

# JOHN 15

---

## **John 15:1–17. Abide in the Love of Jesus**

The image of the vine is an important symbol in the Old Testament, with Israel often represented as the vineyard of the Lord. Jesus’s appropriation of this metaphor, then, means that Jesus and His followers are a covenantal people, like Israel. The main theme of this metaphor is that of *abiding*—note the frequent use of the word (Greek *menō*). We are fruitful in the Gospel only so long as we *abide* in Jesus. We see that discipleship is a gradual process, one that can only come to fruition as we remain connected to the source of life and truth—Jesus Christ. This is true both in mortality and in eternity.

“Friends” perhaps does not sufficiently capture the force of the Greek *philos*, which means, literally, “those whom one loves.” Jesus is speaking to the Twelve here, but we may extend His words to all of us—He loves all of humanity and lays down His life willingly on behalf of each individual. Through this love and our obedience (connected ideas; see verse 10), we are elevated from humanity’s self-imposed position as servants (or “slaves,” the more natural meaning of the Greek *doulos*) to a position of honor and favor—friends of God, equipped with divine knowledge and perspective.

## **John 15:18–16:4. The Coming Persecution**

The topic jarringly shifts from love to hate, contrasting the love that the disciples are commanded to show to one another with the hate they will be shown by outsiders. This enmity is presented as natural consequence in verse 19: the world, representing the forces of darkness, cannot help but hate the emissaries of the light. The fact that Jesus has shown His miraculous works to the world has not dissolved this hatred (verse 24); rather, it has intensified it. Much as the wicked Nephites grew angry at Nephi since his miracles made it “not possible that they could disbelieve his words” (3 Nephi 7:18–20), so too did the

world grow frustrated with Jesus's mighty power. Anger is a natural response to the cognitive dissonance between what we want to believe and what the evidence allows us to. Jesus has left the wicked without a "cloak for their sin."

Others, it seems, are simply misguided. John 16:2 makes it clear that many of the persecutors will take action in the name of God. We are reminded of Paul's early career as a persecutor of the Christians. Reflecting on his past life, the Apostle to the Gentiles writes, "I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it . . . being more exceeding zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:13–14). Yet, according to Jesus's diagnosis, Paul took these actions "because [he had] not known the Father, nor [Jesus]" (John 16:2). The fact that he did come to a true knowledge offers hope that many in the world will eventually be redeemed.

Perhaps we should take a moment to consider the complicated relationship between Jesus and "the world." Remember, "God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16; emphasis added). The "world" (Greek *kosmos*) is no simple subject in the Gospel of John. It was created by Jesus yet did not recognize Him (1:10). Jesus came into the world to save it and give it life (3:17; 6:33), yet He is not from it (8:23). The "world cannot receive" the Spirit of truth and will no longer see Jesus because it has rejected Him (14:17, 19). Above all, Jesus has "overcome the world" (16:33). But despite all this rejection and hatred, Jesus does not ask that His messengers be removed from the world (17:15) but instead asks that they remain so that the "the world may believe" and be sanctified. Despite persecution and enmity, God's love for the world does not cease.

## Credits

**Author:** Jackson Abhau

**New Testament Insights Series Editor:** John W. Welch

**General Editor:** Taylor Halverson

**Associate Editor:** Morgan Tanner

**Senior Editor:** Sarah Whitney Johnson

**Assistant Editors:** Sam Lofgran, Verlanne Johnson

**Content Manager:** Jasmin Gimenez Rappleye

**Source:** *New Testament Insights: John*, by Jackson Abhau