

A Confusing Prayer Promise?



“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). One of the most quoted prayer promises in Scripture, John 15:7 has brought some confusion to a lot of believers. It’s a nice verse to encourage us to pray, but it doesn’t work a lot of the time, they think. John 15:7 is a powerful, true prayer promise, but the problem comes largely because it is taken out of the context of the John 15 “Vine” passage.

In John 15 Jesus uses the metaphor of being a vine and believers are the branches. As branches we need to stay connected to the Vine—Jesus. We need to draw our “sap,” our sustenance from Him. That means staying in His Word—the Bible—studying it, reading it, memorizing it. As branches attached to the vine, we have one purpose the passage says—to bear fruit.

What does it mean to bear fruit? Point people to Christ, let our life help other believers grow deeper in their faith, and so on.

The John 15 Principle

After revealing those two points, Jesus then came to verse 7 and offered this tremendous truth about prayer. But the truth comes with a condition and two implied facts about prayer.

The Condition: remain in the Vine. Take in His Word; know His Word.

The Facts: 1. If I am studying God's Word and growing in my connection to Him, as a result I learn His purposes for mankind, His heart. 2. If I am doing this, I understand that my primary purpose as a believer is to bear fruit.

Their Effect on My Prayers: When I understand and am living these truths, what will happen when I go to prayer? I will be less likely to pray the obvious fix-it prayers for situations and more likely to pray what I sense is on God's heart, what will bear fruit in the situation. And when I do that, do you think it will happen? Certainly!

John 15:7 is a tremendous prayer promise that we need to teach to people. But we need to also teach its context. That will help alleviate the confusion, and help believers to grow into more effective pray-ers. Don't downplay the truth of "ask whatever you wish," but help believers to also understand the life conditions that come with it.

–Jonathan Graf is the publisher of Prayer Connect and a popular speaker on prayer.

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