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“I AM the true vine”

John 15:1-8

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In John 15, Jesus makes the final of his seven “I AM” statements. John 14 closes with Jesus and his disciples leaving the upper room where they had celebrated what is commonly known as the Last Supper. This is the last Passover meal he will share with his disciples before he is crucified. Jesus and his disciples make their way to the Mount of Olives in the garden of Gethsemane. It is in the garden of Gethsemane that Jesus is later betrayed by Judas and arrested.

On their way, it is thought that Jesus and his disciples passed by a vineyard. Jesus uses a vineyard as an illustration to teach his disciples. This illustration would have resounded with the disciples. In the Old Testament, Israel was often referred to as the vine. The main point that Jesus is making is this: Jesus wants us to be fruitful as his disciples.

### What does it mean to be fruitful as a follower of Christ?

The Apostle Paul gives a list of nine characteristics of a fruitful life in Galatians 5:22-23. These characteristics are often referred to as the fruit of the spirit.

**Galatians 5:22-23** *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*

These qualities should exist in abundance in the Christian life. We are not to exhibit a single fruit; rather, we should have all of the fruit of the spirit together. As Christians we must take a personal inventory and compare our lives to the fruit of the spirit.

### How do we become fruitful followers of Christ?

In Jesus’ analogy, he is the vine, we are the branches, and God the father is the vinedresser or gardener. In Isaiah 5 God rebukes the nation of Israel for their unfaithfulness.

**Isaiah 5:7** *“For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.”*

Through the prophet Isaiah, God explains that he planted, loved, tended, and cared for the nation of Israel. In spite of God's faithfulness, Israel decided to do their own thing and rebel against God. This resulted in the punishment of the nation of Israel. In contrast to unfaithful Israel, Jesus identifies himself as the faithful vine. Just as Jesus is the faithful vine, so he is looking for followers who are faithful and true branches.

Pastor Gary explains three ways we can become more fruitful followers of Christ.

### 1) When we Abide in Christ ([John 15:4](#))

Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, so a Christian cannot bear fruit apart from Christ. The word abide is used ten times in John 15 to remind us of this point! To abide means to remain, to stay in close fellowship and communion with God. We will only exemplify the character of Christ when we are connected to Christ. When we do not abide with Christ, we bear the fruit of the flesh.

[Romans 7:18](#) *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells..."*

The key to abiding with Christ is to walk closely with him and regularly repent of our own sinfulness that we might adopt his fruitfulness. We must have regular habits of a repentant life. The natural result of abiding with Christ will be being fruitful in Christ. As long as a branch is connected to a fruit tree, it will naturally produce fruit.

### 2) When we are lifted up by Christ ([John 15:1-2](#))

John 15:2 is not meant that if you are not fruitful that God is going to cut you off or take you away. The only reference to judgement in this passage is in reference to those who are not abiding in Christ at all. It is speaking of those who have rejected him and have no relationship with him at all.

When Jesus uses the phrase "takes away," it can also be translated as "lifted up." In ancient times, vineyards would grow along the ground. In places where the vine was bearing fruit, the gardener would place rocks under the vine to lift it up off the ground so that it may produce more fruit. God will come alongside us and lift us up to help us be more fruitful.

[Psalm 3:3](#) *"But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head."*

God will stoop down to us and lift us up to help us grow.

### 3) When we are pruned by Christ ([John 15:2](#))

Of the three ways we grow, the pruning can be the most uncomfortable. The goal of every Christian life should not be comfort but fruitfulness. This means experiencing the pruning work of God. God tenderly cuts back the dead things from our lives. He deals with the things in our hearts of which he wants to rid us. In order for us to be more fruitful, God has to prune things in our lives to help us grow.

## Discussion Questions

1. Read the Seven "I AM" statements.
2. How can we be proactive in examining our own lives for areas God may need to prune?
3. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

