

Sunday 27th August 2023

Scripture: John 15:1-17.

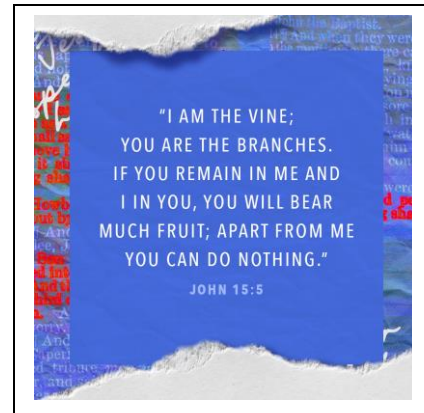
Week 4: I Am the Vine

Do you know much about grapevines?

A grapevine, in the right environment, grows prolifically. Just one single vine

can support numerous branches and bears many grapes.

In His own words, Jesus tells us that He is a vine, and we are the branches. When we remain connected to Him, we receive all the power and strength necessary to produce wonderful fruit in our lives.



As we begin to understand who Jesus is, we can further understand how He is working in us and throughout the world. So far we've heard Him say, "*I AM the bread of life, I AM the light of the world,*" and "*I AM the gate (door).*" These statements paint a picture of Jesus as an amazing, all-powerful, kind, and generous Saviour.

How do you stay connected to Jesus Him and what is the fruit that He is speaking about?

The Power of Jesus Christ is the vine and God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. The branches that are fruitful are the true believers who live in union with Jesus to produce much fruit.

Branches that are unproductive and produce no fruit are those that have turned back from following Jesus after making a superficial commitment. They will be separated from the vine, cut off and tossed aside.

Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning:

1. Cutting off branches – being cut back to promote our growth; being disciplined to strengthen our character and faith.
2. Cutting back branches – being cut completely off the trunk of the vine; cut off from God's life-giving power.

The fruit that Jesus speaks of, is not merely a reference to good deeds or moral behavior. It is a metaphor for the character traits that the Holy Spirit cultivates in us when we remain connected to Jesus – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are not qualities that we can manufacture on our own. They are the fruit of Jesus' power working in and through us.

The power of Jesus transforms us. When life is going well, we feel elated. When hardships come, we can sink down low. Having an ongoing relationship with Jesus means He helps us walk through any trial we may face and replaces our woes with true joy.

This joy remains when we walk with Jesus. We are not merely improved versions of our old selves. We are new creations, reborn

and renewed by His power. This transformation is not a one-time event, but a lifelong process.

Jesus, the vine, was cut off and died so that we, the branches, might live. His resurrection power conquered death, not just for Himself, but for all who believe in Him. This is the ultimate demonstration of His power – the power to save and give eternal life.

His power sustains us. It gives us the strength to endure, the peace to remain calm amidst the storm, and the hope to keep pressing on. His power is our anchor during life's storms.

Remaining Connected to Jesus – the true vine.

Remaining connected to Jesus is a continuous, daily commitment with active participation. This is about a deep, personal relationship with Him, knowing Him, loving Him and living in obedience to His word.

To help us remain connected we use **prayer** – our direct line of connection with God. We can say anything to God – share our needs, concerns, and desires to Him. As we spend time in prayer, we grow in our understanding of who God is and what He desires for us. We also gain strength, wisdom, and guidance for our daily lives.

Studying **God's word** also helps us remain connected. The Bible is God's written revelation of Himself to us. As we read and meditate

on God's word, we are transformed by its truth. We are also equipped and empowered to live out our faith in a world that often opposes God's values and principles.

We need each other to remain connected, to receive and give encouragement, support, and accountability. As we share our lives with one another, we grow in our faith and become more like Jesus. It truly takes a village... We need each other and we need encouragement for the journey.

We are to love each other as Jesus loved us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways we can practice sacrificial love – listening, helping, encouraging, giving. Remember, this is not a 100metre, this is a marathon. We're in it for the long haul, we're in it for eternity's sake and we know that the process of sanctification takes time.

Knowing Jesus is an imperative part of following Him. And one of the best ways to know Him is to listen to what He says about Himself... He is *the bread of life, the light of the world, the gate, and the true vine*. He's the Messiah and Saviour of man.