

2. Andrew Murray's devotional book on John 15, *Abide in Christ* (Lakeland), may be helpful if you want to look at this chapter in more depth.
3. Explore more fully (see study 1) some of the Old Testament background of the image of the vine, as in Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 19:10-14. Find out a little about the characteristics of the vine.

Notes



www.elimcarlisle.org

Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

"This extract from Meeting With God published by Inter-Varsity Press, is used with permission"

21st July 2014

Week 47: John 15 (A meditation)

This chapter forms part of Jesus' farewell discourse to his disciples. Only John out of the four gospel writers has recorded these words for us.

Day 1. Final words

John 13 - 15

Pray for a quiet mind. You need an unhurried approach to the Bible if you are going to benefit from your meditation. So commit every part of yourself, including your mind, imagination and emotions, to God.

Having done that, slowly read through John 13-15 (Jesus' final words do in fact cover chapters 16 and 17 as well). As you do so, notice the quality and depth of Jesus' love for his disciples, which motivated him to speak to them as he did in his farewell message.

Then reflect on how you can best respond to a love of such depth which has been extended to you too.

Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.

'When I survey the wondrous cross', a hymn by Isaac Watts (1674-1748).

Note: The Old Testament frequently referred to Israel as a vine, as in Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15. The vine had actually become the symbol of the nation of Israel. It was for this reason that it appeared as the emblem on the coins of the period just before Christ. So when Jesus described himself as the true vine, he was claiming to be what Israel had failed to be.

Day 2. Remaining in the vine

John 15:1-6

Take the thoughts that you had from yesterday's study to prepare you for today's meditation. Conscious of Jesus' love for his friends, we turn to look at the picture of the vine.

1. Read these verses a couple of times, trying to imagine a garden full of vines, in its various stages of development.

2. When you became a Christian you were joined to Christ. What does it mean to you to be part of the true vine, dependent upon Christ? Consider this both in theory and practice.

Note: Pruning is inevitable and unavoidable. Indeed a newly-planted vine would have to wait three years before bearing any fruit because it would be so drastically cut back.

3. Why does Jesus say that pruning is inevitable? Think over how you have responded to the divine secateurs of the gardener. It may have been a relationship that was wrong, an attitude which needed correction, a habit which had to be broken if you were to be fruitful in serving God.

Painful as it may be, we can be secure in the knowledge that God wants the best for us and has all things under control.

Thank God that he wants you to be reliant upon the true vine which in turn gives you life in all its fullness.

Day 3. My joy in you

John 15:7-11

Once again, consciously put aside the thoughts buzzing round in your mind, as you come to God's Word. Ask God to let his spirit be your teacher.

1. Read these verses through several times. Pick out what Jesus is teaching about the effects of remaining or abiding in Christ, the true vine. These will include an effect upon -
 - our prayer life
 - how others view us
 - our response to the Father's love for us
 - our willingness to be obedient
 - our joy
2. Spend time meditating on these aspects of your relationship with God. How real are they in your own life?

*Jesu, Thou joy of loving hearts, Thou fount of life, Thou light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts, We turn unfilled to Thee again.*

Latin (c. 11th century), translated by Ray Palmer (1808-87).

Day 4. Love each other

John 15:12-17

We are told that it is impossible to command a person to love. But Jesus breaks the rule. Today we see how and why Christian love is so different.

Ask God to speak to you. Then read these verses through.

1. What do you notice about Jesus' friendship with his disciples? Is it unconditional friendship? If not, what are the conditions? Who took the initiative? At what cost?

Spend time thinking over your response to the fact that Jesus has called his disciples to be his friends. Then turn in gratitude to God to thank him for such a friendship.

2. Our love for others is an extension of Christ's love for us. Realizing how much Jesus has loved you, how can that affect your relationships with those you find hard to love? Specifically name those who fall into that category and pray for them in the light of the truth of Jesus' teaching here.

Memory verse: Greater love has no-one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13, NIV).

But Jesus died even for his enemies! 'While we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8, NIV).

Day 5. Rejection!

John 15:18-27

Despised and rejected! We shall never experience what Jesus went through. But being a Christian often means that, like him, we are hated for our faith.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to understand this part of Jesus' final words in this chapter.

1. After reading these verses try to put the main points into your own words. Jesus does not disguise the fact that identification with him has a cost attached. Why is this?
2. In what ways have you experienced rejection because you have been closely identified with Jesus? Jesus was not talking here about insensitive fanatics. This may have meant going against the tide of popular opinion or being the lonely object of derision.
3. Draw out the encouragements and instructions Jesus gives to his disciples throughout this chapter. Then see how they relate to your own life or the situation of any you know who are undergoing rejection. Turn this into prayer.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isaiah 53:3, NIV).

Weekend

1. Read John 13-17 to get a full picture of Jesus' farewell message to his disciples.