

Grow ~ John 15:1–16

Jesus intends Christians to mature. There is something wrong with Christianity that is satisfied to stay where it is: stagnant, complacent, playing church with a case of the “good enoughs.” The Christian life is not perfection, but there ought to be **positive movement**: greater love, knowledge, obedience, self-control, hatred of sin, and love for Christ.

1. The Holy Spirit gives us life and unites us to Christ.

A branch cannot grit its teeth and produce grapes. Jesus says, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” Paul says we were dead in sin, but God made us alive together with Christ.

The Holy Spirit awakens us, gives us faith, and unites us to Christ so that His life becomes our life. Galatians 5 calls what He produces in us the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Ask yourself: are those things increasingly present in you? Fruit does not make us Christians. **Fruit is evidence (not the payment) that there is life in the branch.**

2. Christ feeds us through His Word.

Jesus says, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you.” Abiding in Christ cannot be separated from the Word of Christ. We receive His words and promises by faith and allow them to shape the way we think and live.

How do you know what Jesus has said, promised, commanded, or forbidden apart from His Word? How can you wear WWJD if you don’t know **WDJD**? Everything about you is being formed from somewhere. **Whose words are forming you?**

Paul says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Don’t let the Bible visit occasionally. **Let it move in. Let it rearrange things. Let it have the keys.** If your mind is disciplined for hours by television, social media, politics, and your

phone while Scripture gets a few distracted minutes, don’t be surprised when you think more like the world than like Christ.

John Bunyan was described as so full of Scripture that if you pricked him anywhere, his blood was “Bibline.” That is what I want for us. When suffering, temptation, fear, or grief comes, Scripture comes out. Let the Word dwell in us so richly that we have something stronger than our feelings to stand upon.

3. The Father prunes us through trials.

Jesus says, “Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” The Father is the vinedresser, and sometimes He tends us with pruning shears. Pruning means cutting, and cutting hurts.

We will not always know precisely what God is doing through a trial, but we know whose hand holds the shears. He may expose an idol, break our self-confidence, or remove a comfort we had begun treating like a necessity. **Difficulty does not mean God has stopped working. The gardener prunes fruitful branches because He intends more fruit.**

4. The Church helps form us into disciples.

God did not design Christianity as a private project. Ephesians 4 says the whole body grows “when each part is working properly.” Hebrews tells us to stir up one another to love and good works, and Colossians tells us to teach and admonish **one another**.

Discipleship can be inconvenient. But Jesus did not call us to convenience. He appointed us to bear fruit. And hear the grace underneath that command: “You did not choose me, but I chose you.” He chose us, loved us, laid down His life for us, and by His Spirit united us to Himself.