

# Abiding in the Vine



"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

CONNECTED TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

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**Book 3**

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## PREFACE

Welcome to the discipleship / leadership series. These little booklets were designed to give basic information concerning various topics about our Christian faith in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of this series is to stimulate thought and to foster a clearer understanding of discipleship and servant leadership. These booklets can be used as a discussion tool for personal study, family devotion, youth meetings or in cell groups. Our hope is that this information will stir the readers and encourage them to go deeper into personal research and study.

Our desire is that these booklets will be a blessing to the reader and a tool that can be shared with others as a gift of encouragement.

Please feel free to mail or e-mail us for more copies or to just write to us with any feedback concerning the content of these studies. We hope you enjoy this offering of knowledge and experience. We pray that Christ will draw you into an ever deeper personal relationship with Himself as you study.

Your servants in Christ,

Rev. Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

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

John 15:1

*“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it **abides** in the vine, so neither can you unless you **abide** in Me. **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: 4-5

## INTRODUCTION

As we begin, let us reflect upon our need to have a personal **relationship** with Christ our Saviour. We are to become one with Him and His body, the church. In John 15:1-17 we will find that the word “**abide**” is used thirteen times. Christ desires for us to be joined together with Him in all ways. Sin has separated us from God but through the blood of Jesus we can now enter into a unique personal relationship with Him for all eternity.

Jesus proclaimed that He was the **True Vine**. This irritated and angered the religious people of the day for it meant He was equating Himself to God. He wanted them to understand that God had come to earth to make a way for man to abide together with Him. As disciples we are called to live a moment-by-moment lifestyle that will model and reflect Jesus Christ to a lost world. The only way for this to be possible is to be grafted into the true vine of Christ.

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## KEY WORDS

**Abide:** accept or act in accordance with. Synonyms: bear, endure, dwell, remain, continue, endure, eternal, everlasting, fast, firm, permanent, and steadfast.

**Relationship:** a connection by way of relation; a state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealings. Synonyms: connection, link, correlation, bond, kinship.

## SCRIPTURE READING: John 15:1-17

### Context: John 14:7 to 15:27

- In chapter 14 and 15 we are encouraged to abide and remain in the Father, the Holy Spirit and the Son.
- Jesus was teaching them about the great love that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have for the disciples.
- The Holy Spirit is to be sent by the Father to be a comforter and teacher, guiding and directing the disciples each day.
- Christ encouraged the disciples to trust in Him rather than worry - through all difficulties they would have peace.
- He told the disciples that He would be going away, but not to fear, as He will be coming for them again in the future.

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## **Transitional Sentence:**

There are at least eight things that Christ wants us to understand about our abiding relationship with Him as the True Vine.

## **Body:**

The picture of Christ as the true vine came from His desire to have a personal relationship with His disciples. This relationship joins man with the vinedresser (the Father), the vine (Christ), and with the life source (the Holy Spirit). Aside from Christ we can do nothing. We are called to a daily walk of abiding in Him, which will produce fruit and act as a witness to a lost world.

Christ taught the disciples what this relationship with Him would look like and how they would be connected to Him. He used the illustration of a vineyard since the people at that time had either worked at or lived by one and could therefore grasp the meaning of His parables.

What follows is an overview of the parts of the vine and how they work together.

## **I SEED**

The seed was God's plan, so that when man fell into sin God had a way for redemption. It would carry within it a "germ" of life. Once the seed was planted, it would break open and produce roots, a vine and branches that would result in fruit. Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit"* (John 12:24).

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It took His coming to the earth, being placed amongst men (who were the weeds), and dying to produce a vine that we could become grafted into as God's own children. This seed (Christ) was ready from the beginning of time and at the appointed hour was planted by the Father in love. He was sent by the Holy Spirit to a virgin woman who in due time would give forth a Son that would be named "Emmanuel" which means *God with us*. He would become the seed of reconciliation and redemption for all mankind so that whoever would believe could have eternal life.

His resurrection life also became the seed that we as ambassadors would go out and plant for more fruit and a greater harvest. When Jesus died He was placed in a grave but three days later death was conquered by life. The seed broke open and Jesus became the firstborn of many who would come after Him. Scripture points out,

*"I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the **growth**. So then neither the one who **plants** nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the **growth**. Now he who **plants** and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are **God's field**, God's building." 1 Cor. 3:6-9*

*"Now He who supplies **seed** to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your **seed** for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;... 2 Cor. 9:10*

*"... for you have been born again not of **seed** which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." 1 Peter 1:23*



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## II ROOTS

Roots are important due to their multipurpose job in relation to a plant. First, they keep the plant grounded and firm. Second, they feed and give the plant water. As the plant grows above so does the root system grow below. The word **root** can be defined as, “the part of a plant which attaches it to the ground or to a support, typically underground, conveying water and nourishment to the rest of the plant via numerous branches and fibers; the basic cause, source, or origin of something.” Some synonyms would be source, origin, starting point, seed, germ, beginnings, base, foundation, fundamental, core, nucleus, heart, kernel, essence; origins, beginnings, family, ancestors, heritage; birthplace. The roots are the starting point for all that will take place above the ground. As well, roots need to be in good soil if they are to do their job properly. The roots will give strength and stability to the vine.

As we become part of the vine we become united in the history or heritage of that plant. Likewise, when we become part of Christ’s vine we also become united in His heritage, right to the root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:10, Romans 15:12, Revelation 5:5). Jesse was the father of King David. If you follow the genealogies of Christ, you will find kingship and priesthood are part of His root system.

Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecy that was spoken about Him over a period of hundreds of years by many different prophets. As I become grafted into Christ this also becomes my history and heritage as well. I am no longer just an individual, I am now part of a unique people called out for service by Christ. I have become joint heir with Him.

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## III VINE

Above the roots we have the vine, which is the main support system to all the branches. The vine has to be strong, firm and well connected to the roots if it is to withstand the storms and challenges to bear fruit. The vine is the Gospel message of Christ. It represents His birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit, birthing of the Church, and finally, His second coming.

It is important to remember that it is the vine that holds up the branches and not the branches that hold up the vine. Likewise, Jesus holds us up, we do not have to hold Him up. We are who we are because we abide in Him and He holds us up by His power and strength.

Christ indicates that He chose us, we did not choose Him. *You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.* John 15:16 It was customary in the times of Christ for the disciples (or students) to pick out the rabbi or teacher who they wanted to instruct and train them in the way of Judaism. Christ wanted to show His disciples this was not how He desired it to be – He sought them out.

Likewise, today Christ seeks out the lost and calls them to come and abide with Him. He knows our heart and petitions us to come and join Him as joint heirs of the King. He calls but we must accept the call through repentance of sin and at that moment we begin a personal relationship that makes us part of the vine.

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## IV BRANCH

Next on the plant are the branches. There are two kinds of branches that a plant can have: those that are natural and grow up with the plant and those that are grafted in (as referred to in Romans 11:11-24).

Jesus tells us the natural branches are the Jewish people. Because of their rejection of Him they are cut off and thrown into the fire. The grafted branches are those that used to be wild (referred to as Gentiles in the Bible) and had no value other than firewood. Out of Christ's love and by faith in Him, these wild branches could be grafted in. Christ had come to break the dividing wall so that both Jews and Gentiles could be part of His kingdom. Gentiles were no longer to be alienated but could become part of the family of God.

The branch is defined as “part of a tree which grows out from the trunk”. Other descriptive words would be – limb, arm, offshoot, expand, spread out, open up, extend, spread/stretch one's wings. These words describe who we are in Christ as branches. We are no longer our own, but take on the life of the Vine and become an extension of who He is.

Christ also teaches that the branches must remain in Him. We have free will and if we choose not to remain or bear fruit we will be cut off, thrown into the fire and burned. Yet if we remain, our desire will be to seek all that He has for us according to His will (v.7). We remain also as we obey His words and commandments (v.10).

Abiding as a branch is critical to a fruitful journey here on earth. We know that while He was on the cross His side was pierced for our transgressions (John 19:34, Isaiah 53:5, Zechariah 12:10). The branches will need to be pruned (our transgressions

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removed) every so often to keep producing fruit – fruit is what comes out of a living and active branch.

## V GRAFT

How do we become part of the vine? Jesus tells us that it happens by being grafted into Him. The definition of grafting means to insert a shoot from one plant into another so that they join and grow together creating a point of union. Some synonyms are implanting, splicing, affixing, inserting, and joining.

As we are grafted, we become attached in all ways to the vine. The vine has to be cut open, we are spliced in and with some binding and tenderness, we in time become part of the whole. We take on a new relationship with God Himself. From being once separated due to sin, we now have become alive in Christ Jesus.

This grafting also makes us part of a family; we are joined together with many other branches (the church). Paul teaches about the process of grafting to the Roman Church (Romans 11:11-24). Together we begin to mature and grow, to work in harmony and unity with other disciples of Christ.

Life now comes up through the roots into the vine and out to the branches. We take on Christ's character and nature as well as becoming friends with Christ. We get to experience His very heart (v.13) and know the Master's business (v.15). He shares what the Father has for us because of friendship, fellowship and relationship with Him.