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Issue

TWELVE

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Wednesday, June 17, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

EBC Update



News Brief

- ❖ **Online:** Our services are available [here](#) on YouTube. They can also be accessed through our Facebook page and website. The next will be held on June 21 at 10:30 a.m. Pastor John will be speaking on "Carrying Our Cross."
- ❖ **Reopening:** As the COVID-19 outbreak continues and the BC "Restart" plan unfolds, our leadership will soon be unveiling a plan to reopen Sunday services in a manner that complies with B.C. Government health regulations and guidelines. We would welcome your prayers. Please watch this space!
- ❖ **Prayer Chain:** Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (604-244-1636) or Freda Ross (604-326-5123).
- ❖ **Pastoral Care:** Pastor John can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356. His email is: seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com.

"Bearing Much Fruit"

"Remain in me, and I will 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. I am the vine; you are the branches. If anyone remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5)

There are plenty of books, videos and courses about how to become a more effective church or a more fruitful Christian. But much of the available material is formulaic, market-driven or unduly complex.

Biblical teachings are much simpler. You certainly could not find anything much more down to earth than John 15:1–8, where Jesus compares himself to a vine and us to its branches.

And what is our Lord's counsel for success or fruitfulness in our Christian walk or church life? In essence, it is to stay close to him.

The imagery is so straightforward that it does not require a lot of explanation. "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener," Jesus tells his disciples in verse 1, followed by a similar statement in verse 5: "I am the vine; you are the branches."

Then he gives his followers two main options. Either we will bear fruit, in which case we will show ourselves to be true disciples, we will glorify God and our prayers will be answered, or we will be barren and risk being cut off altogether.

So what is the deciding factor that determines our fruitfulness? According to verses 4–7, it is whether we "remain" in Christ or not, whether we stay rooted in the vine, or try to go our own way and do our own thing.

And what does it mean to "remain" in Christ? John 15:9–17 tells us that it basically involves following his commands and wishes. It entails clinging fast to him through all our challenges and changing

circumstances. It ultimately means living a life of love in which we receive Christ's love and share it with others.

As we do that, the marvellous good news of the gospel is that we can rest safe and secure. For we can be confident, as verse 3 puts it, that those who come to faith in Christ are "already clean." In other words, we have been cleansed from the penalty and power of sin, if we have received the truth of the gospel.

So if we put all this together, what Jesus is ultimately saying is that we will be effective, fruitful disciples if we stay true to him, but that we will not, if we do not.

This is such a simple message that we can easily neglect it or trip over it, if we are not careful. Yet to do so would also be to miss all the glorious promises which Jesus makes to those who honour it.

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you," Jesus says in verses 7 and 8. "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

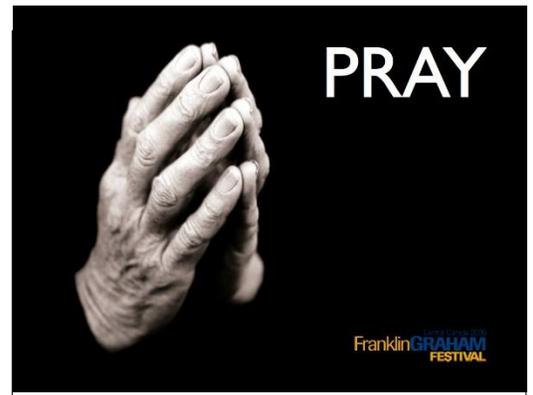
Those are pretty amazing words, when we take them to heart. For they show that commitment and obedience to Christ are more than just biblical requirements.

They are also, in a very real sense, the keys to answered prayer and the foundations of truly fruitful Christian living. If we want to enjoy a healthy church and productive Christian lives, the only way is to remain in Christ and to build our lives on God's Word.

I am especially struck by this message in this week which marks the third anniversary of the start of my ministry at Ebenezer. And I believe that it may have as much to say to us as a community, as it does to me personally.

The past few months have been challenging in so many ways for us all.

The advent of COVID-19 has not only impacted our individual and family lives, bringing so many restrictions on our everyday activities, social



isolation and often loneliness, as well as health and economic anxieties. It has suspended our church gatherings and robbed us of most of the fellowship opportunities on which we have come to rely.

Yet in the process, it has also surely led many of us to depend more closely on Christ and to reach out to others in ways that we might not have done otherwise. And that has been a blessed opportunity.

As things begin to open up, some of our challenges will abate. But my prayer is that we will continue to draw nearer to Jesus, to "remain in" him, and so to "bear much fruit."

Pastor John

Major Prayer Needs

1. Our sick & shut-ins
2. Government leaders
3. Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
4. Our online services and Zoom outreach
5. All who are anxious, depressed or lonely
6. The complete defeat of COVID-19

Zoom Meetings and Games Night



1. Pastor John and Kirsten invite Ebenezer youth and young adults to a weekly Zoom online fun night on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. The evening will include games and quizzes. For access, go to this link and enter Meeting ID: 851 704 4556.
2. The Friday Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting is studying Paul's letter to the Galatians. This week's passage is Gal. 4:21–5:1. To participate, please go to this link on your computer. The meeting ID is: 851 704 4556. You can also call in by phone to 778-907-2071, using the same meeting ID when requested.
3. The Zoom Women's Prayer Meeting, hosted by Rhea Ravanera, meets Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. To join, please go to this link and use meeting ID 349 890 420, or call 778 907 2071.