

# Barriers to Answering the Call

Lesson for Sunday, February 8, 2026

## INTRODUCTION/REVIEW:

- ⇒ What does it mean to be a disciple? We have been focusing on four calls that Jesus issues to each of us. Can you remember what they were? See *how much they can recall...use the board...*
  - **Come and see** – means to ***just show up*** and was issued to the **seeker**.
  - **Follow Me** – means to line up behind and to imitate – issued to those **young believers** who are ready to ***commit*** to walking in the steps of Jesus.
  - **Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men** – Jesus was inviting those men to become part of His **ministry** team and to become a **worker**.
  - **Go and bear fruit** – this is the call to be a spiritual **producer** – this is what it means to be a **disciple**.
- ⇒ Last week we studied the Parable of the Sower and identified potential sticking points that keep us from moving forward in our personal discipleship.
- ⇒ Today we are looking at another familiar teaching of Jesus found in John 15. In this text, Jesus identifies barriers that keep us from being what Jesus has called us to be.

## CONTEXT: John 15:1-8

- ⇒ These are some of the last teachings that Jesus gave to His disciples. This probably occurred after they left the upper room and were heading to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus would be betrayed.
- ⇒ In this passage, Jesus speaks of four levels of fruit-bearing: no fruit, fruit, more fruit and much fruit. Read vs. 1-8 and look for these four levels.
  - Verse 2 has three of the levels – no fruit, fruit and more fruit
  - Vs. 5 & 8 – much fruit
- ⇒ Point out that these four levels of fruit-bearing correspond to the four callings on Jesus that we have been discussing. *Use the board to add to the chart...*
  - Come and see = no fruit as the lost person can do nothing to yield a harvest.
  - Follow Me = fruit because a new believer begins to grow a harvest.
  - Follow...fishers = more fruit as the Christian begins to serve the Lord.
  - Go and bear fruit = much fruit as the disciple becomes focused on making more disciples.
- ⇒ According to verse 8, God's ultimate goal for every one of us is to bear **much fruit**. As Jesus stated, when we bear much fruit, we prove we are His disciples and God the Father is glorified.
- ⇒ Not every believer bears fruit or much fruit. Each of us must overcome certain barriers that keep us from getting to the next level of fruit production.

## BIBLE STUDY:

1. Barrier 1: **Sin**
  - a. In verse 2, Jesus says that every branch that does not bear fruit, God will take it away. The word for "away" in the Greek is *airo*, and it is used over a hundred times in the NT. The word literally means to "**lift up**" or "move to a different location."
  - b. If you have ever seen a vineyard, you notice that the vines are carefully lifted up and placed on trellises.
  - c. If a gardener sees a vine that has fallen off, he will lift it up (*airo*) out of the dirt and place it back in the sunlight so that it can eventually bear fruit.
  - d. If it is left in the mud, it will become a branch that withers and will eventually be thrown in the fire to burn (see vs. 6).

- e. The barrier between no fruit and fruit is sin. Sin causes us to fall out of the sunlight and into the dirt. Left in our sin, we will become unproductive.
- f. But if we are lifted up and placed back into the Son light, then we can move from no fruit to fruit.
- g. In verse 5, Jesus makes it clear that we cannot bear fruit apart from Him. In the same way, we cannot bear fruit if sin is controlling our lives.

2. Barrier 2: **Good Things**

- a. Still in verse 2, Jesus tells us that to go from fruit to bearing more fruit is through **pruning** (“purgeth”).
- b. Most are not interested in horticulture, but a basic lesson is that a failure to prune certain plants will result in a weak root system, which eventually will keep the plant from bearing fruit.
- c. There are several questions that Jesus answers in these verses.
- d. Who gets to experience pruning? According to verse 2, **every** branch!
- e. When do you get pruned? It always comes **before** the harvest. Read Hebrews 12:11. Even though pruning can be painful, later on it produces a harvest of righteousness.
- f. Why do we need pruning? Simple: To be **more** fruitful.
- g. What gets pruned? This is the hard one to believe! What gets pruned are not the bad things but the **good** things! A good gardener removes a flower – a good thing – from the branch to make room for fruit.
- h. NOTE: This may be the point you need to park on for a minute!
  - i. Many Christians struggle with the pruning process! Good things are taken away – a job, our health, a loved one. This can leave the believer questioning God and the risk of becoming bitter.
  - ii. Pruning is a struggle. It is painful. It demands submission to the Lord and trust in His sovereignty (Romans 8:28).
  - iii. It's not easy, but breaking through this barrier brings great joy and an increasing harvest.

3. Barrier 3: **Satisfaction**

- a. There is a danger for the fruit producing Christian: We become satisfied.
- b. It's important to recognize that our personal satisfaction isn't the goal of our Christian life. The goal is to “**abide** in Christ.”
- c. Jesus uses this phrase eight different times in John 15. (Read through vs. 2-5 and note either “abide in Me” or “in Me.”)
- d. The Greek word is *meno* and it means to dwell, continue or tarry. It has the idea of making Jesus our permanent resting place. (See Psalm 91:1.) It is a lifestyle that must be cultivated and learned over time.
- e. As we abide in Him, we bear much fruit and God gets the glory (vs. 8).

**APPLICATION:**

- ⇒ What barrier is your biggest struggle?
- ⇒ If our barrier is sin, discuss what we are to do with sin.
  - Confess, repent, etc.
  - 1 John 1:9 is a good reference.
- ⇒ If we are enduring a time of pruning, what are we to do in the midst of that time?
  - Learn to pray, meditate on God's Word...
  - What are some specific promises of God that we can cling to?
  - How do we work to not become bitter toward God?
- ⇒ What are the behaviors of someone who is abiding in Christ?