

John 15:1-8
“Why Viticulture Matters To You”

- 1. THERE IS A PURPOSE FOR WHICH YOU WERE SAVED**
 - A. That someone might be praised by your life
 - B. That something might be produced in your life
- 2. THERE IS A PLACE IN WHICH YOU ARE STRONG**
 - A. It is in your relationship with Jesus
 - B. It is in your reliance on Jesus
- 3. THERE IS A PROCESS THROUGH WHICH YOU CAN SUCCEED**
 - A. He cleanses our lives through His word to us
 - B. He cultivates our lives through His work in us

1. I recognize that most people don't even know what viticulture is, much less how it could possibly matter to them.

2. The term “viticulture” comes from the Latin word for “vine”, and it simply means the science and study of the production of grapes, and the things that take place within a vineyard.

3. Believe it or not, there is quite a culture for viticulture, especially in wine producing regions. Many universities, in places like California, offer college degrees in viticulture.

4. Now that you know what viticulture is, the question still stands, why does it matter to you? It matters to you because some of the most important truths Jesus ever taught to His disciples used as an illustration the imagery of a vine and its fruit.

5. In John 15, Jesus said in verse 1, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman (or the vineyard keeper).”* Then in verse 5, He said, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches...”*

6. The lessons Jesus communicated to His disciples in John 15 are among some of the last He gave them before His death on the cross. They are also some of the most significant.

7. You may not care anything about viticulture, but if you love Jesus, then what He teaches about the vine is of great importance to you and your relationship to Him.

8. As we look at this text, I want to work from verse 8 back to verse 1. Doing that, I want to draw some truths from this important passage.

9. First of all, as we walk with Jesus through the vineyard, He teaches us that:

I. THERE IS A PURPOSE FOR WHICH YOU WERE SAVED

1. I am afraid that too many people view salvation as nothing more than a reservation in heaven and a rescue from hell.
2. As Jesus walked with His disciples through the vineyard, He taught them that knowing Him was about much more than where you go when you die.
3. In verse 8, He said to them, *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”*
4. This verse points us to the real reasons for which God has saved us. Being saved means that you will go to heaven, but that is just a product of your salvation. It is not the main purpose.
5. So, what is the purpose for which we have been saved? First of all, the purpose is:

A. That someone will be praised by your life

1. Look again at verse 8. Jesus said, *“Herein is my Father glorified...”* That phrase reminds us of the fact that the glory of God is the end purpose of all He does in saving sinners like us.
2. In Ephesians chapter 1, there is a deep, rich passage that describes all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ.
3. In verse 12 of that chapter, Paul tells us why God has done all those marvelous things for us through Jesus. He says, *“That we should be to the praise of his glory...”*
4. In other words, God did not save you just for your sake. He saved you for His sake. He saved you that you would in turn bring glory to Him.
5. What does it mean to glorify God? Mark that word “glorified” in verse 8. It is translated from the word *doxa*, which gives us our word “doxology”.
6. It means, among other things, to praise. You could say that God has saved you so that you would in turn praise Him.
7. The Doxology says:

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,*

8. Praising God is not for just for a few fringe denominations, or for a handful of fanatical Baptists. No, praise is the purpose for which every believer was saved!

9. Notice not only that the purpose of your salvation is that someone will be praised by your life, but notice also that the purpose for which God saved you is:

B. That something will be produced in your life

1. Look again at verse 8. Jesus said, *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”*

2. If we were saved to bring praise and glory to God, how are we primarily to do that? Jesus says, “Here is how my Father is praised – when you bear much fruit.”

3. The reason Jesus uses the vine as an illustration is that a vine – at least a useful one – will produce fruit.

4. If you look at this chapter, you find a progression. Look back at verse 2. There Jesus describes a branch that *“beareth fruit”*, and then goes on to *“bring forth more fruit.”*

5. Then in verse 8, the branch will glorify God by producing *“much fruit”*. Did you catch that?

6. Salvation takes place in our lives, and God then gets praise as our new, saved lives go on to produce fruit, more fruit, and much fruit.

7. What is this fruit? Well, fruit is the product of the life of the vine? In the case of the Christian life, Galatians 5:22 describes “the fruit of the Spirit”, which are godly traits that grow in our character.

8. Hebrews 13:15 describes, *“...the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”* In Romans 1:13, Paul talked about people who were saved under his preaching as being a type of “fruit”.

9. In short, any good thing that your relationship with Christ produces in you is a “fruit”, and all of those fruits bring praise to God, and they are the very reason He saved you!

10. With that being said, is there *any* fruit in your life? Is there *much* fruit in your life? F.B. Meyer said, “Much fruit! Only thus will the Father be glorified.”ⁱ

11. If we are not fruitful, then we are not glorifying God, and that is why He saved us in the first place.

12. As we move along in the vineyard with Jesus, He points us not only to the fact that *there is a purpose for which you were saved*, but moving back in the text, we find also that:

II. THERE IS A PLACE IN WHICH YOU ARE STRONG

1. There is a word that keeps coming up throughout John 15. In fact, Jesus uses it some 10 times in the first 11 verses. It is the word “abide”.
2. The word translated “abide” literally means to remain, to live, or to dwell. Jesus says in verse 5, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit...”*
3. Jesus points us to a vine with branches growing out from it, and He says, “This is a picture of me and you. I am the Vine, and you are these branches. As long as we are connected, and my life is flowing into you, you will produce much fruit for the glory of God.”
4. This key word, “abide”, reminds us of the place where we are best able to do that for which God saved us. Where is this place? Well, first of all:

A. It is in your relationship with Jesus

1. Jesus says in verse 4, *“Abide in me, and I in you.”* He is calling for us to remain with Him, to dwell in Him. What does He mean by this?
2. It all goes back to the picture of the vine and the branches. The branches must remain connected to the vine if they are to be useful and fruitful.
3. If they are separated, the branches are no longer able to produce fruit, and as Jesus indicates in verse 6, they wither and become waste.
4. When Jesus calls upon us to “abide” in Him, He is calling for us to maintain our connection to Him. This connection is in your daily relationship with Him.
5. Think of this way: When we haven’t seen or spoken with someone for a long time, we say this, “I lost touch with them,” or, “We haven’t kept in touch.” What we mean is that we haven’t kept up our relationship with that person.
6. Just as the vine and the branches must “keep in touch”, so must the believer and the Lord Jesus stay connected with one another through a daily and deepening relationship.
7. Warren Wiersbe explains it this way: “Abiding in Christ demands worship, meditation on God’s Word, prayer, sacrifice, and service...”ⁱⁱⁱ These are the things involved in a daily relationship with Christ.

8. Someone once asked former president Lyndon Johnson's daughter to describe her relationship with her famous father. She thought for a moment, and then said, "Blood."ⁱⁱⁱ

9. Our relationship to Christ is one of blood. We have been bought by His blood, and adopted into the family of God. However, our relationship must not stop there.

10. It is to be an ongoing, on-growing, abiding relationship, in which we stay connected to Him every day. That is the place in which you are strong spiritually.

11. Notice also, that the place of spiritual strength is not only in your relationship with Jesus, but also:

B. It is in your reliance on Jesus

1. Look again at the text, as Jesus further explains our vital connection to Him. He says in verse 4, "*...As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*"

2. Maintaining your relationship and connection to Jesus is not just something you *should* do; it is something you *must* do.

3. At the close of verse 5, Jesus says, "*...for without me ye can do nothing.*" In other words, it is not that you will have *more strength* if you abide in Jesus. No, you will have *no strength* if you don't abide in Jesus.

4. Some of you are struggling spiritually. You have no power, no joy, no peace, no victory, and you seem to have no spiritual strength at all.

5. The problem is that you have been trying to live your life apart from a vital relationship and total reliance upon Jesus!

6. You have no time for Him, and you put little trust in Him. Therefore, like a branch cut off from the vine, you are withering and dying.

7. Ours is increasingly the wireless / cordless generation. Our grandkids will probably one day look at an extension cord about the way we look at a rotary phone.

8. There is no such thing, however, as wireless, unplugged Christianity. If you are not vitally and totally connected to Christ, then you will have no power – no spiritual strength. That is found in your relationship and reliance upon Jesus.

9. The vineyard teaches us about our relationship to Christ. As He uses that illustration, He points out that *there is a purpose for which you were saved*, and that *there is a place in which you are strong*. Moving on, Jesus also uses the vineyard to teach us that:

III. THERE IS A PROCESS THROUGH WHICH YOU CAN SUCCEED

1. Now we come to the opening of the chapter. Jesus began the illustration of the vineyard by saying in verse 1, *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman."*

2. A vineyard does not grow on its own. Behind every healthy vineyard is a vinedresser – a keeper of the vineyard.

3. Verse 1 calls Him *"the husbandman"*, and Jesus says that the Heavenly Father is the one who performs this role in our lives.

4. In other words, while you abide in Jesus, God the Father is working through that connection to see to it that you become what you should be – a healthy, fruitful Christian.

5. How does He do this? Jesus indicates at least two parts of the process God uses to help us succeed as branches on the vine. First of all:

A. He cleanses our lives through His Word to us

1. In verse 2, Jesus says, *"...every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."* Mark that word "purgeth". It is the key to the Father's work in the vineyard.

2. The word means "to cleanse from filth". In the context of the vineyard, it means to remove anything from the branch that would keep it from producing fruit.

3. Notice what Jesus said to the disciples in verse 3: *"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."*

4. Our first cleansing comes when we hear and believe the gospel. The Word of Christ comes to us, and the truth of it cleanses us from our sin.

5. We are cleansed when we are saved, however, there are still things in our lives that need to be removed and "purged" as we walk with Jesus.

6. What does God use to purge those things from our lives? Once again, it is His Word. Jesus prayed for us in John 17:17, and said, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."*

7. The Psalmist asked, *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word (Psalm 119:9).”*
8. This is why it is so important that you read and study your Bible. The Father uses His Word to cleanse your life, and purge from it the things that are holding you back spiritually.
9. The late Dr. Adrian Rogers used to say, “If you have a Bible that’s falling apart, you’ll have a life that’s not.”^{iv}
10. Your success spiritually will come through the process of God cleansing you with His Word. Notice not only that He cleanses our lives through His Word to us, but notice also that:

B. He cultivates our lives through His work in us

1. Jesus says in verse 2, *“...every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”*
2. Again, the idea of purging is to remove anything from the branch that will hinder its growth and production of fruit.
3. This process *can* be done through a cleansing, or washing. That is not all that is involved though.
4. Many times this purging will involve pruning. The ESV translates verse 2 as, *“...every branch that does bear fruit he prunes...”*
5. In the vineyard, pruning involves the cutting away of any dead wood on the branches, as well as a trimming of any unnecessary parts that would hinder the growth of the grapes.
6. Many times our Father will cut into our lives, and will seek to trim away old habits and excess things. This pruning is usually not easy for us, and it often hurts us for the moment.
7. However, we need to remember that God is an expert with His vineyard. He knows what to cut and what to keep, in order to grow the healthiest branches.
8. Warren Wiersbe says, “Yes, pruning hurts, but it also helps. We may not enjoy it, but we need it.”^v
9. Right now, you may feel as if God is doing a little cutting on your life. Perhaps, the pruning sheers of His discipline are causing you some discomfort.

10. If so, don't get discouraged. The purging and the pruning are all part of the process through which God is making you a successful part of His vineyard.

1. As I was studying for this message I discovered that most of the people who care anything about viticulture are those who are into wine making.

2. In fact, if you *google* the word "viticulture" it will often be found in connection with the word "enology", which is the study of winemaking.

3. Just for the record, I don't care anything about wine-making. I'm a "tee-totaling" baptist – I don't even drink wine at communion.

4. I am, however, interested in what Jesus had to say about the viticulture of the Christian life. He is the true Vine, the Father is the Vinedresser, and I am the branch.

5. When I am connected to Christ, and dependent upon Him, God works through me to produce that which glorifies Him – spiritual fruit.

6. Understanding this means that viticulture matters to all of us more than we ever knew.

ⁱ Meyer, F.B., Gospel of John, (Oliphants, London, 1970), p. 263

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, Warren, Be Transformed, (Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987), p. 42

ⁱⁱⁱ Bloody Relatives, *anecdote.com*, accessed 4/29/10, <http://www.anecdote.com/index.php?aid=12873>

^{iv} Rogers, Adrian, Adrianisms: Vol. 1, (Love Worth Finding Ministries, Memphis, TN, 2006), p. 28

^v Wiersbe, Warren, p. 43