



Links Players

The Gardener...The Vine...The Branches

I am the true vine, and My Father is the Gardener. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit, He completely cuts off, but each branch that does produce fruit, He prunes in order that it may produce even more fruit. (John 15:1-2, The Newer Testament)

I've been playing competitive golf for over forty years. Continuing to invest time to improve my swing, mental and emotional attitude, and course management takes great intentionality. It is a never-ending process.

Likewise, to experience a growing relationship with Jesus, we must be intentional in staying connected to him, always. The metaphor of the vineyard offers the landscape in which we can do this and thrive.

A vineyard consists of soil, the vines, and the branches. As an essential part of first-century life, Jesus used the vineyard metaphor to catch his listeners' attention.

In naming himself as the true vine, Jesus was declaring himself the perfect one who would fulfill Israel's purpose. As the vine provides nutrients for the branches, Jesus was saying he is the source of spiritual life.

Every vineyard needs a caretaker. This is God. God does not leave us alone in the vineyard of life. He is helping, nurturing, and tilling.

The branches are those who believe in Jesus. Remaining connected to him for nourishment requires consistent intentionality.

The gardener cares for the health of the vineyard in two ways. When a branch is not producing fruit, it is cut off so nourishment can go to other branches. The imagery of cutting off a branch is a warning. If we say we believe in Jesus in word only but do nothing to stay connected to him through prayer, reading God's Word, growing in obedience to his teachings, and loving others, then we are not good for the vine.

The pruning process convicts us of our harmful habits, negative distractions, and lack of loving others well. Pruning these areas of our lives (and more) allows for the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) to flow out of us.

Let's consider one more layer to the vineyard imagery. Ancient vines grew along the ground, and if not properly attended to, the branches might become moldy or grow their roots into the ground. To help the branch heal and reconnect to the vine, the gardener would lift up the branch and set it on a rock, giving the branch time to heal and become fruitful again.

When we are struggling or doubting, God's grace lifts us up instead of cutting us off. He gives us time to receive his nurture and turn back to him if we are willing.

What kind of branch are you today? One that is struggling and needs grace to lift you up and tend to your heart? Are you producing good fruit and need a reminder to stay connected to the vine? Have you turned away from God and need encouragement to return to the vine?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for being the gardener of our lives. Help me today to connect to the vine of Jesus and produce good fruit.

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Tracy Hanson

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