

**ST. ANDREW'S
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

Slack Tide

LIVING IN THE IN-BETWEEN





SLACK TIDE; WEEK SIX

We are in our sixth week together in our series, "Slack Tide" focusing on John 15.

A very popular piece of Scripture! The Vine and the Branches. In this week's guide we will be diving deep with Dale Bruner, the main commentaries on "bearing fruit" followed by a few discussion questions probing thought behind the "true vine" and the emphasis on "abiding."

- **HOW ARE YOU THIS WEEK?**
- **TAKE TIME TO PRAY WITH EACH OTHER AND OVER EACH OTHERS WEEK'S BEFORE DIVING IN.**
- **READ JOHN 15:1-9**
 - **WHAT IS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION?**
 - **HOW DOES IT SPEAK TO YOU?**
- **SEE COMMENTARY BELOW**



WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE THEMATIC "BEARING FRUIT" IN OUR PASSAGE?

The two main answers in the commentary tradition, in about this order, have been (1) being loving Christians in our several vocations and (2) doing Christian mission or evangelism. See both interpretations Schlatter + Barrett: "The bearing of the fruit is simply living the life of a Christian disciple (vv.5,8); perhaps especially the practice of mutual love (v.12)." Luther, is helpful in protecting the Church from a frequently contorted view of fruitfulness: "The schismatic spirits say: 'We see no special work or fruit of the Spirit in those who know nothing to teach but Christ. One must really put forth strenuous effort by looking morose, wearing gray garments, owning no property or, like the monks by fasting, mortifying the flesh, and not eating and drinking as others do'. Such a life is outwardly very impressive, and the rabble is quick to say: 'What are our clergy and their followers in comparison? These are saintly, Christian people who forsake all, wear gray garments, etc.'" Bultmann's comment seem balanced: "The nature of the fruit-bearing is not expressly stated; it is every demonstration of vitality of faith, to which, according to vv.9-17, reciprocal love above all belongs." Schnackenburg's summation, carries weight: Jesus' expression "bearing fruit" is deliberately open, "and this means that it may contain a missionary aspect which is brought into prominence by the reminder that the disciples have been chosen, but the dominant aspect is undoubtedly the fruitfulness of Christian life, especially demonstrated in brotherly love, as the following verse makes clear," adding that the following verse's promise to prayer can also "be seen as a part of their bearing fruit." Blank, wants to stress, with the majority, that John's Jesus leaves the meaning of "bearing fruit" completely open.



DISCUSS WITH YOUR GROUP

- When Jesus says "I am the true vine," what is he claiming about himself? Have we seen Jesus make similar statements? Read John 6:35; 8:12; 10:9 & 11; 11:25; and 14:6.
 - When the vine is talked about in the Old Testament, who is that a reference to? Read Psalm 80:8-16 and Isaiah 5:1-7.
 - Who is the vinedresser? What does the vinedresser do to care for and provide for the vineyard? Read John 15:2.
 - How has God provided for and cared for you?
 - Have you ever undergone the pruning process so that you can produce more fruit? Was that process painful? Was the result worth undergoing the pruning process?



DISCUSS WITH YOUR GROUP CONT..

- How many times does Jesus use the word “abide” in this passage?
 - What is the key to producing fruit in the life of a Christian? What must they do in order to bear much fruit? Read John 15:5.
 - What does it look like for someone to “abide in Jesus”?
 - Are you abiding in Jesus at this point in your life? If not, what would have to change for you to say that you are abiding in Jesus?
 - When Jesus talks about bearing much fruit, is he talking only about evangelism? What other fruit could he be talking about that is important to see in the life of a Christian?