

If we have accepted Christ into our hearts—received His love, mercy, and forgiveness for ourselves—we have absolutely no excuse for not loving and forgiving like Jesus did. As long as we abide in the Vine, the Lord promises to abide in us. He will give us a supernatural capacity to love and forgive. But too often, today’s Christian is like the Sadducees of old when any effectual witness they could have had was side-railed by their pride and ignorance to God’s Word (truth). “Jesus replied, ‘Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God’” (Matthew 22:29).

Do you know the Scriptures? Are you *living* God’s Word on a daily basis—reading, studying, putting into practice His eternal truth? Do you know the power of God? To know the Scriptures is to see the power of God displayed throughout time, for He reveals Himself through His Word. Ultimately, the Word became flesh and paid a high price to redeem us from this fallen world. The Lord loves us and has grafted us into the true Vine so that we can know the joy of abiding in His presence and bearing much fruit. Oh that we would decide today to be a true branch of the true Vine! May we bear much fruit for Christ’s Vineyard.

*Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into His glorious presence without a single fault.*

*All glory to Him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*All glory, majesty, power, and authority are His before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.*

*(Jude, vv.24-25)*



**Text: John 15:1-17**

## **PROMISE**

**In Christ we bear fruit by being**

\_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ Giving  
\_\_\_\_\_ of the Universe.

1. Staying \_\_\_\_\_ produces \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Being \_\_\_\_\_ produces \_\_\_\_\_.

### **How Do We Stay Connected to the Vine?**

1. Do what Jesus \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Love like Jesus loves - \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **One Year Bible Reading**

July 19: 1 Chronicles 28:1-29:30, Romans 5:6-21, Psalm 15:1-5, Proverbs 19:18-19

July 20: 2 Chronicles 1:1-3:17, Romans 6:1-23, Psalm 16:1-11, Proverbs 19:20-21

July 21: 2 Chronicles 4:1-6:11, Romans 7:1-13, Psalm 17:1-15, Proverbs 19:22-23

July 22: 2 Chronicles 6:12-8:10, Romans 7:14-8:8, Psalm 18:1-15, Prov. 19:24-25

July 23: 2 Chronicles 8:11-10:19, Romans 8:9-25, Psalm 18:16-36, Proverbs 19:26

July 24: 2 Chronicles 11:1-13:22, Romans 8:26-39, Psalm 18:37-50, Prov.19:27-29

July 25: 2 Chronicles 14:1-16:14, Romans 9:1-24, Psalm 19:1-14, Proverbs 20:1

**July 18 & 19, 2015**

# PROMISES

Life Group Lesson • Week of July 19

Wine critics tell us the best wines come from the oldest vines. Some of the world's most luscious vineyards are hundreds of years old. Growing a vineyard doesn't happen overnight. Unlike a vegetable garden, a vineyard can't be grown in one summer. The vine is planted once the time is suitable for planting, but more like an orchard, a vineyard takes many years to bear the amount of fruit necessary to produce a wine worth savoring.

It's not uncommon for a vineyard to be in the same family for many generations. Once in Old Testament times, King Ahab wanted to buy a vineyard near his palace. But its owner, Naboth, knew the value of such a family treasure: "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance that was passed down by my ancestors" (1 Kings 21:3). Sadly Naboth was murdered and his vineyard stolen, which brought God's judgment against the house of Ahab even more furiously than had been warranted up to this point (see 1 Kings 21:17-19).

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus spoke to the disciples about a Vineyard He would soon plant, His Church. The disciples had no way of understanding the pain and suffering their Lord was about to face. They had no idea that their allegiance to this Man would in time cost them their very lives. And yet, because of their witness (see John 15:27) many people would come to know Jesus as Messiah. In time, true branches remaining in the true Vine would produce glorious fruit—a harvest of souls and "great glory" to the Gardener!

## Read John 15:1-17

True discipleship is remaining in the Vine over the long haul – when there's pruning involved, seasons of draught, disease, and setbacks. But just as the success and endurance of a vineyard is determined by the amount of care given, our Father (gardener, husbandman, vinedresser) faithfully tends His vineyard—and promises to take care of His vineyard until the day of the final harvest.

1. If we are going to remain in the Vine – withstanding the difficult times of pruning and seasons of draught – we must be focused on the harvest. Our number one job is to bear fruit. What does v8 say about our bearing "much fruit"?

How is fruit defined in John 4:36?

Every disciple must understand that pruning is involved. What must continuously be cut away if we're going to experience the joy of bearing much fruit (a harvest of souls)?

Jesus repeats one primary imperative in John 15:1-17 – "Remain in Me." Jesus is the Vine, the Source of life-giving nutrients. The disciples are the branches, tended and pruned to produce an abundance of fruit. The Heavenly Father is the Gardener (the Husbandman or Vinedresser) and makes sure every branch is maintained and cared for well. "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

2. What happens to the branch that doesn't produce fruit (see v2a), and what happens to the branches that do produce fruit (see v2b)?

Look closely at v4. What does Jesus promise in the early portion of that verse?  
"Remain in me, and I \_\_\_\_\_."

Are you abiding in the Vine? What difference is being connected to Christ making in your day-to-day life—how much fruit are you producing?

Growing the church is long-term investment, spanning many generations. It doesn't happen overnight. A true branch stays connected to the true Vine and ever-focuses on the true goal, which is bearing fruit. If we allow our heavenly Vinedresser to prune us, then we must be willing to let go of pride and distractions. For the fully devoted follower of Christ, there is no turning back. In fact, Jesus said, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). There's no way around it. Jesus—the true Vine—expects His branches to bear fruit. And if we don't, we are going to get cut!

3. Jesus told His disciples: "You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you" (v3). Refer to the following passages, and consider the power of God's Word and the Gospel message. How we are pruned and purified through His Word?

Matthew 4:4

John 17:17

Ephesians 5:25-26

Hebrews 4:12-16

Abiding in the Vine means we must do what Jesus says and love like Jesus loves—which is unconditionally. Jesus said, "This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you" (v12).

4. We are called to love even though Jesus said the world would hate us, because it hated Him first (see John 15:19). How is it possible to love in the face of hatred?

What did Jesus do in the face of hatred? (see Luke 23:32-34)