

John 15:1 - 17 (NLT)

¹I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener.

²He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.

³You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.

⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

⁶Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

⁷But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!

⁸When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

¹⁰When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

¹¹I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

¹²This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.

¹³There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

¹⁶You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.

¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

The vine.

¹I AM THE TRUE VINE, AND MY FATHER IS THE VINEDRESSER.

⁴ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN YOU. AS THE BRANCH CANNOT BEAR FRUIT OF ITSELF UNLESS IT ABIDES IN THE VINE, SO NEITHER CAN YOU UNLESS YOU ABIDE IN ME.

⁵I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES; HE WHO ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM, HE BEARS MUCH FRUIT, FOR APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.

There are actually three different vines found in Scripture.

1. **The past vine** was the nation of Israel (see Ps. 80:8-19; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 19:10-14; and Hosea 10:1). God "transplanted" Israel into Canaan and gave the nation every possible benefit. "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" God asked (Isa. 5:4). But the vine produced wild grapes! Instead of producing righteousness, it produced unrighteousness. When Jesus came to the vineyard, they cast Him out and killed Him (Matt. 21:33-46).
2. There is also a **future vine**, "the vine of the earth" described in Revelation 14:14-20. This is the Gentile world system ripening for God's judgment. Believers are branches in "the vine of heaven," but the unsaved are branches in "the vine of the earth." The unsaved depend on this world for their sustenance and satisfaction, while believers depend on Jesus Christ. The "vine of the earth" will be cut down and destroyed when Jesus Christ returns.

3. **The present Vine** is our Lord Jesus Christ, and, of course, the vine includes the branches. He is the “true Vine,” that is, “the original of which all other vines are a copy.” As Christians, we do not live on substitutes! The symbolism of the Vine and branches is similar to that of the Head and the body: we have a living relationship to Christ and belong to Him.

The branches.

2[“]EVERY BRANCH IN ME THAT DOES NOT BEAR FRUIT, HE TAKES AWAY; AND EVERY BRANCH THAT BEARS FRUIT, HE PRUNES IT SO THAT IT MAY BEAR MORE FRUIT.

4[“]ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN YOU. AS THE BRANCH CANNOT BEAR FRUIT OF ITSELF UNLESS IT ABIDES IN THE VINE, SO NEITHER CAN YOU UNLESS YOU ABIDE IN ME.

5[“]I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES; HE WHO ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM, HE BEARS MUCH FRUIT, FOR APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.

6[“]IF ANYONE DOES NOT ABIDE IN ME, HE IS THROWN AWAY AS A BRANCH AND DRIES UP; AND THEY GATHER THEM, AND CAST THEM INTO THE FIRE AND THEY ARE BURNED.

1. Of itself, a branch is weak and useless. It is good for either bearing or burning, but not for building (read Ezek. 15).
2. The branch cannot produce its own life; it must draw that life from the vine.

- It is our communion with Jesus through the Spirit that makes possible the bearing of the fruit.
- Many of the images of Christ and the believer given in Scripture emphasize this important concept of *union and communion*: the body and its members (1 Cor. 12), the bride and the Bridegroom (Eph. 5:25-33), the sheep and the Shepherd (John 10). A member of the body cut off from the body would die.

Abide = The key word is *abide*; it is used eleven times in John 15:1-11 (“continue” in John 15:9 and “remain” in John 15:11).

- What does it mean to “abide”? It means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us to produce fruit.
- This certainly involves the Word of God and the confession of sin so that nothing hinders our communion with Him (John 15:3).
- It also involves obeying Him because we love Him (John 15:9-10).

How can we tell when we are “abiding in Christ”? Is there a special feeling? No, but there are special evidences that appear and they are unmistakably clear. For one thing, when you are abiding in Christ, you produce fruit (John 15:2).

The vinedresser.

1[“]I AM THE TRUE VINE, AND MY FATHER IS THE VINEDRESSER.

8[“]MY FATHER IS GLORIFIED BY THIS, THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT, AND SO PROVE TO BE MY DISCIPLES.

9[“]JUST AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED ME, I HAVE ALSO LOVED YOU; ABIDE IN MY LOVE.

10[“]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.

The vinedresser is in charge of caring for the vines, and Jesus said that this is the work of His Father. It is He who “purges” or prunes the branches so they will produce more fruit. Note the progression here: no fruit (John 15:2), fruit, more fruit, much fruit (John 15:5, 8).

The vinedresser prunes the branches in two ways:

1. He cuts away dead wood that can breed disease and insects.
2. He cuts away living tissue so that the life of the vine will not be so dissipated that the quality of the crop will be jeopardized.
 - In fact, the vinedresser will even cut away whole bunches of grapes so that the rest of the crop will be of higher quality. **God wants both quantity and quality.**

This pruning process is the most important part of the whole enterprise.

- A. The people who do it must be carefully trained or they can destroy an entire crop.
- B. Some vineyards invest two or three years in training the “pruners” so they know where to cut, how much to cut, and even at what angle to make the cut.

Notes on God’s pruning process:

- The greatest judgment God could bring to a believer would be to let him alone, let him have his own way.
- Because God loves us, He “prunes” us and encourages us to bear more fruit for His glory.
- Sometimes He cuts away the dead wood that might cause trouble; but often He cuts off the living tissue that is robbing us of spiritual vigor.

How does the Father prune us?

1. Sometimes He simply uses the Word to convict and cleanse us. (The word translated “purge” in John 15:2 = “clean” in John 13:10. Read Eph. 5:26-27.)
2. Sometimes He must chasten us (Heb. 12:1-11). At the time, it hurts when He removes something precious from us; but as the “spiritual crop” is produced, we see that the Father knew what He was doing all along.
3. Pruning does not simply mean spiritual surgery that removes what is bad. It can also mean cutting away the good and the better so that we might enjoy the best. Pruning hurts, but it also helps. We may not enjoy it, but we need it.

Monday Morning Moment

*“Our union with Jesus is:
a living union, so we may bear fruit;
a loving union, so that we may enjoy Him; and
a lasting union, so that we need not be afraid.”*

GALATIANS 5:22 - 23 (NASB) ²²BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, ²³GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL; AGAINST SUCH THINGS THERE IS NO LAW.