

STAYING CONNECTED

Bearing Eternal Fruit

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' claim to be the True Vine is the last of the seven "I am" statements found in John's gospel. Jesus and the disciples had just finished the Last Supper where he told them that he was about to be betrayed and that he would soon die. The analogy of the Vine and the branches is communicate that though he was leaving, he would still be connected to them and that he would enable them to fulfill their purpose (to be fruitful).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The New Testament uses the term "remain" 112x and appears- 11x in John 15 alone. Scan through the chapter and determine how many times it is a command for us to remain in Christ and how many times does Christ or God remain in us. How does that seem to fit into John's gospel about believing?
2. John explains what remaining in Christ looks like:
 - Prayer (John 15:7, 14:14)
 - Obedience (John 15:10, 14,17,20)
 - Joy (John 15:11)
 - Love (John 15:12; 14:21)

When is "remaining in Christ" the hardest for you? Easiest? Why?

3. As Christians, we are most familiar with the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in our lives but when it comes to God the Father, we often draw a blank. John 15 gives us a glimpse of the work of God the Father in our lives: pruning us to become more productive.
 - a. What does Hebrews 11:7-11 have to say about the purpose and length of God's pruning?
 - b. Practically speaking, what does pruning look like? Share a time that God pruned you.
4. Finally, we need to ask these probing questions about being connected and productive:
 - a. No fruit- Have we been dependent on gimmicks or are we truly depending on Christ to help us to be effective witnesses?
 - b. Some fruit- Have we been angry at God for pruning us or resistant to God's pruning because we are satisfied where we are at?
 - c. Much fruit- Have we been spending time with God to regularly listen and obey his words?
 - d. Lasting fruit- Have we focused too much on the outward success that the inward man (character) is in dire need of repair?

CONCLUSION

Many of us set personal goals and our bosses set incentive-laced work goals. John 15 tells us that God has spiritual goals for us and that he will never abandon us to accomplish the purposes he has set for us. The challenge is for us to stay connected into the diVine lifeline for without Jesus, we cannot bear any fruit.