



“I Am The Vine” ~ November 4, 2018

OPEN

Do you want to be fruitful or fulfilled? James Davison Hunter wrote,

“Self-fulfillment is no longer a natural by-product of a life committed to higher ideals but rather is a goal, pursued rationally and with calculation as an end in itself. The quest for emotional, psychological and social maturity, therefore, becomes normative. Self-expression and self-realization compete with self-sacrifice as guiding life ethic.”

Brian Doerksen has written a song that expresses a prayer for fruitfulness.

*Here we stand at a crossroads again - like you said in time the seasons change
Looking back we recall the blessing and the pain - but now we turn our hearts
Toward what is still to come - we want to dream again
Lead us Lord into a life of fruitfulness - prepare our hearts to risk again
As we trust, taking simple steps of obedience we know that you will lead us Lord*

When Jesus revealed Himself as the Vine and His followers as branches, He was providing us with the **Secrets of the Vine** (Multnomah, 2001, 22). Author Bruce Wilkinson writes, “We are here to fulfill God’s dream – that we will bring Him glory through a remarkably abundant life.”

DIG

Read carefully John 15:1-6. Can you identify the three roles and responsibilities that are contained in the metaphor of the vine and branches?

- **The True Vine (v. 1)**
- **The Gardener (v. 2)**
- **The Branches (v. 5)**

This picture teaches that an intention, continual faith connection is essential. No institutional or even informational connection with Jesus will suffice. Apart from a remaining, abiding, connected relationship, there will be no transfer of the life of Jesus. This is what Paul was speaking of in Galatians 2:20, which we could call “the exchanged life”.

In John 15:7-16 Jesus points us to three important implications for His followers, those who are “branches of the Vine”. Read this passage and consider what it means to be fruitful.

Remember, rarely is a lack of fruit due to a crisis of information. Usually, it is a lack of action. In Galatians 5:25 we read, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

1. **Being branches of the vine means activating a powerful new authority**
– vv. 7-9

2. **Being branches of the vine means practicing an authentic new responsiveness** – vv. 10-11

Consider the issue of true obedience from the world of horticulture...

Anemotropism is change in the growth or shape of an organism in response to the wind such as trees on a windy beach. This is just an external change, not an inner transformation. This suggests a life of reactionary, fearful obedience.

Thigmotropism is the change in an organism in which the plant actually changes at a cellular level such as sweet pea tendrils. This is a fundamental, internal transformation. This suggests a life of abiding, trusting obedience.

3. **Being branches of the vine means reflecting a dynamic new relationship** – vv. 12-16

“The cancerous growth of self-orientation must be cut out of the believer’s thinking or there will be no fruit.”
- Robertson McQuilkin

REFLECT

To be fruitful we need to examine our mind-set. Are we building a trellis or a vine? That is the very excellent challenge Colin Marshal and Tony Payne pose in **The Trellis and the Vine**, Matthias Media, 2009, 17). They suggest the following ministry mind shifts:

1. From running programs to building people
2. From running events to training people
3. From using people to growing people
4. From filling gaps to training new workers
5. From solving problems to helping people make progress
6. From clinging to ordained ministry to developing team leadership
7. From focusing on church polity to forging ministry partnerships
8. From relying on training situations to establishing local training
9. From focusing immediate pressures to aiming for long-term expansion
10. From engaging in management to engaging in ministry
11. From seeking church growth to desiring gospel growth

To be fruitful we need to examine our gift-set. It is important to answer vital questions: Where are you serving? Why are you serving? How are you serving? You can check out the Cornerstone resource pamphlet “[Serving](#)”

SOME SUGGESTED READING ABOUT THE VINE METAPHOR

Five Secrets of Living by Warren W. Wiersbe (Tyndale, 1978)

Abiding In Christ by Andrew Murray (Bethany House, 2003)

The True Vine by Andrew Murray (Moody Publishers, 2007)

Secrets of the Vine by Bruce Wilkinson (Multnomah Books, 2006)

Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret by Howard Taylor (Moody Publishers, 2009)