

**Welcome to the
Common Ground Café!**



Sunday, April 22, 2018

**“I Am the True Vine”
A Study of John 15:1-8**

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What plant best describes you at this point in your life: Towering oak? Weeping willow? Tumbleweed? Crab apple tree? Explain.

In John 15, Jesus compares the relationship we have with him to the connection a branch has with a vine. Read John 15:1-8.

Jesus Intends to See You Fruitful

Read Matthew 3:8 and Matthew 7:20. In light of these verses, define what Jesus meant by “fruit” in John 15:1-8.

As you spend time with Jesus, his characteristics will flow through your life like the nutrients of a vine flow through the branches connected to it. What are some characteristics of Jesus that will start showing up in your life the more you spend time with him? Try to list at least 7 before moving on to the next question.

Pastor Tom said that all the experiences of our lives just form a theater where we can display Jesus. But sometimes we’re more focused on what kind of theater we have instead of how well we display Jesus in the theater. In the following things, how can we put Jesus on display?

- ❖ Getting married and staying married
- ❖ Dealing with grief
- ❖ Pursuing success in school or work
- ❖ Dealing with health issues

In order to be fruitful, Jesus said there’s something *God will do* and something *we must do*. Use your sermon notes to the complete the blanks in the next two main points

What God Will Do for Your Fruitfulness:

Read John 15:1-3 again. What branches does God *cut off*? What branches does God *cut back*?

The Cutting-Off Process. Scholars are divided over whether the cut-off branches were true believers or pretend believers.

- ❖ Our church teaches that the cut-off branches were pretend believers. (Our doctrine statement on our website includes this statement: “All true believers endure to the end....Believers...shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”) Why would you say this assurance of salvation is important, or what questions do you have about this belief?
- ❖ John Calvin, the great teacher on Christian assurance, said that in this passage “Christ is arousing anxiety; for some corrupt God’s grace.” What does that mean? In what way can “anxiety” over our fruitfulness be a good thing?

The Cutting-Back Process.

- ❖ If you’ve toured a vineyard in the Texas Hill Country or elsewhere, describe your experience. If you’ve seen vineyards in the early spring, what do they look like? Why do vineyard owners cut back their vines?
- ❖ The 19th century English Baptist pastor, Charles Spurgeon, said that adversity is only the handle on the pruning knife, while God’s Word is the blade. In other words, adversity *alone* does not lead to healthy pruning. In fact, what kind of unhealthy attitudes and decisions can result from adversity if we’re not relying on God’s Word to get us through?
- ❖ Jesus said the cutting-back process makes us more fruitful. What fruit can come after we’ve gone through adversity?

What You Must Do For Your Fruitfulness:

Salvation is not merely about your one-time ***profession of faith*** but your ongoing ***position in faith***. Why does “remaining” in Christ prove the genuineness of your first-time profession of faith?

When Jesus called himself the *true* vine in John 15:1, that implies that there are other “vines” people center their lives on instead of him. What are some other “vines” people depend on for their happiness, security, and worth?

Read Acts 2:42 and 47 from your sermon notes. At our church, we remember the four things they “continued steadfastly” by using the acronym “H.I.L.L.”

- ❖ ***Honor the Lord of Life.*** Which phrase in those verses relate to honoring God?
- ❖ ***Invite Your World to Life.*** Which phrase in those verses relate to inviting others to God?
- ❖ ***Love the Fellowship for Life.*** Which phrase in those verses relate to loving fellow believers?
- ❖ ***Live the Word in Life.*** Which phrase in those verses relate to studying the Word and putting it into practice?

In John 14:4, when Jesus said, “Remain in me, *as I also remain in you,*” how does his reassurance (“as I remain in you”) give us confidence to obey his command (“remain in me”)?



Close with praise reports and prayer requests.