

JESUS IS THE TRUE VINE

"WHO IS JESUS?" FAMILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE - Week 34, April 1

JESUS IS THE TRUE VINE

"I am the vine; you are the branches.
If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much
fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

JOHN 15:5

Jesus packed in a ton of teaching that final night with his disciples. He spoke with actions by washing their feet and breaking bread with them. He spoke of the future, predicting his betrayal, Peter's denial, and the suffering and grief the disciples would experience in the coming days and years. He spoke promises of the Holy Spirit, saying it was good for them that he was going away, so that the Counselor, the Spirit, could come. And he spoke to them again in parables.

Jesus said to them, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener" (John 15:1).

The metaphor of a vine was not a new idea for the disciples. Many times in the Old Testament, Israel is compared to a vine or vineyard. In Isaiah 5:1-7 we learn of a well-loved vineyard, planted on a fertile hillside. God took care of the vineyard perfectly, clearing the land, planting the best vines, and guarding it with a watchtower. The vineyard, however, produced only

bad, sour fruit. So the vineyard was destroyed.

Israel was the vine, and Israel had failed. The disciples knew this.

But now Jesus was saying something different to them. Israel was no longer the vine; *he* was! Israel had failed to produce good fruit—they had majorly messed up. But Jesus was perfect. Where Israel had failed, Jesus had succeeded. The disciples couldn't rely on belonging to Israel to be saved. They needed to belong to Jesus, the True Vine.

Jesus said, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4).

The Old Testament prophets dreamt of the day when Israel would "bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit" (Isaiah 27:6). Because of Jesus, this can happen! All of us have the opportunity to abide in Jesus and bear fruit for the glory of God. Bearing fruit is the purpose of the vineyard, and now it's our purpose, too.

Jesus makes it clear that we cannot bear fruit by ourselves. We must be attached to him, the vine. God as the gardener prunes us to make us even more fruitful. If we obey him, bear fruit, and love one another, we will be filled with joy. And he will even call us his friends.

Knowing what would happen so soon, Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (15:13). The very next day Jesus would die on the cross, taking on the judgment that belonged to Israel, to us, and to the whole world.

Israel had failed. We, as sinful people, have failed. Without him we can do nothing. But Jesus, the True Vine, stepped into the world to accomplish what we could not. When we remain in him, we receive everything we need to live and to bear fruit that will last.



REFLECT

1. Who was the vine in the Old Testament? And who is the vine now?
2. What does it mean to remain (or abide) in the vine?
3. How can you bear fruit?
4. Why does a gardener prune a vine? Why and how does God prune us?
5. What was the very first command God gave to Adam and Eve? See Genesis 1:28.

BIBLE REFERENCE JOHN 15:1-17

KEY VERSE JOHN 15:5