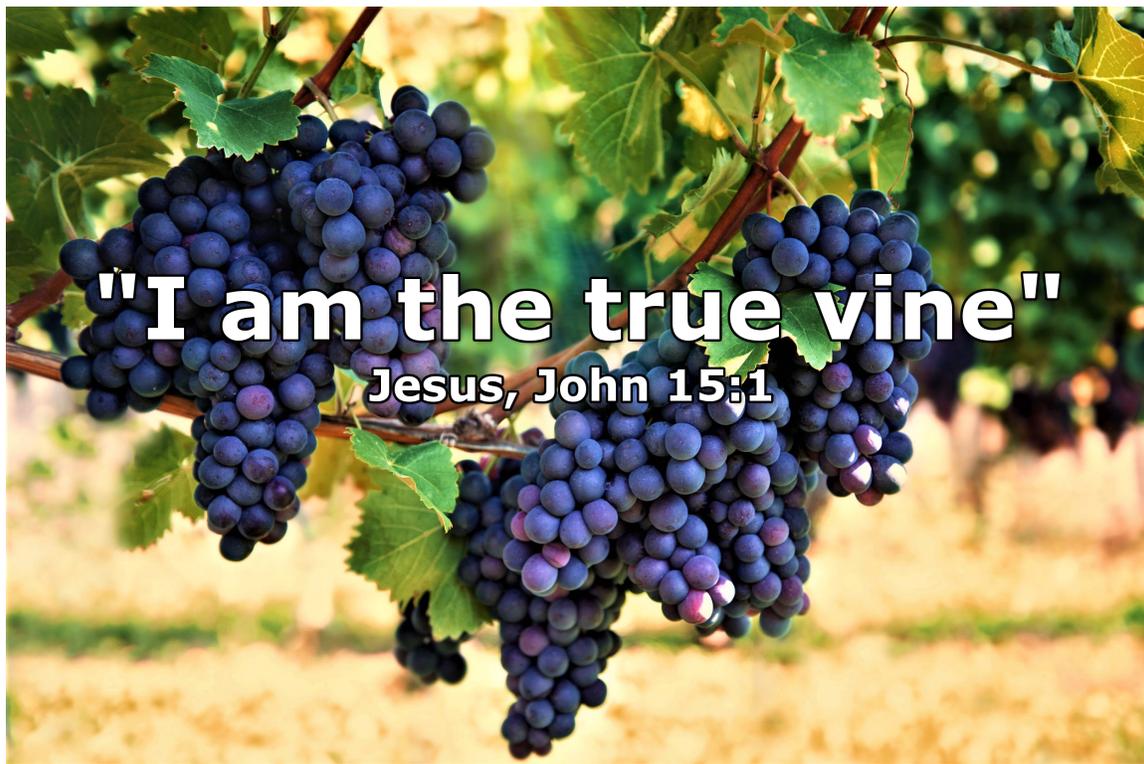


“Jesus is the True Vine”

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Purple Red Grapes on the Vine - 123RF Photo - with John 15:1

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." (John 15:1)

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

This lesson is the sixth in the series on the "I AM" statements of Christ. Today's lesson discusses Jesus' statements, "I am the true vine" in John 15:1, and "I am the vine" in John 15:5.

Consider. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the true vine? Are you staying in close relationship with him? Are you bearing much fruit for him?

"I am the true vine." Jesus had just concluded celebrating Passover with his disciples (John 13:1, 4). The same evening, Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1). Jesus' disciples likely already knew the vine as the image of Israel from the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus added new meaning to a familiar figure when he said, "I am the true vine" (Ref. 1).

In the Old Testament, the scriptures describe Israel as a vine and as a vineyard which God had planted. The psalmist describes God's people, Israel, as a vine that God removed from Egypt (Psalm 80:1-13). Further, the psalmist asks God to "Look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine, even the shoot which Your right hand has planted" (Psalm 80:14-15).

The prophet Isaiah describes a song in which my "well-beloved" plants a vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-2). The "well-beloved" is the Lord of hosts (Isaiah 5:7). The transliteration of the Hebrew word for *Lord* is *YHVH*, the proper name of the God of Israel (Ref. 2). The vineyard is the house of Israel (Isaiah 5:7). Isaiah states that God planted the vineyard with "the choicest vine," and that God expected it to produce "good grapes," but "It only produced worthless ones" (Isaiah 5:2). God "looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed." God looked "for righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress" (Isaiah 5:7).

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of the house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel (Jeremiah 2:4). "For long ago I broke your yoke and tore off your bonds; but you said, 'I will not serve!' For on every high hill and under every green tree you have lain down as a harlot. Yet I planted you a choice vine, a completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?" (Jeremiah 2:20-21).

When Jesus says, "I am the true vine," in John 15:1, he contrasts himself with the degenerate vine which had not fulfilled the purpose God desired. Jesus is *the full revelation of God's faithfulness* (Ref. 3). "Jesus is the fullest realization of the hope of Israel, of her expectations, of what God had intended her to be" (Ref. 4).

"I am the vine, you are the branches." Note that Jesus repeats his statement, "I am the vine" (John 15:1, John 15:5). Good teachers repeat

important principles for their students. The second time, in John 15:5, Jesus adds the application. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

The Greek word for *abide* is *menó*, which means *to stay in a given place, state, relation or expectancy* (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance - Ref. 5). A branch of a natural grapevine must remain part of the vine in order to live, grow, and bring forth fruit. Likewise, we, as Jesus' disciples, must abide continually in him so that we live, grow, and bring forth fruit. Jesus said that we abide in him by having his word in us (John 15:7), by keeping his commandments (John 15:10), and by abiding in his love (John 15:10). Jesus also said that God prunes us so we will bear more fruit (John 15:2).

Fruitfulness is the product of a godly life living in union with Christ. Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matthew 7:16-17). The Apostle Paul described the fruit of godly character that the Spirit develops in us when we abide in Christ. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The key to bearing fruit in our Christian life is to abide in close relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the true vine.

Apply. Are you abiding in Christ? Are you bearing fruit for him?

References

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