

The Secret of the Christian Life

by Jim Cymbala

The secret to a life of fruitfulness and glory is to abide in Jesus, remaining connected to Him through prayer, trust, and communion.

Duration: 27:18

Scripture: John 15:1

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of glorifying God in every aspect of our lives. He highlights the need to abide in God and make choices that align with His will. The speaker also discusses the concept of producing fruit for God and how God prunes those who bear fruit to produce even more. The sermon concludes with a reminder to live obediently and strive to glorify God in all that we do.

Transcript

Why are we here? Why did God create humans, men and women, why? He didn't need us or he wouldn't be God. The definition of God is he's self-sufficient, so he doesn't need anything. If he needed something, he wouldn't be God.

He could have been God and let the ages roll on and just been God and there'd be no earth and no us, but he created us for a reason, so people have studied. What's the essential reason? And theologians study it, we don't think enough about it, because in this question lies the key to so much peace and joy that you can't believe it, plus eternal life forevermore. Why did he create us? Well, the old Westminster Catechism, I think, has it this way, based on scripture, of course.

Man was created to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Listen, men and women were created, why were you created? Why am I here? To glorify God and enjoy his presence, communion with him forever, both here and in the hereafter. We were not created to glorify ourself, satisfy ourself.

We weren't here to glorify a country or a race. We were here to glorify our creator, the one who made us, who gives us life. Of course, when sin came in the world, people turned away from that motive of, I'm alive every day, every sentence, everything I eat, everything I do, how can I do it in a way that will glorify God, make him happy, praise God? So then you have verses like this in 1 Corinthians.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Look at that. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.

Because that's why you and I were created, to lift him up, to tell people about him, to show how great he is, to live a life filled with such kindness and love and mercy that people go, wow, where'd you get all of that? Oh, I got it from my God, from my savior, Jesus Christ. We always deflect the glory because God won't share the glory. It's interesting in the Bible that God will share his power and he will share some of his knowledge, but he won't share any of his glory.

He has to get all the glory. And the most horrible ground you can stand on as a minister, as a singer, as a Christian, is to try to get some of the glory. To preach in a way, not that God would get all the glory, but that you show off your oratorical skills or how clever you are or how much knowledge you have so that people will say, whoa, that guy is, he's the bomb.

And that's not giving God all the glory. Because what do you and I have that God didn't give us? So to make it like it's ours and show it off is to just grieve God to the utmost degree because how many agree with me? Everything we have, everything we own, everything, skill, everything comes from God. How many would say that? So where we're born to show everybody how great God is and enjoy his presence forever.

How do you do that though? That's a nice saying, you know, give God the glory. We have a lot of songs like that. But how do you do that? How do you make it so that God is glorified in your everyday life, everyday life? Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.

So now we get to the deepest part of the whole thing. Look at John 15. I am the true grapevine and my father is the gardener.

He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit. And he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they produce even more fruit. Just notice there in that first verse, there's no fruit, there's fruit, and there's even more fruit.

If there's no fruit, he cuts them off. If they produce fruit, he prunes them, cleans them so they'll have even more fruit. You have already been pruned and purified by the message or the word I've given you.

Remain in me or abide in me or stay connected to me and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine. And you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

Yes, I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who remain connected in me, fellowship, communion, in union with me, I in them will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want and it will be granted.

Now notice this verse. When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

What brings glory to the Father? That we produce much fruit. What brings glory to God? We produce fruit, fruit of praise, fruit of thanksgiving, fruit of kindness, fruit of mercy to others, fruit of helping to discourage

person. All the things that are fruit, moral, spiritual fruit, love, joy, all those good things.

As God produces that in us, we bring glory to God. We bring glory to God by fruit. Fruit brings glory to God.

So a big cluster of grapes because it's a grapevine. Whoa, those grapes are so delicious, they're so beautiful. Now that's a real grapevine.

Those other grapes over there, so-so. But what brings glory to the grapevine? What makes it admired and complimented? It's the fruit, the size, the sweetness of the grapes. So now we're going backwards here.

Let's go. We were created to give God glory. That's when you and I are the happiest.

You gotta believe this now. You and I are always happiest and have the most peace and joy when we're not trying to glorify ourselves, our family, our race, our country, our whatever, our education, when we are not glorifying ourselves, but just living to glorify God. There's so much peace and joy that he sends into us that we can hardly take it because that's why we were created.

When you're glorifying anything else, you have now left the design that God gave for your life. You and I now are glorifying, boasting, however it is, and now we've left our calling, the creator's purpose for us. Why were we created? To glorify God and enjoy him.

When are we the happiest? When do we have the most peace? When we're glorifying God. These folks are gonna be glorifying God at the Royal Family Kids Camp. They're gonna work hard, but what they're doing so glorifies God, they're gonna have peace and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Why? Because they're doing this to glorify God. They're not doing this to make money. They're not doing it to glorify a church.

They're doing this to glorify Christ and help somebody. That's fruit coming from their lives. And not only does God get the glory, but we get the peace and the joy and the fulfillment.

This is why so many people who even go to church, people who confess Christ and are Christians born again, there's something so missing in their life. They're so sour. They're so depressed.

They're so angry. They got a bitter edge. They got this, that, discombobulated.

Why? Because they haven't found the simple reason why they're alive. You and I are alive to glorify God. Can we put our hands together and say amen? Glorify God.

Preachers have to be careful of that, or singers. Like A.W. Tozer said, a lot of ministers, because you're standing in front of the public like I am, and the choir does every Sunday, a lot of preachers want to give God the glory, but they want to keep a tithe for themselves. Just 10%.

Come on. I'll give God the glory, but how about 10% for me? But God's not sharing his glory. The moment you start to project yourself and draw attention to yourself that you are somebody, you are now disobeying the rule of your purpose of your existence.

We were made to glorify God. So when we eat and it's a good meal, we glorify God. Thank you, God, for this good meal.

When the meal's not so good, well, I still have Jesus. Praise God, the food's not so good. Everything we can do and say, we should glorify God.

But notice, that's not just giving God glory. As you give God glory, it rebounds back to you, full of peace and full of joy and a purpose and a meaning to life. God has made us that the more you try to be happy, the less happy you are.

And the more you forget to try to be happy and just glorify God, you got happiness chasing you all over the place. How many have found that? Say amen. But the moment you say, I gotta be happy today, what do I wanna do? No, what can I say or do today that will glorify God? God, lead me, et cetera, et cetera.

Now, fruit glorifies God. But fruit that comes from where? Most times when we get saved, we wanna glorify God, so we try hard. What can I say today? Who can I help? What can I do to glorify God? We make our best efforts at it, but it's a strain.

Man, it's a strain. It's a hard life. I gotta be obedient today.

That will glorify God. I gotta be obedient. I can't lose my temper.

I can't be gossiping. I'm always gossiping. Gotta stop that.

Gotta do this. But now Jesus takes us to the very depth. The same one who said, I am the good shepherd.

The same one who said, I am the light of the world. He's the one who also said, I am the true vine. This is not a vine, but you're all gonna say amen as I walk out here with it.

Hey, what can I say? I only work here. It's live though. It's real.

It's an orchid. So what did Jesus say? This is the deepest of all the truths in the Bible. There's levels of truth.

There's concentric circles of truth. Nothing's deeper than what I'm about to tell you that's found in the scripture. Nothing about the Christian life.

He probably was referring to a grapevine or figs were a big thing back then, but probably the commentators believe he might've walked by as he was talking to disciples that last supper together. He saw a grapevine. I don't have a grapevine I can show you, but I can show you this.

The Lord didn't say I am the flower, I'm the orchid or I'm this leaf. He said, I'm the whole thing. I am the true vine.

That's everything. What are you? He said, I am the true vine. You are the branches.

Here's a branch. Got this little shoot coming out of it. I just noticed.

Oh yeah, two. One coming over here to this little baby and then one over here to this. He said, you are the branches.

What makes this orchid beautiful and gives glory to it are the flowers, the fruit. By this, my father is glorified that you bear beautiful fruit, but you can't bear any fruit on your own except that you're part of the vine. None of these flowers are stressing out right now to try to look beautiful.

Listen, see if you can hear them groan. I don't hear a thing. What do they do? Just stay connected.

Because the life is not in the fruit. The life is not in the flower. The life is in the vine.

And they only have one job, stay connected. Now if I would get scissors, I don't wanna do it. I have to preach twice more today.

I'll have no plant left. But if I were to take scissor right there, you see that one choir right there? See it? The minute I would snap that closed, that thing begins to die. No, it's still beautiful.

It's dead. Why? It only exists connected to the vine. So Jesus said, abide in me, trust me, stay connected to me moment by moment.

Does this little branch, does it visit the plant like a couple hours a day? No, 24 seven, three, six, five. It stays connected. It has no life in itself.

You have no life in yourself. You have nothing to produce any fruit. You have nothing, zero.

None of us have anything. Have we not found that out? Only fruit producing will do. The only beautiful things that will result in our life is abiding in the life of the vine.

Where is that life? So down here are the roots. The roots are into this pot and the life is coming up through this branch. You see there's sap in this branch here, in the stem, in the rootage of it coming up and it feeds the branch and then the flower comes out.

The only life that this thing has is the life of the plant. The only life that you and I have is a transferred life from Jesus Christ. That's why Paul says, I no longer do I live, but Christ lives in me.

There's no deeper truth than this. Saints, that has a meaning, children of God, disciples, that all has meanings, but the deepest of all is my life is Christ. For to me to live is Christ.

What did he mean by that? I abide, he flows. As I stay connected, that's why Jesus said, come on, you got to abide for without me you can do nothing. The minute you clip this, you say no, but I've been 25 years in the Lord.

I know a lot of Bible verses. You stop abiding, you start dying. The fruit no longer is produced, why? Without the branch, you can't do anything.

Without the vine, without that life. See, God made us that you never have any life in yourself. That would be such a good truth if we could accept it.

Because many times we wake up trying. I'm gonna do something and Jesus is saying, you can't do anything. So why are you trying? Just abide.

See, but that's counter intuitive to us. We're doers. We live in a world where you try harder.

And Jesus says, don't try anything. Just abide. I will be your life.

I will be your peace. I will give you love. Up in the balcony, I will break that temper.

I'll make you sweet where you've been sour. I'll give you the gift of forgiveness so you don't have to live with the scars and all of that. My life will replace all the junk that been in your life and you'll be living the Christ life.

People will see Christ in you. Why? Because you're abiding. You're abiding.

Every day, the strongest Christians over the centuries have not been the most learned. The ones who had the most books and studied and sat under the best teachers or preachers. No, the best Christians who have ever lived have been the ones who learned the secret of abiding.

Just abiding. Resting in him. Sensing the moment we withdraw from him and we're not connected anymore.

Uh-oh, some sentences. That was Jim Simba again. Here he comes, that little rascal.

He wants to get a little glory or he wants to say something that doesn't glorify God. It doesn't bring glory to God. And the minute you catch yourself as you're abiding, oh Lord, you are my life.

I want to abide in you. How deep does this go? Every thought, every word. Will this glorify God? Will it produce fruit? It only will if I'm abiding.

Oh, you know what? I've been abiding in him and I can't go watch that movie because I can't abide in him and watch that and take that in through my eye gate. No legalist, just can't do it. It'll hurt my abiding.

I can't listen to that filthy rap song. Can't do it. I don't care who listens to it.

I can't because that will affect my abiding. That will break it up. Now, notice he says, my father is the gardener and he uses the word to prune you.

If he says, even the branches that bear fruit, my father prunes them through the word of God and circumstances. Why? So they can bear more fruit. Sometimes you read the word and you get convicted.

Ooh, he's pruning you. He wants you to bear more fruit. He's getting rid of junk that's in there.

Stuff that blocks the sap from flowing. That's how he carves it out. Why? So that you can produce much fruit.

Why? So that your father might be glorified. He's glorified when you bear much fruit. All the little selfish ways we have.

I remember one day, this is such a secret of living the Christian life. It is the ultimate secret of the Christian life. An exchange life.

No longer me, but Christ. Christ flowing through me by me abiding. But how do you abide? Some people have said sometimes it takes a thousand thought prayers a day.

I need you, Jesus. I need you. Uh-oh, phone call just came in.

Oh, she's on the phone. Oh, I need you, Jesus. Yeah, I need you, Lord.

Oh, my wife or husband just said something that irritated me. Lord, I abide in you now. Give me your life, otherwise you know me, Lord.

You know me, Lord. Am I right or wrong here, right? It's a constant abiding. The branch doesn't abide in the plant once in a while, make visits once a week, sit in the church.

Just think of that. Some people think Christianity is going to church on Sunday. How sad is that? And that's why you can't measure a pastor, his effectiveness, unless you walk among the people and find out how many are abiding in Christ.

Drawing a crowd, shallow, selfish, carnal, making a production, building church numbers, that can be done without much help from the Holy Spirit. But oh, you have to walk among the people. Wow, you meet them, they love the Lord.

They're in the Word, they're being pruned, they're bearing fruit, they're so sweet. But you know it's not them because they're sour. We're all sour without Jesus, amen? And you say, wow, the Lord is working in his life, in her life.

And in abiding, it's not only that constant leaning and communion and talking to him all day long, talking all day long, Lord, I need you. Lord, I'm resting, oh, I'm sensing now, I'm learning now. My abiding has weakened here.

I need to draw closer to you, Lord. I need to draw closer, you are my life, Lord. I trust you now.

Be my life because you are the vine, I'm the branch. I can't do anything, so I'm just trusting you now, Lord. I'm getting all agitated.

That is not you, you never get agitated. You know what? Someone has said, it's a beautiful thought. The branch is only doing as good as the vine.

So when someone says to you, how are you doing and you're part of the vine, you can just answer, I'm just doing as good as the vine is, which is real good because the vine is Jesus. So how are you doing today? Oh, I'm doing great, why? I'm just a branch in the vine and trust me, that vine is dynamite. I'm part of a dynamite.

Are we not part of a wonderful vine? Come on, let's say amen to that. If he is our life, in a sense, always doing good, when we get sideways is when we break communion with the vine and now we're in that world of I'm on my own, I gotta figure this out. I had, I don't know why this comes to me, maybe because Garnett Cason was in the church back then.

I was in college going to a church in Brooklyn that she went to then and oh, I met God and I was wanting to abide in him. I was so sick of Jim Cimbala. How many get sick of yourself once in a while? Say amen because when you meet Jesus, you just, you wanna be like him.

How many wanna be like the Lord? Come on, lift your hand. Not just blessings and prosperity and all of that, but you wanna be like the Lord. I was just communing with the Lord.

I was abiding in him by the grace of God. I'm telling you, he was filling me with such peace, such joy, I was in another world. Service ended where I really had reached out to the Lord.

I was college age and I went to somebody's house. They had bagels and cream cheese, all this good health food and we're gonna serve it in a little fellowship. I sat down at the table, but I was at the table, but I was communing with the Lord.

I was listening, I was engaged, high, but all the time my heart was just holding, clinging to Jesus. I was in two worlds. That's the way we have to live, in two worlds.

We live in this world with people and all of that, but our hearts always, I've set the Lord always before me. He's at my right hand, David says, I shall not be moved. If you just go by people and circumstances, you're gonna really go rock and roll back and forth, right? But you gotta be communing with the Lord all day long.

His life has to minister through you because you don't have anything in you to help. That's a good recognition. It's humbling, but it's true.

So I was at the table and I'm just communing with the Lord because I'm with them, but I'm not with them. I mean, I'm with them, but how many understand what I'm talking about? Anybody? I'm just in another place. I was abiding.

Somebody said a name of someone in the church and two or three just started to talk nasty about that person, just gossip. Not vile, not cursing or anything like that, but just really nasty stuff. But the person wasn't there to defend themselves.

And I was so abiding in Christ that at first I just didn't say anything. And then as God is my witness, I can see myself. I excused myself from the table.

I walked down this long hallway of this house and I went into the living room and I just burst out crying, just crying because those words were affecting and attacking my drawing from Jesus. How many get what I'm talking about? I'm struggling to explain it, but it's like, no, if I listen to that, I'm gonna lose this. I ain't gonna lose this for nothing.

If I have to just stay in this living room the rest of my life, I just wanna have communion with the Lord. I wanna live to glorify him. I wanna drink in his life.

So if you're here today and you got some besetting sin or something, you could try as hard as you can till the cows come home, nothing will change. It's his life that bears fruit. He is the vine, we are the branches.

He's gonna produce beautiful flowers in us. He's gonna produce, listen, he's gonna do it. He's just saying to us, stop and abide.

Stop running, abide. Stop trying, stop arguing, stop justifying. Just abide like the branch in the vine because without me, you can do nothing.

So when you end up doing nothing, then there's no surprise. It's like, oh Lord, please let me explain this to you. He already knows you stopped abiding and you did nothing.

You have to explain it to him, he already knows. You broke contact with him. Oh, I wanna cling to him.

I wanna abide in him. Why? So that his father might be glorified. Praise the Lord.

You know how another way we can glorify him? Let's just lift our hands up and open our mouths and just praise him with your eyes closed. Everybody praise him out loud. You were created to glorify God.

Just praise him out loud. Come on, choir, come on, audience. God is not dead, he's alive.

He hears our praise, we glorify him. We praise you, Lord. Father, we pray to you today, forgive us for ever glorifying anything or anyone but you.

Forgive me if I've ever tried to glorify myself in front of the people, Lord. Forgive me for you deserve all the glory. We don't wanna glorify Brooklyn Tabernacle.

We don't wanna glorify a choir. We don't wanna glorify a denomination. We don't wanna glorify a race.

We don't wanna glorify a country. We only wanna glorify God. We wanna glorify God.

We wanna lift him up. Whether we eat or whether we drink or whatever we do, we wanna do it for the glory of God. But we can't do that, Lord, unless we abide in you.

Naturally, we go off, we go off track. So would you teach us, Lord? I tried to say it, but my words, they fall short. For these are deep things indeed.

Teach us how to abide in you, to stay connected, to stay close, to be trusting, to be leaning, ever leaning, like the branch leans on the vine, just stays connected, drinks in the sap, which is its life. And once the life comes in, it's gonna naturally produce fruit. Help us to stop trying to produce fruit in ourselves because we have no fruit.

We have no life apart from you. I thank you for this congregation of people who wanna be like you, for a choir behind me that wants to be like you, Lord. We wanna be like you.

We don't want a lot of money. We wanna be like you. We wanna be like Christ.

We wanna bear fruit so the Father is glorified. Thank you for this word today to us. Now apply it to our hearts in ways that only the Holy Spirit can teach.

And we'll give you praise for now and forever. Oh, God's given us a good day today, hasn't he? Everybody stand and give somebody a hug. Choir, hug somebody.

Amen.

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