I AM” statements culminating with “I am the true vine” (vs. 1). This final statement not only directs us to the divinity of the Savior, but also to his ever-presence with us.

The context is significant. We are quickly approaching the betrayal and arrest which will climax with Jesus’s death. Jesus has announced his eminent end previously but now wants to assure his followers that he is not abandoning them. Thus, as the True Vine, he nourishes and sustains the branches while they produce fruit (vs. 5).

This means that not only is Jesus continually present, but he also continually works. Apart from the vine, the branches cannot bear fruit (vs. 4). Just as separating a branch from the trunk will kill the branch, so too severing the branch from the vine will lead to its demise. Thus, the only way for believers to grow spiritually is tied to his or her connection to Christ. That is to say, the lack of intimacy with the Savior produces no spiritual fruit. But a deep, an abiding love for Jesus that is genuine and real will produce fruit in abundance.

The key spiritual fruit Jesus highlights is love. “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide I my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.” (vs. 9-11) Christian love was modeled by Christ (cf. John 13) who took on the form of a servant for the good of others. Most prominent is the cross (Lamb language) where Jesus laid “down his life for his friends” (vs. 13). So too, followers of Jesus will walk in such love. As the 20th century hymn states, “They will know we are Christians by our love.”

The application is clear. Abiding in Jesus produces comfort in a broken world and genuine love amid a violence and angry world (see 18-27).