

Lesson 1 (Thursday)

The Sap

1. From Abide to Sap

The discussion on **abiding** naturally carries over from Wednesday's lesson. In the New Testament, the word translated *abide* comes from the Greek **μένω (*menō*)**, meaning *to remain, to stay, to dwell*. It implies an **ongoing, sustaining relationship**, not a momentary connection.

Jesus' words are therefore not merely poetic or metaphorical—they are deeply **scriptural** and theologically grounded, rooted in the long biblical image of the vineyard.

2. The Vine Motif in Scripture

The vineyard imagery did not begin in John 15.

- **Psalm 80:8** — Israel is described as a *vine* brought out of Egypt.
- **Isaiah 5:7** — Israel is again called the *vineyard of the Lord*.

In both passages, **God is the keeper of the vineyard**.

When Jesus speaks in **John 15:1**, He makes a striking claim:

*"I am **the** true vine."*

The emphasis on **the** is critical. Jesus is not merely another branch within Israel; He identifies Himself as **the vine itself**.

3. Roles Within the Vineyard (John 15)

A clear structure emerges:

- **John 15:1** —
 - The **Father** is the *husbandman* (cultivator).
 - **Christ** is *the vine*.
- **John 15:4–5** —
 - **Life and fruit** come only through *abiding in Christ*.
 - Apart from Him, the branches can do *nothing*.

- **We** are identified as **the branches**.

This establishes a relational flow rather than a static identity.

4. The Role of the Holy Spirit

The picture deepens when we bring in the Spirit:

- **John 14:16–17** — The **Holy Spirit abides in us**.
- **Romans 8:10** — The **Spirit gives life**.

This raises an important question:

If **Christ is life**, yet **the Spirit gives life**, how do these truths work together?

5. Life Flow in the Godhead

When the passages are held together, a beautiful coherence appears:

- The **Father** is the **husbandman** (cultivator).
- The **Son** is the **vine** (the source of life).
- The **Spirit** is the **means by which that life reaches the branches**.

In other words:

Life flows from the Vine to the Branch through the Spirit.

This is not competition within the Godhead, but **organized cooperation**.

6. Botanical Insight: Why “The Sap” Matters

From a botanical standpoint, **sap** is what carries:

- nutrients
- water
- life

from the **vine** into the **branch**.

Without sap:

- the branch may look connected
- but it will not live
- and it will not bear fruit

This gives powerful clarity to Jesus' metaphor.

7. The Apple Grafting Illustration

The story of **McIntosh apples** illustrates this well.

The original McIntosh apple tree was discovered in the field. But to produce more McIntosh apples:

- You **cannot** simply plant seeds.
- Seeds introduce **genetic diversity**.
- The fruit will not remain the same.

Instead, growers **graft** branches from the original tree onto new rootstock.

For a graft to succeed:

- the tissues must connect
- **the sap must flow**

No sap means no life.

8. The Spiritual Parallel

Likewise:

- We cannot manufacture spiritual life on our own.
- We cannot bear fruit by mere attachment or appearance.
- **We must have the life-flow.**

Christ is the Vine. The Spirit is the Sap. We are the branches.

And as long as the sap flows, **life is sustained**.

9. Key Takeaway

Abiding is not passive. It is **remaining where the life flows**.

When we abide in Christ:

- the Father tends us
- the Son sustains us
- the Spirit brings life into us

This is the divine cooperation that keeps the branch alive—and fruitful.