



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Detaching . . . a virtue for highly effective leaders? Well, nothing could be further from the truth! According to John 15, Jesus, the most effective servant-leader to walk this earth, emphasized and modeled the value of genuine relationships—not surface, passing acquaintances but deep, nourishing connections with others.

In fact, if we desire for Him to lead our lives, we must commit to remaining in daily fellowship with Him like fruit-bearing branches that receive nourishment from the life-giving vine. Jesus had one word for this vibrant connection between a believer and the Divine. He called it . . . *abiding*.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

When you search the Scriptures, thinking about context is very important. One way to do that is by reading a portion of the Scripture immediately preceding the passage you're studying. Furthermore, if the passage you're studying begins a new chapter, it's helpful to read the preceding chapter in its entirety to see how the two chapters relate.



Searching the Scriptures Tip

Remember: The *gospel* writers were theologians as well as historians, desiring their readers to embrace major truths about God, faith, and themselves. So, for example, thinking through the reasons John included specific events and where they occurred can help you piece together the meaning he intended to convey.

Quotable

I'd like to show you how Jesus valued relationships.

The entirety of John 15, in fact, revolves around that very subject.

— Charles R. Swindoll



Read John 14. Make some notes in the space below on what you discover about the relationship between the chapters. What connecting words appear? How are the scenes related in time or sequence? Any clues to geographic location or setting?



Observation: A Survey of John 15

Now that you’ve compared closely John 14 with John 15, let’s survey John 15. To do that, take a few minutes to study the chart below and compare it with what you see in the chapter. By the way, a survey (even making your own chart of a chapter!) helps you understand how a passage fits together.

The Most Important Relationships for Believers

Section	Relationship	Key Term	Emphasis
Verses 1–11	Believers with Christ	“Abide” (NASB) (10 times in 11 verses)	Union
Verses 12–17	Believers with believers	“Love” (4 times in 6 verses)	Communion
Verses 18–27	Believers with the world	“Hate” (8 times in 10 verses)	Disunion

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As you review the chart, what else would you add from your survey of John 15?



Chuck Swindoll offers four clear observations about this passage in John 15. For each one, read the verses and answer the following questions.

The entire passage is for believers only.

What words or expressions in John 15:1–8 help you come to the conclusion mentioned above?

What are some aspects of the believer's relationship to Jesus that are highlighted in these verses?

The verses revolve around one compelling metaphor.

What is the main metaphor Jesus used to describe His relationship to all believers?

In what ways did He develop that metaphor (John 15:2–6)?



The main subject is *abiding* or “remaining.”

How many times in this passage did Jesus use a form of the word *abiding*?

If you're using the New Living Translation of the Bible or another version, what word is used in place of *abiding*?

The result of *abiding* is fruit bearing.

How did Jesus describe this result of *abiding*?

What happens to branches that do not bear fruit?



Interpretation: Understanding Metaphors and Imagery

Often, biblical writers used rich imagery to convey meaning. Part of interpretation is identifying the images used and studying what meaning those word-pictures would invoke in the minds of the original audiences. In the picture Jesus painted portraying the importance of *abiding*, three images stand out: the *grapevine*, the *gardener* or *vinedresser* (NASB), and the *branch*.



The Grapevine

Jesus identified Himself as the genuine *Grapevine* in John 15:1. Obviously, Jesus was not speaking literally. Yet in the same way a grapevine delivers life-sustaining water and minerals to the rest of the plant, Jesus offers spiritual nourishment to the branches attached to Him. What do you think He meant by this analogy?

Jesus referred to the common agricultural practice of pruning branches as necessary to ensure greater growth. What do you think spiritual pruning entails? In what ways did Jesus explain this aspect of His relationship to believers?

If large, juicy grapes are the desired fruit of a well-nourished branch, what would be the spiritual fruit of a believer who abides in Jesus?



The Gardener (or Vinedresser)

According to Jesus' metaphor in John 15:1–4, what is the relationship between Him (the Grapevine) and His Father (the Gardener)?

Read John 15:1–15. Identify the occasions where Jesus referred to His Father. In what way does each reference to the Father help us understand what Jesus meant when He said, “my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1)?

What did Jesus identify as the “fruit” that results from believers abiding in Him? See how many fruits you can identify in verses 1–15, and write them below.

The Branch

Whom did Jesus identify as the *branches* in John 15:2–8?



What is the ultimate result of believers abiding in Jesus and producing much spiritual fruit (John 15:8)?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlating the Scripture passages you're studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. As Jesus' Jewish audience listened to His teaching on vines and branches, perhaps overtones of an ancient prophecy resonated in their minds. Turn to Isaiah 5:1–7, and read it closely.

How does Isaiah's story of the vineyard relate to Jesus' metaphor in John 15?

How are the two passages the same? How do they differ?

Now take a close look at a couple of New Testament passages that describe examples of spiritual fruit in the believer's life. In each one, write down what you discover.

Galatians 5:22–23

Spiritual fruit:



2 Peter 1:5–7

Spiritual fruit:



Application: How Are You Abiding?

To go back to where we began our study, we must acknowledge that as we detach from Jesus—either because of sin or because of doubt and hurt—we soon notice the negative impact on our relationship with Him. Chuck refers to this as spiritual *barrenness*.

In those times when you sensed detachment from Jesus, what sort of consequences did you experience?

In what ways did your detachment cause your loved ones to experience spiritual barrenness too?

Similarly, what did you experience spiritually when you committed to remaining close to the Lord in prayer, worship, and communion with Him through His Word?



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Abiding

John 15:1–11

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Write down three things you can do to deepen your relationship with Christ.

1.

2.

3.

Find someone with whom you can share your renewed commitment to abiding with Christ. Ask that person to pray for your faithfulness in keeping that commitment to Him.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I am so thankful that You do not allow me to wander too far from the fold of Your grace. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to make a way for me to come to know You through Him. Enable me by Your Spirit to remain close to Him and to bear much fruit that will bring glory to You. In His name I pray, amen.



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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Abiding

John 15:1–11

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



Tools for Digging Deeper



Exalting Christ . . .
The Lamb of God:
A Study of John 15–21 —
A Signature Series
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



Following Christ . . .
The Man of God:
A Study of John 6–14 —
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Beholding Christ . . .
The Son of God:
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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