

Timothy ... will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul - 1 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

# In Christ

Or don't you know that all of those who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death...burial...and resurrection.

Paul - Romans 6:3-5 (NIV)

David Kuykendall Ministries

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## Fruit-bearing Christians

David Kuykendall

Obey the five commands listed below and experience your life "in Christ." Experience the abundant life through living by grace. Notice that each command is either to believe something or to choose to do something.

### THE FIVE COMMANDS

#### Believe

Romans 6:11

Reckon (believe) yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord

#### Choose

Romans 6:12

Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts

#### Choose

Romans 6:13a

Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin

#### Choose/Believe

Romans 6:13b

Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead.

#### Choose

Romans 6:13c

[Present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

We can and should obey each of these commands because Romans 6:3-5 teaches that all believers have been baptized into Jesus and as a result all believers have been baptized into his death, burial, and resurrection.

Fruit bearing cannot be reduced to how many people we influence to walk with God. Anything we do that brings Him glory is bearing fruit for Him.

All God-loving Christians want to bring glory to the Lord by bearing fruit for Him. Some are disappointed that their approach to fruit bearing seems to have been in vain.

The best-known passage in the Bible concerning fruit bearing is the vine and branch statement of Jesus recorded in John chapter 15. There are three statements in the passage that speak of how a believer bears fruit for God. Two of those statements are in verse 5. The verse begins with:

*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit ...*

Because of the closeness of the vine and branch an unseen but essential action is taking place. Below the ground moisture is mixing with elements in the soil that will produce sap—an essential for bearing fruit. In order for the branch to bear fruit the sap must reach the branch.

The sap would never make its way into the branch apart from the branch's attachment to the vine. When the branch remains attached to the vine, sap will reach the branches and fruit will result.

The message of the picture Jesus gives with the vine and branch illustration is clear. The believer is to live in fellowship with Jesus. Just knowing about and talking about Jesus is not what makes fruit-bearing Christians. It is communion with Him. It is talking with Him. It is permitting Him to talk with us. It is depending on Him.

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When the believer yields to temptation, the fellowship is broken. Satan also uses such things as being too ambitious with our work. The list could go on and on.

John 15:5 ends with the words:

*"...without me you can do nothing."*

With these words, Jesus is saying that if we do not remain in fellowship with Him, fruit bearing is only a desire and not a reality. When the God-loving believer does not maintain his communion with Jesus, he is left in a state of frustration. Regardless of how hard he works, he will not be a fruit-bearing Christian of the type God is looking for.

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A third statement Jesus makes in the vine and branch illustration that fruit-bearing Christians must give attention to is in the last part of verse 2. Jesus says:

*"... every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."*

In a fruit-bearing season, a branch might grow to a length of 20 feet. When the next growing season arrives, there is not enough sap to go through the branch to produce fruit. The branch must be cut back. The vine dresser might cut the length of that 20 foot branch to no more than 4 inches. Reducing the length has the branch prepared to bear fruit.

Continued on back page

God the Father is our vine dresser. In order to keep us in a fruit-bearing condition, there are things He must remove from our lives. One pastor, after hearing a sermon on the purging of the fruit-bearing believer, resolved to reduce his time on the golf course. Such decisions are good but they are only a start. As well as external hindrances God wants to remove internal hindrances to fruit bearing such as anger.

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God purges hindrances to fruit bearing from our lives in different ways. He uses such things as an inner disturbance with the presence of sin in our lives to make us aware of the need of purging. He sends difficult circumstances at times to purge from us faith in ourselves that we might trust only in Him. There is one thing above all others that God uses to purge our lives to keep us in communion and fellowship with Jesus. It is to keep our know-it-all attitude—our sin nature—out of power. He gives us a passionate desire to be all He wants us to be. He shows us that when we were saved, we were spiritually crucified. He shows us how to experience our crucifixion and enables us to experience it. When we begin experiencing our crucifixion, God does His greatest work of purging in our lives. It is easy for us to attempt to be fruit bearers without fellowship with the vine when we believe we are wiser than He is.

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In addition to the vine and branches statement in John 15 on the theme of fruit bearing is Romans 7:1-4.

Romans 7:1-3 is an illustration. In verse 4, Paul makes the application of the illustration. In those first three verses, Paul writes of a wife who married a second husband after her first husband died. It is the death of the first husband freeing the wife to marry again that should receive our attention. Following the illustration verse 4 reads:

*Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.*

The verse says that one's relationship to Jesus can be as intimate as a marriage. It implies that one's relationship to law can be as intimate as a marriage. What is a marriage to law and how can such a relationship be to intimate?

Romans 8:3 says that the law arrangement God made with the Jews was an arrangement between the commands of God and the flesh of man. All other law arrangements are the same. When we commit ourselves to "do our best for Jesus", we are in a law relationship with our self-made command. The many God-loving believers who are living in this law relationship will always be disappointed in their fruit-bearing.

Why are such law arrangements so intimate that they are called a marriage? One answer to that question is that many believers who are passionately committed to God believe that they express their love and obedience to God through keeping commandments of the Bible or doing their best for Jesus in their own strength. They believe that such commitment on their part pleases God. They know nothing about living by grace.

Another reason a person's commitment to keeping the laws of God or doing his best for Jesus is so strong is his belief that this is the way to acceptance by God. He knows nothing about living by grace.

Remember that according to Romans 8:3, all law arrangements are between flesh and commands. In one's own wisdom and strength, he will attempt to keep the commands. That is what flesh seeks to do. However, Galatians 5:24 says that our flesh is crucified. We all would admit, though, that the flesh is still very much alive in us even though we do our best for Jesus. It is that approach that keeps flesh so active in us.

Such marriages to law—living so consume a person that they eliminate the possibility of a

life of availability to Jesus and dependence on Jesus.

We are, as mentioned in Romans 7:4, "dead to the law by the body of Christ." When we were crucified at the time of our conversion, we died to the law because flesh—an essential part of a law arrangement—was crucified. However, one must experience the crucifixion of his flesh. When that happens, a law arrangement is not a factor in one's life. Therefore, he is free to enter a marriage relationship with Jesus. We can then live in a relationship to Jesus that is as intimate as in our relationship to law. We can now live as the bride of Jesus.

According to Ephesians 5:22-33, in a perfect marriage, the husband takes the lead and the wife submits to that leadership. In this spiritual marriage between Jesus and the believer, Jesus takes the lead. We follow his lead because we are free from marriage to the law. We no longer are living and serving God out of our own wisdom and strength. We now live out of the wisdom and strength of our spiritual husband.

This marriage is between two who are both crucified, buried and resurrected. This is true of Jesus physically and of the believer spiritually.

Such a marriage cannot and will not fail to bear fruit for God.

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#### MINISTRY NOTES

In a recent mid-year meeting of the board of our living by grace ministries, someone suggested that we determine the number of nations we are having a ministry. Different members told of places they know where we have books. When the list was totaled it was almost 40 nations. After the meeting, some of us remembered another nation or two that were not mentioned in the meeting. In addition to our book ministry we have a Web Site which reaches many nations where English is read and where Christians live.

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