

## UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF A TEXT

### John 15 (ESV)

1. OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?
2. INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
3. CORRELATION: WHAT OTHER VERSES EXPLAIN IT?
4. APPLICATION: WHAT WILL I DO ABOUT IT?

### BASIC RULES OF INTERPRETATION

#### 1. READ THE PASSAGE

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

<sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another."

John 15:1-17 (ESV)

#### 2. CONSIDER THE CONTEXT: Who is being spoken to and why?

Chapters 13 -17 = Jesus' final words of comfort to his disciples before his arrest

- Ch. 13 -17 "**The Farewell Discourse**"
  - The disciples gather in the upper room
  - Jesus washes their feet
  - The Last Supper
  - Judas departs
  - Final teaching
  - The promised coming of the Holy Spirit
  - Take heart – I have overcome the World
  - The High Priestly Prayer

### 3. DEFINE THE KEY WORDS

- “Abide” – Mentioned 11 times
- “Love” – Mentioned 8 times
- “Fruit” – Mentioned 8 times
- “Fruit” and “Fruitful” – Mentioned 45 times in the New Testament with 10 meanings  
What is the meaning of “fruit” in this context?

### 4. INTERPRET UNCLEAR VERSES WITH CLEAR VERSES

“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” (vs. 4)

- BEARING FRUIT IS PRODUCED BY ABIDING IN CHRIST

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (vs.8)

- BEARING FRUIT BRINGS GLORY TO GOD

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (vs. 11)

- BEARING FRUIT WILL GIVE ME FULL JOY

### 5. LOOK FOR THE MOST OBVIOUS MEANING

- THREE TYPES OF BRANCHES (PEOPLE):
  1. Those that are disconnected from the Vine
  2. Those that are being pruned
  3. Those that are bearing much fruit
- I BEAR SPIRITUAL FRUIT BY ABIDING IN CHRIST AND ASKING IN PRAYER

### PERSONAL APPLICATION

#### WHICH TYPE OF BRANCH AM I? WHAT AM I GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

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