



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N1 January 4, 2026

## “The Fullness of Joy in Jesus” John 15:1-11

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Personal God

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

*“I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

**Psalms 121:1-2**



### Q?

How do Christ's disciples remain in him?



Joy is the byproduct of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ characterized by obedience. In the Upper Room discourse (Jn 15-17), Jesus tells his disciples, “I have told you this so that your joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (15:11). To understand what he meant his disciples had to identify what “this” refers to, they had to recognize the implication of the logical relationship indicated by “so that,” and they had to admit his emphasis on the repeated term “joy.”

The nearest antecedent of “this” is in verse 10. “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” In other words, I have commanded you to “remain in my love” (v. 9b); to do that you must obey my commands – and that for a specific purpose, i.e., that their joy might be complete. And what commands does Jesus have in mind? In a nutshell, Jesus tells them if they obey his commands, they will remain in his love, and as a result experience fullness of joy (v. 12).

Clearly, joy is found in Christ. The joy that belongs to him can belong to us also. Remaining in him and his love, the result of obeying his commands, is the key.

C. S. Lewis explores and comments on relationship between joy and rejoicing, enjoyment and praise, suggesting that one completes the other. He writes: “I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with (the perfect hearer died a year ago). This is so even when our expressions are inadequate, as of course

they usually are. But how if one could really and fully praise even such things to perfection – utterly ‘get out’ in poetry or music or paint the upsurge of appreciation which almost bursts you? Then indeed the object would be fully appreciated, and our delight would have attained perfect development. The worthier the object, the more intense this delight would be. If it were possible for a created soul fully (I mean, up to the full measure conceivable in a finite being) to ‘appreciate’, that is to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme beatitude. It is along these lines that I find it easiest to understand the Christian doctrine that ‘Heaven’ is a state in which angels now, and men hereafter, are perpetually employed in praising God. This does not mean, as it can so dismally suggest, that it is like ‘being in Church’. For our ‘services’ both in their conduct and in our power to participate, are merely attempts at worship; never fully successful, often 99.9 per cent failures, sometimes total failures. We are not riders but pupils in the riding school; for most of us the falls and bruises, the aching muscles and the severity of the exercise, far outweigh those few moments in which we were, to our own astonishment, actually galloping without terror and without disaster. To see what the doctrine really means, we must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God – drunk with, downed in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable, hence hardly tolerable, bliss, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression, our joy no more separable from the praise in which it liberates and utters itself than the brightness a mirror receives is separable from the brightness it sheds. The Scotch catechism says that man’s chief end is ‘to glorify God and enjoy Him forever’. But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him” (*Reflections on the Psalms*, 95-96).

# 1

## EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

### Read John 15:1-11

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked 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, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." (NIV)

### Read another translation

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (ESV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Highlight vv. 1, 5.
- Circle "true vine" in v. 1.
- Circle "gardener" in v. 1.
- Circle "cuts off" and "prunes" in v. 2.
- Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in vv. 2, 11 and "because" indicating *reason* in v. 3.
- Underline "fruit" and "fruitful" with one line throughout.
- Circle "remain" throughout.
- Circle "bear" v. 5.
- Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 6.
- Highlight the conditional clauses, the "if" clauses, in vv. 5, 10.
- Circle "fire" in v. 6.
- Circle "whatever" in v. 7.
- Bracket "showing yourselves to be my disciples" in v. 8.
- Box "as" and "so" indicating *comparison* in v. 9.
- Circle "my commands" in v. 10.
- Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 10.
- Circle "my joy" in v. 11.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Jesus is “the true vine” and God is “the gardener.” Identify the divine vinedresser’s ultimate objective and explain what *he* does to accomplish it.
  2. What do you infer from verse 3?
  3. Fruit bearing is *conditional*. How so?
  4. Explain the *comparison* in verse 6.
  5. Receiving what you wish from God is *conditional*. How so?
  6. What does “bearing *much* fruit” show? Given your answer, what does bearing *little* or *no* fruit show?
  7. Explain the *comparison* in verse 10.
  8. In verse 11, what did Jesus tell his disciples (i.e., “this”) and for what *purpose* (i.e., “so that”)?
  9. What does *complete joy* imply to you?
  10. **Discussion:** Talk about the relationship of obedience to joy.
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### Commentary On The Text

In John 15:1-11 Jesus uses the analogy of the vine to emphasize that our Heavenly Father wants us to lead fruitful Christian lives and to explain that we must remain in him to do so. He opens by identifying himself as “the true vine” and his Father as “the gardener.” It follows that believers, those who are “clean because of his word” (v. 3), are “the branches.” His Father tends the vine with loving care to make it as fruitful as possible.

The sense of verse 2 rides on the meaning of the Greek words translated “cut off” and “prunes” in the NIV. While their meanings can be construed in a number of ways, it might be better to translate them literally “lifts up” and “cleanses.” One author describes vine-dresser’s first task this way. “The Greek word translated ‘cuts off’ normally is rendered ‘lifts up.’ This may be preferable here. To conserve moisture in a dry land, vines were allowed to run on the ground until the blossoms began to appear. It was then necessary for the gardener to lift vines off the ground so that the blossoms could germinate. Vines were lifted up either on sticks or on [piles of] stones. The vines thus were put in a place where they could produce fruit. Thus Christ was saying the His Father had the responsibility of putting each branch in a place where it could bear fruit” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 441).

Then the same author goes on to describe his second task in these words. “The cleansing of the vine required not only the removal of sterile branches, or old growth, but also the removal of insects that would consume the vine. This had to be done tediously by hand. In the dry climate in which the vine would grow, the leaves would accumulate a thick layer of dust. This dust would weaken the vine. It was necessary for a gardener to sponge the leaves to remove the accumulated dust so that the vine could remain healthy. When Christ spoke of the Father as cleansing the vine so that it would be fruitful, He had in mind the Father’s work of removing *from the branch* anything that would interfere with the production of fruit” (441, italics added).

Here’s the point. The vinedresser isn’t lopping off branches right and left; he’s tending them—lifting up on sticks or piles of stones the fruitless ones so they might produce and removing random shoots, insects, and dirt from the fruitful ones so they might produce more fruit. Obviously, “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine” (v. 4), and lest the disciples miss it, Jesus clarifies the point of his analogy by explaining, “Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” One commentator summarizes the im-

portance of Jesus’ analogy in these words, “The allegory of the vine brings before us the importance of fruitfulness in the Christian life and the truth that this is the result, not of human achievement, but of abiding in Christ” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, 668).

In verses 5-8 Jesus goes on to explain what will happen if believers do not remain in him and what will happen if they do. Since apart from him we can do nothing (v. 5), if we do not remain in him, we will be unproductive—useless as far as bearing fruit is concerned—like discarded branches that have been left to dry and later be burned. The point of his *comparison* is that unproductive believers are like unproductive branches; they are useless since their purpose is bearing fruit; it’s not that unproductive believers will be burned up like unproductive branches, i.e., thrown into hell, either because they did not remain in him, i.e., lost their salvation, or were never truly saved in the first place. And if we remain in him our prayers will be answered because we will pray in accord with his words to us and we will bear much fruit showing that we are his disciples. Verse 8 makes it perfectly clear that Jesus is talking about *fellowship* and discipleship, not *relationship* and salvation.

Finally, in verses 9-11 Jesus concludes by exhorting us to remain in his love by obeying his commands *just as he remains in his Father’s love* having obeyed his commands—indicating once more that obedience is the key to remaining in him and his love. All of what he said he said so that his joy might be in us and our joy might be complete. One author calls Christian joy a “defiant ‘Nevertheless’” (Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 120) because it is grounded in the spiritual blessings that God has given us in Christ Jesus that can never be taken away or diminished by our circumstances, no matter how trying. And the command Jesus has in mind, should there be any doubt following 13:34, 35, is that his disciples love one another—*as he has loved them*. “The words as I have loved you not only remind us of the immeasurable high standard Jesus himself provides but explicitly ties this passage to the new commandment (13:34-35) and anticipates the next verse. As John says elsewhere, ‘This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers’ (1 Jn. 3:16)’” (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC, 521).

John 15:1-11 is about joy but only in the sense that it is a byproduct of remaining in fellowship with Jesus. And how are his disciples to “remain” in fellowship with him? By keeping his commandments.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *true vine* Israel is often referred to as a vine in the OT (Ps 80:8, 9; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Eze 15; 19:10; Hos 10:1). Later the vine became a symbol for Israel and is found on coins minted by the Maccabees. Although God had planted Israel like “a choice vine of sound and reliable stock,” the nation turned into “a corrupt, wild vine” (Jer 2:21) in contrast to Jesus “the true vine” (cf. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, 668).

v. 1 *gardener* The Greek word translated here is the common word for “farmer,” but this word is seldom used in English in connection with raising grapes, and “viticulturist” is unfamiliar. Other possible translations include: “vinedresser” (NKJV; cf. “husbandman” KJV), “vinegrower” (NRSV), or simply “gardener” (TEV, NEB, the NET Bible).

v. 2 *cuts off* The Gk. word can mean “lift up, take up, pick up”; “take or carry”; carry away, remove”; “take away, remove” with no suggestion of lifting up (BAGD, s.v., *airō*). Its meaning must be determined by the context. Here it may refer to removing unproductive branches by cutting them off, but it may also refer to something else. Vines were often lifted up and placed on sticks or piles of stones so that they might bear fruit (Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, 104-106).

v. 2 *prunes* The Gk. word means literally “make clean” (BAGD, s.v., *kathairō*). Its meaning must also be determined from the context. Here it may refer to “cleansing” a vine by *pruning* the branches, but it may also refer to something more. Dust and insects had to be removed from vines by hand so as to increase the production of grapes (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 441).

v. 4 *remain* Jesus was referring to remaining in *fellowship* with him rather than remaining in *relationship* with him for the consequence of not remaining in him is *fruitlessness*—fruitfulness being a mark of his disciples (v. 8). “As is well known, however, many have read the metaphor of the vine and the branches as though it described the state of salvation. They have then concluded that salvation can be lost since a branch can obviously be separated from the vine . . . If the vine/branch relationship describes the state of salvation, then no unsaved person was ever a branch to begin with. How, then, can such a person be described as a branch that is withered and burned? It is a serious—and totally unnecessary—mistake to view the vine/branch metaphor as a picture of salvation. Nothing at all in the text suggests this. On the contrary, the text does suggest that the metaphor is related to discipleship. Thus, in His final words about this significant analogy, Jesus says” “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (Jn 15:8 italics added)” (Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free*, 135, 36).

v. 5 *bear* “The man who so abides in Christ and has Christ abide in him keeps on bearing fruit in quantity. In isolation from Him no spiritual achievement is possible” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, 670).

v. 6 *like* “He is like a *branch* that is thrown away and withers” (NIV; cf., CEB, ERV, EXB, ICB, NIRV). Is the one who does not remain in Christ thrown away, or is he *like* an unfruitful branch that is thrown away, i.e., useless, that is ultimately burned? After describing various views, one commentator writes: “Still others, fourthly, think the mention of ‘fire’ is only incidental, since vinedressers burned the branches they cut off in the fall pruning. They believe Jesus’ point was that some Christians are as useless to God as these branches were to vine-growers. The point is their *uselessness*, according to [this] view, not their judgment” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on John,” 2016 ed., 279, [soniclight.com](http://soniclight.com)).

v. 6 *fire* Identifying this as a reference to hell fire amounts to “an unjustified interpretive leap” (Hodges, 137). Pruned vine branches were burned because they were useless for fruit bearing (cf. Eze 15:3-5)—as is the believer who does not abide in Jesus and hence can do nothing (cf. v. 5)—but useful for fuel.

v. 7 *whatever* “Whatever” is *conditional*, not *absolute*. This recalls 14:13-14, where the disciples were promised that if they asked anything in Jesus’ name it would be done for them. The two thoughts are really quite similar, since here it is conditioned on the disciples’ remaining in Jesus and his words remaining in them. When both of these qualifications are met, the disciples would in fact be asking in Jesus’ name and therefore according to his will. “Those whose lives are so in harmony with Jesus will find their prayers controlled by his word, and such prayers will be answered and bring added glory to God (15:7b; cf. 14:10-12)” (Burge, 418).

v. 10 *my commands* I.e., “love each other as I have loved you” (vv. 12, 17).

v. 11 *my joy* Does he mean so that I may have joy in you, or so that you may have the joy that I will give you, or so that you might have the joy that comes from obeying my commands, the same joy that I have from obeying my Father’s commands? I’m inclined to the final nuance.

# 4

## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Believers who remain in fellowship with Jesus, the true vine, by obeying his commands – especially the command to love one another – experience his joy and glorify God by bearing much fruit.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## PARENT CONNECTION

The holiday season is over. You went to all the kids’ winter recitals and classroom celebrations. You attended the home group Christmas party, and as a family perched on Santa’s lap. You even dressed up and rang in the New Year at the neighborhood annual bash. You haven’t taken the tree down yet, so you should still be riding a wave of seasonal joy. Why do you feel so empty? You’re a busy person with so many things to do. Your kids are busy with their own color on the family calendar. Why don’t you feel full? The fullness of joy for you and your kids can only be experienced by abiding in Christ. If you look at the original Greek, to *abide* means to remain, to continue to be present, to be held or kept, and also to live, to survive. Abiding is a lifeline, a connection to the Father that’s in no way dependent on Him but purely dependent on us. Abiding is our willingness to stop doomscrolling and start praying. It happens when we release our tight fist of control and open our hands in surrender to His will and way. Abiding begins when we move our focus off of ourselves and onto His Word. If we struggle with abiding, how much more do you think our kids will? As we turn the pages on our calendar and resolve to better ourselves for 2026, or apply a word that states our intention, let’s focus on abide. Let’s reorient our hearts and minds and abide in the only One who offers the fullness of joy.

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read John 15:1-11.

1. Who is the vine, the vine-dresser (or gardener), the branches?
2. What happens to branches that bear fruit?
3. How can a branch bear fruit?

### What Do You Think?

How can you abide in Jesus?  
List 3-5 practical ways to abide in our Savior.

### What Do You Do?

Do some yardwork this week. Throw away the dead leaves and sticks. Prune the shrubs. Teach your parents how this is like our passage.

### CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

### MEMORY VERSE: Romans 11:36

*“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen .”*

## KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week’s verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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**OUR MISSION**  
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.