

**Lesson 15**  
**John 15:1-17**  
**RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Memory verse:** “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” (John 15:16 NIV)

Jesus continued to prepare His disciples for His departure. He next taught the Eleven the importance of abiding in Him, which would result in their producing much spiritual fruit. He dealt with their relationships to Himself, one another, and the world around them in chapter 15. Their responsibilities were to abide, to love, and to testify respectively.

Now 'abiding' always has reference to fellowship, and only those who have been born again are capable of having fellowship with the Father and His Son. Jesus often used a grapevine to describe the nation of Israel (cf. Matt. 20:1-16; 21:23-41; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 13:6-9; 20:9-16). The vine as a symbol of Israel appears on coins of the Maccabees.

Here in this chapter, Jesus used the vine metaphorically of Himself. One can hardly escape the inference that Jesus viewed Himself as the fulfilment of Israel. The passage is not a parable in the Synoptic sense, since there is no plot. It is more of an extended metaphor, similar to the shepherd and sheepfold metaphors in chapter 10.

In this chapter, we have the seventh and last of the “I am” statements of Christ recorded in the gospel of John. However, Jesus did not stop with this image, but went on to use the picture of “the friend.” These two pictures of the believer—branches and friends—reveal both our privileges and our responsibilities. As branches, we have the privilege of sharing His life, and the responsibility of abiding. As friends, we have the privilege of knowing His will, and the responsibility of obeying.

The cultivation of vineyards was important to the life and economy of Israel. A golden vine adorned Herod's temple. When our Lord used this image, He was not introducing something new; it was familiar to every Jew. Therefore, we must learn and understand the elements in this allegory so as to benefit from His teaching.

This study began in the vineyard and ended in the throne room! The next study will take us to the battlefield, where we experience the hatred of the lost world. If we are not abiding as branches and obeying as friends, we will never be able to face the opposition of the world. If we do not love one another, how can we ever hope to love lost men and women in the world? If we are not marching together as the friends of the King, we will never present a united front to the enemy.

“Without me, ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

We are not simply handicapped or hindered.

We are hopelessly paralysed!

We can do nothing! But if we abide in Him, if we stay close to the throne, we can do anything that He commands us to do!

What a privilege—and what a responsibility!

Scripture Reading: John 15:1 -17

To learn in this lesson: 1) The True Vine and the branches 2) The Vinedresser and the fruit 3) Friends of Jesus

**Discussion Questions:**

1) Who is the True Vine and how should the branches relate to the True Vine (Verses 1 to 11)?

2) What is the work of the vinedresser or gardener and the meaning of fruit in the passage (Verses 1 to 11)?

3) Jesus relates to believers as His friends! How are believers to respond in this relationship (Verses 12 to 17)?