

## John 15:1-17

<b>NRSV-Updated Edition</b>	<b>The Message</b>
<p><sup>1</sup> “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup> He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are</p>	<p><sup>1-3</sup> “I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.</p> <p><sup>5-8</sup> “I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing.</p>

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<p>gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.</p> <p><sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have</p>	<p>Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.</p> <p><sup>9-10</sup> "I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.</p> <p><sup>11-15</sup> "I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy,</p>

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<p>loved you. <sup>13</sup> No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup> I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.</p>	<p>and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.</p> <p><sup>16</sup> "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.</p> <p><sup>17</sup> "But remember the root command: Love one another.</p>

## **“Secrets of the Vine”**

This study is based on the 2001 commentary and Bible study “Secrets of the Vine” by Bruce Wilkerson.

These verses are part of the longer discourse that Jesus has with His disciples beginning in chapter 13. In this chapter, Jesus begins telling His disciples more plainly what events will soon take place and that one of them will betray Him. Judas departs to do, as the eleven thought, whatever it was that he did. Jesus continues in chapter 14 with His assurances and promises. At the end of the chapter, He announces a break with “Rise, let us be on our way.”

In these opening verses of chapter 15, Jesus seemingly begins a discussion on how to raise and tend vines in a vineyard in order to have a bountiful harvest.

Unlike earlier in John and in the parables in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is almost speaking clearly and speaking almost on the same level. Almost.

1. Read John 15:1-17 as if you are reading it for the first time. What are your initial impressions?
2. Grape vines were common in Israel. Read Numbers 13. What was the report from the spies about the quantity and quality of agriculture in the land?
3. Read the first part of verse two. What happens to branches that produce no fruit?

4. Read verses two and three again. Why do you think the latter is included? Why is it important for a grape leaf to be clean?
5. Jesus keeps repeating “I am the vine”. What part is the vine? Is it below ground or above ground? What main color is the vine?
6. Who are the branches in His illustration, though it might be confusing? What is the relationship of the branches to the vine?
7. There are several things that can happen to the branches. What can happen to the branches?
8. Read these scripture passages about discipline: Deuteronomy 4:35-37, 8:4-6; Psalm 94:12; Proverbs 3:11-13, 10:17. What constitutes discipline in one’s life? Why does discipline happen?
9. Which of the events that can happen to branches seems most like discipline we might experience? What is the purpose of this discipline?
10. In 2 Corinthians, Paul tells the readers about a thorn he had been given. Read 2 Corinthians 12:6-8. Who gave this thorn to Paul? Was it a present or award? What was the purpose of the thorn?

11. Reread the second part of John 15:2. What is the purpose of pruning a grape branch? Why, on a real branch, does pruning happen?
12. In a vineyard, the branches need to be supported by some type of structure. Branches send out tendrils which attach themselves to something nearby, hopefully something that will provide support. The vinedresser, or vinegrower, may physically attach branches to trellises or other structures. What happens to branches that are not attached to anything? Do they have any value?
13. Sometimes branches and leaves get dirty? Reread John 15:3. What has happened to the “branches” in this verse?
14. Read John 15:8. What pleases God and gives Him glory?
15. There are several New Testament passages which discuss being fruitful in some way: the Parable of the Sower (or, of the Seeds that Are Sown) (in Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 14-20; Luke 8:4-15); the Parable of the Talents (in Matthew 24:14-30); Bearing Fruit for God (in Romans 7:4-6) and Fruit of the Spirit (in Galatians 5:22-26).

For individual reflection:

Are you being fruitful?

Have you been disciplined; if so, did you like it?

Have you been pruned?

What holds you up?