



# The True Vine

## John 15

### **15:1-2 – How can we cope with set backs in our life?**

Set-back are a sign that God is preparing us for something better. In John 15:1-2, Jesus said that God prunes us to make us more fruitful. The act of pruning appears harsh. The vinedresser cuts back the lush, growing branches just as they are about to flower. Grape branches grow very fast and long using resources that could be channeled into making fruit. Pruning focuses the growth and energy of the plant. God's pruning of our lives can be painful. He may limit or remove achievements, resources, and abilities. These may not be a problem in themselves, but God knows they will detract from our fruitfulness. So we should not resent God's pruning. Instead, God's discipline should cause us to turn to Him with renewed desire to be productive.

### **15:1-4 – How does abiding in Christ help us?**

In John 15, Jesus used the analogy of a vine to explain how His followers as branches of the vine may fulfill their purpose. In John 15:1-4, Jesus said, *"I am the true vine, ...No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine"* (NIV). The only way we can produce anything of value is to take actions according to the will of Christ. And this begins by accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord enough to follow Him in all aspects of our life. The more we can be like Christ to our associates, the more fruit we will bear among them and lay up treasure in heaven for ourselves.

### **15:5 – Why should we stay close to Jesus?**

Our society is full of people trying to do what is right. But this façade is easily torn down when the going gets rough. Jesus said in John 15:5 that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to him, like a branch attached to a vine. Apart from Christ our efforts are unfruitful. We may become nourished by Christ when we pray for His help with our challenges in life. As we experience Him intervening to help us in ways we had not even anticipated, we'll be more effective and our faith will also grow. So don't be among those who only appear to do what is right, bear some real fruit by acting in accord with Christ's will.

### **15:5 – How does this passage help us understand our purpose?**

John 15:5 says, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing"* (NKJV). Without God, we can't accomplish anything of value. God equipped us to accomplish the purpose He has intended for us. Thus, what we enjoy doing and our aptitude to do certain things well are

indicators of our purpose. And since God is sovereign and in control of our circumstances, even the opportunities we receive will be consistent with our purpose. So if we focus on what the Lord has equipped us to do well, we will find ourselves getting things done more efficiently.

### **15:5 – How may we experience God more?**

We may experience God more by inviting Jesus to be involved in everything you do. Jesus said in John 15:5, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"* (NIV). The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and other godly attributes of Galatians 5:22-23 that only come from a personal relationship with Jesus. Remaining in Jesus means praying about our daily challenges then glorifying God when we see Him helping us because as it says in James 1:17, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above"* (NIV). The more we see God working with us, the more fruit we will have in our life.

### **15:5-6 – How may we avoid wasting time?**

We can avoid wasting time by abiding more in the vine of Christ. In John 15:5-6, Jesus said it is necessary to follow Him in order to be productive in what really matters. A branch that is not attached to the vine will be *"picked up, thrown into the fire and burned"* (NIV). God created us to fulfill a unique set of purposes. Jesus is the vine who enables us to fulfill our purposes bearing fruit in our life. When we are tapped into the source of all life, we can express love, joy, peace, and other fruits of the Spirit despite circumstances that are not conducive to any kind of fruit. So the more we stay close to Christ, the fewer unproductive days we'll have.

### **15:7 – How may we get our prayers answered?**

We will get our prayers answered when we abide in Christ. In John 15:7, Jesus said, *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you"* (NKJV). For Jesus' words to abide in us we must have intimate knowledge of what He has said. But abiding also implies that His words become a vital part of the way we live. Jesus' words abide in us when we know what He said and did and then allow those words and actions to affect the way we live. The more we apply what we learn from Jesus, the more we will act according to His will and the more effective our prayers will be.

### **15:8 – What is the problem with comparing ourselves with others to determine if we are bearing enough fruit?**

In this competitive world it is standard practice to compare ourselves with others to see how we're doing. So it may be tempting to see the "*much fruit*" Jesus speaks of in John 15:8 as the proof necessary to show we are indeed abiding in Him. But God is the judge of what constitutes "*much fruit*." So instead of feeling bad because we failed to meet some standard we have imagined for ourselves, we should make sure we gauge our spiritual productivity using God's criteria. And this boils down to whether our life is bringing God glory by following Jesus. Depending on our abilities, gifts, and opportunities, a believer may produce "*much fruit*" in a neglected corner of the world. In God's economy, quality of service to Him is way more important than the quantity of perceived results.

### **15:1-11 – What is joy and why is it superior to happiness?**

Happiness depends on circumstances, joy is independent of circumstances. While the world seeks happy circumstances, the Lord offers joy despite our circumstances. In John 15:1-11, Jesus told us about our need to remain in His love so that our "*joy may be complete*" (NIV). When things go well, we feel elated. But difficulties can cause us to become depressed. True joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ rising above the rolling waves of circumstance. When our lives intertwine with His, He helps us walk through adversity without sinking into debilitating lows, and we can manage prosperity without moving into deceptive highs. The joy of living with Jesus Christ daily keeps us level headed no matter how high or low our circumstances.

### **15:12 – Why should we be active in society?**

One of the intrinsic benefits of being active in society is that this provides opportunities to develop relationships with people. While the world considers love to be a fleeting emotion, love is really a fundamental building block of all relationships. Jesus demonstrated the kind of sacrificial, selfless love necessary to build relationships when He paid our sin penalty on the cross. God wants us to develop good relationships with associates because He uses these to encourage people to grow closer to Him. In John 15:12, Jesus commanded us to, "*love each other as I have loved you*" (NIV). We are powerless to obey Jesus' command to love unless we are yielded to Him. When we consider the example of love Jesus showed us, the least we can do out of gratitude is set aside our own agenda to serve our associates.

### **4:17 – What is the benefit of being a friend of Jesus?**

Mere servants just do what they are told but partners have a shared vision working together toward a common goal. In John 15:14-15, Jesus said, "*You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a*

*servant does not know his master's business*" (NIV). Being a friend of Christ means demonstrating that we embrace His vision for what we are all about by following Him in all aspects of our lives. Working toward a shared vision with the Lord makes us a partner with Him. We partner with Jesus when we ask for His help there then glorify Him as we see the good results.

### **15:16 – How may we produce fruit that lasts?**

The Lord wants us to produce results that have an enduring quality. In John 15:16, Jesus said, "*I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last*" (NIV). There are no short cuts in fruit bearing. Portraying a phony spiritual image is dishonest and prevents new growth. People see through efforts to appear close to God. Relating experiences with the Lord that sound impressive but be dismissed as mere coincidences undermine any good they may actually accomplish. It is better to be real about what God is doing in our lives by demonstrating we have been changed through our actions. A picture really is worth a thousand words. Genuine growth takes time and lasts much longer than instant successes. Jesus intends our fruit to last for eternity!

### **15:17 – How may we obey our command to love?**

Our society provides great opportunities to develop relationships. God wants us to have relationships with others because some may come to know Him as a result. Relationships are built on love. Our world wants love to be spontaneous and driven by feeling. But Jesus knows our deeper need. He wants us to love even when we don't feel like it. In John 15:17, Jesus said, "*This is my command: Love each other*" (NIV). Jesus provided us the model for loving and helps us to accomplish His command. When we practice love, feelings of love follow naturally. If we waited to be motivated by affection for others, we would never love them. Treating our associates with honor and respect even when we don't feel they deserve it will bear fruit in our lives and may gain us friends for eternity.

### **15:18 – Why does the world hate Christians and how should we cope with this?**

In John 15:18, Jesus said, "*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first*" (NIV). Christianity threatens the systems of this world. We believe in a God the world cannot accept. The world rejected the way Jesus lived, and will reject the way we live, if we live like Jesus. The world resented Jesus' freedom from conforming to a human system; and it will resent ours. Christians believe in absolutes in a world that proclaims absolute pluralism and the absence of divine standards. Christians return love for hatred and are therefore hated even more. As Jesus didn't let those who crucified Him keep Him down, we shouldn't let difficult associates discourage us.

**15:19 – Why should we welcome rejection?**

If we follow Jesus, we will experience rejection.

In John 15:19 Jesus said, *“I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you”* (NIV). Rejection is not pleasant, but if we never experience it, we may be hiding our Christianity. If we are warmly embraced by the world, we should reexamine our commitment to Jesus. Remaining silent about our faith to gain acceptance by the world is a poor trade. This makes us dishonest by denying the faith we claim is central in our lives and we deceive those whose acceptance we want by keeping our Christian faith private. We are warned in James 4:4 that, *“Friendship with the world is hatred toward God”* (NIV). So making sure our associates know we follow Jesus should be a top priority.

**15:20 – Why shouldn’t we be discouraged to be a witness for Christ?**

Every believer is a witness for Jesus in our society, for either good or bad. Unbelievers will develop their opinion about Jesus by watching as they put Christians to the test. In John 15:20, Jesus said, *“No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also”* (NIV). The more effective we are as good witnesses for Jesus, the more likely we will encounter associates who scoff, some who will ignore our witness, and others who will down-right hate us. But there will also be those who believe, turn to Christ, and find salvation. We need to be aware of the eternal impact we may make on our associates each day and pray for God’s help in being a good representative of Jesus.