

IN THE BEGGINNING WAS THE  
WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH  
GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD.

the gospel of

# JOHN

John 15:1-8

## Introduction

Put yourself in Jesus' place for just a minute. He is within hours of going to the cross. His disciples do not understand his mission, one is in the process of betraying Him, and the world is clueless of His existence. What would you say to the disciples to help them understand? Jesus paints a word picture.

This is a well known passage, but we often forget the backdrop of the story.

## John 15:1-8

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, 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, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

# Defining the Roles

John 15:1

**“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”**

Jesus defines the characters in his parable. He is the Vine, God is the Vinedresser (the Cultivator or the Gardener), and men are the branches.

1. Jesus is the true Vine. There are false vines in the world. People, religions, and systems that claim to be able to meet man's needs.
2. God is the Vinedresser. He is the One who carefully planted the Vine (Christ) and waters and feeds the Vine. He is the One who cares for, looks after, and watches over the Vine and the branches. He is the One who prunes and purges, cleans and protects the Vine and its branches.

## Defining the Roles

John 15:1

**“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”**

3. Men are branches. In the following verses we will see that the branches are all judged on the basis of how they relate to the True Vine. They are...
  - either unfruitful (John 15:2) or fruitful branches of the true Vine (John 15:2-3).
  - either unattached (John 15:4-6) or attached branches of the true Vine (John 15:7-8).

# Unfruitful Branches

John 15:2

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

There are the unfruitful branches. They are taken away. Note that these are attached branches. Jesus said that they are “in me,” but they have a problem: they bear no fruit.

1. The unfruitful branches did become attached to Christ. There was a time, a point when they began to bud and sprout. They even grew into branches. They listened to Jesus and the gospel. Made a profession for Christ, and are capable of bearing fruit, but are not.

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2. The branches are unfruitful. They are "in" the Vine, a part of it, but they simply bear no fruit. What does this mean? These are branches that are not drawing their nourishment from Christ. They go through the routines and expectations, but inwardly are self-reliant or dependent upon something other than Christ. These are deceived into thinking that they can bear fruit through their own strength and determination.

# Unfruitful Branches

John 15:2

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3. God “takes away” the unfruitful branches. The word means to take away and to remove. Notice that this is not saying that God removes their salvation. God often uses trials and tribulations, to help the unfruitful focus on the things that are truly important. Sometimes, He simply removes the obstacles that stand between the believer and himself.

God is more interested in who we become (like Christ), and our long-term essence than our own selfish goals and endeavors. God wants to be first place in our lives and is willing to remove that which we place before Him. There also is a place where God removes the branch through death.



# Fruitful Branches

John 15:2b-4

“and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

There are the fruitful branches. Note three points.

1. Fruitful branches are pruned. All bad spots, useless buds, misdirected shoots, and discolored leaves are pruned off. Even fruitful believers have areas and things that must be cleaned away and cleared up.

# Fruitful Branches

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2. The purpose for pruning is to prepare the branch to bear more fruit. The purpose is not to punish, not to hurt and damage the branch. Note two things about fruit-bearing.

- a. The fruit a believer is to bear. There is the fruit of the Holy Spirit that He bears in our lives (Galatians 5) and there is the evangelism were others are brought into a relationship with Jesus Christ.
  - b. There are different degrees of fruit bearing.

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3. Note how the fruitful branches are pruned and cleansed. There are two ways.

a. Branches are cleansed by the words which Jesus has given to men, by the Word of the Lord Himself. The Word of God refines men by purging away the contamination, pollution and dirt that clings to them. When a man comes to the Word of God sincerely, the Word of God shows what he is doing and what he is not doing, and where and why he fails.

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b. Branches are cleansed by "abiding" in Jesus. Note exactly what Jesus said: "Abide in me, and I in you." The believer cannot change or bear fruit in their own strength. The believer must abide in the vine. It is the vine that provides the strength and nutrients to bear fruit. It is Jesus who provides the power to change, grow, and bear fruit.

# I AM the Vine

John 15:5

“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.”

Here is the heart of passage. It is here that we find another of the I AM's of John. Jesus states that “I AM the Vine”. Jesus is the central part of the plant. He is responsible for the support and feeding of the branches. Believers are the branches and it is their responsibility to bear fruit by yielding to the vine.

The word “abide” means “to dwell and remain”. It has the idea of living and dwelling in a house. The believer is to live in a continual basis in and on Christ. The believer is to find the essence, purpose, strength, thoughts, vision, and goals in Christ!

# Unattached Branches

John 15:6

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”

The unattached branch is on its own and does not abide in Christ.

The unattached are not His and are incapable of bearing fruit because it is not connected to the vine. Therefore, it has no life and cannot have “good fruit” .

Those who seek life and meaning someplace other than in Christ are doomed to failure. The unattached branch is all alone upon this earth and it is doomed to be by itself.

# Unattached Branches

John 15:6

**“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”**

The unattached branch is doomed. He is cast forth to wither and to be gathered and cast into the fire and burned.

- a. Cast forth means to be plucked off and cast out, thrown away, discarded, disposed of. The unattached branch wants and chooses to be unattached, so God lets it.
- b. Withered means to be dried up, wrinkled, peeled; to become sapless and bare; to lose energy and strength. The unattached branch experiences everything withering away.
- c. These dead branches are not profitable and will be gathered up in the day of judgment and will be burned. This is a sober thought!

# Attached Branches

John 15:7-8

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

There are attached branches, and the results and promises made to them. These are the same as the fruitful branches mentioned earlier. Jesus had already covered the pruning or the disciplining of the branches, so here He covers the promises made to them and the results of their "abiding" in Him. Note that the promises and results are conditional: "If you abide in me...." Note also that the words of Christ must abide in the believer.



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The promises and results of abiding in Christ are threefold.

1. The attached branch receives answered prayers. When one abides in Christ, he will desire the things that Jesus desires. Therefore, his prayers will be according to the purpose and will of God. God also delights in answering the desires of His children.
2. The attached branch glorifies God by bearing much fruit.
3. The attached branch proves he is a disciple by bearing fruit.

# Attached Branches

John 15:7-8

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

There are ways to tell if a person really is attached to Christ:

Does he bear fruit?

⇒ Does he live righteously or do shameful things?

⇒ Does he bear “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control”?

⇒ Does he lead the lost to Christ?

What about You?