John 15 Bible study

John 15:1-27. 3 sessions of about 45 minutes, or one longer session. For small groups and personal study.

Remaining in Jesus means continuing in dependence on him, with his words shaping prayer and his love shaping obedience. The vine image makes the dependence clear: branches cannot produce fruit by themselves. Verses 9 to 17 connect remaining with keeping his commands and loving one another. Verses 18 to 27 then prepare the disciples for opposition and witness. Read these movements together rather than reducing remaining to a private feeling.

READ TOGETHER: JOHN 15:1-27

1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the keeper of the vineyard. 2 He cuts off every branch in Me
that bears no fruit, and every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes to make it even more fruitful. 3
You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in Me, and I will remain in
you. Just as no branch can bear fruit by itself unless it remains in the vine, neither can you bear fruit
unless you remain in Me. 5 I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in Me, and I
in him, will bear much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in
Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are gathered up, thrown into
the fire, and burned. 7 If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and
it will be done for you. 8 This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, proving yourselves to
be My disciples. 9 As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Remain in My love. 10 If you
keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s
commandments and remain in His love. 11 I have told you these things so that My joy may be in you
and your joy may be complete. 12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have
loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My
friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not
understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because everything I have learned
from My Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you. And I
appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will remain—so that whatever you ask the Father in
My name, He will give you. 17 This is My command to you: Love one another. 18 If the world hates
you, understand that it hated Me first. 19 If you were of the world, it would love you as its own.
Instead, the world hates you, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the
world. 20 Remember the word that I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they
persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well; if they kept My word, they will keep yours as well. 21
But they will treat you like this because of My name, since they do not know the One who sent Me. 22
If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no
excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates Me hates My Father as well. 24 If I had not done among them
the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have seen and hated both
Me and My Father. 25 But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated Me without
reason.’ 26 When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth
who proceeds from the Father—He will testify about Me. 27 And you also must testify, because you
have been with Me from the beginning.

Scripture from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain.

BACKGROUND

A farewell conversation

Read John 14:30-31 before the chapter. Jesus speaks about the coming ruler of this world and his own obedience to the Father, then calls the disciples to leave. John 15 continues his instruction before his arrest. The text does not require us to identify a particular vineyard he passed on the way.

The people hearing the vine image will soon face Jesus' death and their own tests of faithfulness. Read the commands alongside the assurance of his love. This is neither a productivity technique nor a promise that faithful disciples will avoid opposition.

> *I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming, and he has no claim on Me. But I do exactly what the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Get up! Let us go on from here. (John 14:30-31)*

Three movements, one chapter

Verses 1 to 8 focus on the vine, branches, fruit, and prayer. Verses 9 to 17 spell out love and obedience. Verses 18 to 27 turn to hatred from the world and the witness of the Spirit and disciples. Mark those transitions before discussing individual phrases.

Continue into John 16:1-4. Jesus says he has told the disciples these things so they will not fall away when persecution comes. His warnings prepare them; they do not tell them to seek hostility or treat every disagreement as persecution.

> *“I have told you these things so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do these things because they have not known the Father or Me. But I have told you these things so that when their hour comes, you will remember that I told you about them. I did not tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you. (John 16:1-4)*

FOLLOW THE CHAPTER'S ARGUMENT

Keep the vine, the command to love, and the call to witness on the same page.

Vine, gardener, branches (15:1-3)

Jesus names himself the true vine and his Father the gardener. Branches receive their life from the vine. Verse 3 also says the disciples are already clean because of Jesus' word. Keep that assurance beside the pruning image.

Remaining and bearing fruit (15:4-8)

The repeated command is to remain. Verse 7 connects prayer to Jesus' words remaining in the disciples, and verse 8 connects fruit to the Father's glory. This is not an unrestricted promise that every desired outcome will occur.

Love and obedience (15:9-17)

Jesus moves from the Father's love for him to his own love for the disciples. He commands them to love one another as he has loved them. Joy, obedience, friendship, and chosen purpose belong together in this section.

Hatred and responsibility (15:18-25)

Jesus says the world hated him first. The warning describes opposition connected to him and his name. It does not excuse a disciple's cruelty, dishonesty, or refusal to hear correction.

The Spirit and the witnesses (15:26-27)

The promised Advocate testifies about Jesus. The disciples also testify, with verse 27 identifying their presence with Jesus from the beginning. Begin with these first hearers before applying the call to Christian witness today.

SESSION 1 OF 3

Life from the vine

Read John 15:1-8. Read fruit and prayer within the chapter's language of dependence.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. Who is the vine, the gardener, and the branches? What does each do?

2. What words or commands repeat in verses 4 to 8?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. How does verse 3 balance the warnings around it?

4. What conditions accompany the invitation to ask in verse 7?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. Name a task where you are treating visible output as the only sign of faithfulness. How might this passage reshape that?

6. Choose a sentence from Jesus' words to shape a specific prayer this week.

SESSION 2 OF 3

Love that takes shape

Read John 15:9-17. Connect remaining to love, obedience, and shared life.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. Trace the movement of love from the Father to Jesus to the disciples.

2. What command is repeated in verses 12 and 17?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. Why should verses 9 to 17 shape how we understand fruit in verses 1 to 8?

4. How do verses 13 to 16 explain the kind of friendship Jesus names?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. What is one costly but appropriate way to serve someone in your church this week?

6. How can your group encourage obedience without using this passage to measure whose faith is strongest?

SESSION 3 OF 3

Witness under pressure

Read John 15:18-27. Read the warning about opposition beside the promised help of the Spirit.
Also read: John 16:1-4.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. What reasons does Jesus give for the world's hatred?

2. Who testifies in verses 26 and 27? What qualification does Jesus name about the disciples?

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. Read John 16:1-4. Why has Jesus told them about coming trouble?

4. How can you distinguish opposition because of Jesus from criticism of a Christian's harmful conduct?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

5. What would truthful, patient witness look like in one conversation you expect to have?

6. Pray for someone facing hostility without promising that the hostility will end immediately.

ONE-SESSION PATH

John 15 in one evening

Read all of John 15:1-27. About 45 to 60 minutes.

Observe: what does the text say?

1. Read all 27 verses. Give each of the three movements a short heading.

2. List what the branches receive and what the disciples are commanded to do.

Interpret: what did it mean then?

3. How do Jesus' words and commands define remaining in verses 7 and 10?

4. Why is the prayer promise not a blank check for success?

5. What does the witness section add that you would miss by stopping at verse 8?

Apply: what does it mean for us?

6. Choose one response involving prayer, love for another person, or truthful witness.

7. What help will you ask your group to provide as you practice it?

FOR THE LEADER

- In session 1, answer from the text: fruit depends on remaining, prayer is shaped by Jesus' words, and the Father's glory is the stated outcome. Do not impose a numerical target for converts, work output, or religious activity.
- In session 2, let verses 12 and 17 supply the concrete command. Love is not merely an internal feeling. Jesus' giving of himself is the standard in verse 13.
- In session 3, verse 27 speaks first to disciples who had accompanied Jesus. Do not imply that every present-day believer can make that same historical claim.
- Treat the branch warning seriously without using one discussion to settle every dispute about perseverance. Read the assurance and the commands together, and let participants ask questions without assigning their spiritual status.
- Do not diagnose a person's loss, disability, or trauma as a particular act of divine pruning. The image does not authorize the group to explain why a specific tragedy happened.

WHERE CHRISTIANS READ IT DIFFERENTLY

Who are the branches that do not remain?

Some read the unfruitful branches as people counted among the church by outward profession who lack a living root in Christ. Others read the warning as addressed to branches united to Christ by living faith. The primary expositions linked below explain these alternatives. Read the warning in verse 6, the assurance in verse 3, and the repeated command to remain together. This study does not settle the dispute.

What exactly is the fruit?

The image can be applied to character, obedience, service, and witness. The chapter does not give a single exhaustive definition. Its explicit commands to love, the Father's glory, and the closing testimony should constrain our examples. Fruit should not be reduced to personal success or one ministry statistic.

SOURCES

John 15, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Primary text for all three movements and the interpretive questions.

John 14:30-31, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Immediate setting before the vine discourse.

John 16:1-4, Berean Standard Bible. Berean Bible. Public domain. Jesus' stated purpose for warning the disciples about opposition.

John Calvin, Commentary on John 15:1-6. John Calvin. Public domain. Primary exposition of the outward-profession reading of unfruitful branches.

John Wesley, Notes on John 15:4-6. John Wesley. Public domain. Primary exposition reading the branches as united by living faith.

Protos study editorial. Protos. CC BY-SA 4.0. Original study structure, questions, leader guidance and applications; not an external theological review.

Edition 2026.1. This study is licensed CC BY-SA 4.0. You may copy, print, adapt and share it with attribution under the same license.



Protos

The full study, with links to the commentary and dictionary, is free at protos-app.com/study-guides/john-15. Protos is a Bible app for iPhone and Android that puts the history and context beside the passage you are reading.