



CULTIVATING FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS ~ John 15:1-11

¹ “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵ “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹ “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! (John 15:1–11 NLT-SE)

- CULTIVATING...WHAT IS IT AND WHO DOES IT?

- **What does it mean to cultivate something?**

- **To cultivate is to nurture and help grow.** Farmers cultivate crops, fundraising professionals cultivate donors, and celebrities cultivate their images. When you cultivate something, you work to make it better. Originally, the word referred only to crops that required tilling, but the meaning has widened.

- Synonyms for Cultivate: advance, encourage, forward, foster, further, incubate, nourish, nurse, nurture, promote.

- **What does it mean to cultivate relationships?** To develop something such as an attitude, ability, or skill. To develop a friendship or relationship with someone, **usually in order to get an advantage from it**. Here are the some articles that pop up when you Google the topic...

- 6 Ways To Cultivate Better Relationships for More Happiness
- 10 Ways to Cultivate Work Relationships and Grow Trust
- 5 Practices for Cultivating More Loving Relationships
- 11 Ways to Make New Friends and Cultivate Relationships

- If you cultivate a relationship, you make a special effort to establish and develop it, **because you think it might be useful to you**.

- **How can WE cultivate a great friendship with Jesus?**

- **Time**...spending time in his presence (Ps 27:8)
- **Attention**...increasing our awareness of his presence (Ps 139:7-8, Jer 23:24)
- **Communication**...engaging with him while in his presence (Ps 145:18)
- **Follow-through**...responding in obedience to his presence and his word (2 Cor 10:5)

- **How does JESUS cultivate friendship with us?**

- **Loving us**...⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. (1 John 4:9–10 NLT-SE)
- **Encouraging or exhorting us**...¹⁶ So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. ¹⁷ These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. ¹⁸ There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever. (2 Cor. 4:16–18 MESSAGE)
- **Leading or directing us**...The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. (Psa. 32:8 NLT-SE)

- **FINOYB ~ Fruit Is None Of Your Business**

- **The fruit you bear depends upon which vine you're connected to**

- Josh Houston says that "**Fruit is simply the results and outcomes of our actions.** Fruit is also the results and outcomes of the actions of God, Satan's kingdom, and other human beings...we can abide in whatever vine we want, and as a result of our abiding, we will bear the fruit of that vine...The only way to bear long-lasting, healthy fruit is to abide in the true vine."
- **The purpose in bearing fruit is to glorify the Vinedresser**...The Father. Josh goes on to say, "Fruit bearing is not about our enjoyment of the fruit. Fruit bearing is about Kingdom good over your good, which means sometimes the fruit of your life will be beneficial for the Kingdom of God while tasting terribly bitter (e.g., Paul, Jesus).

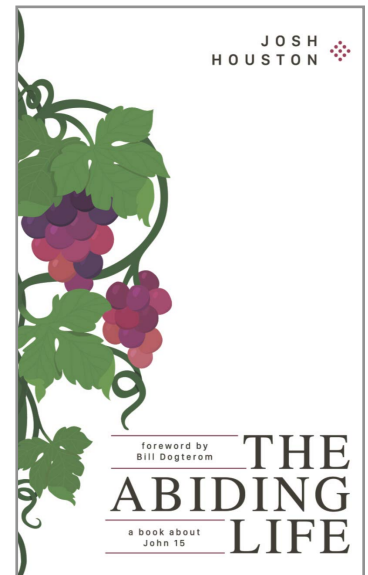
- **Question:** Whose job description does fruit production fall under: the vinedresser, the vine, or the branches?

- **Answer: The Vinedresser alone.** The vine simply does what the vinedresser desires, and the branches are only told to do one thing: abide in the vine. You belong to the vinedresser, and your job is clear and specific. Your job is to abide. All this means is that **FRUIT IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.**

- **Remaining (NIV, NLT), Abiding (KJV, ESV, NASB), Make yourself at home (TMB), Live in union (TPT), Vitally united to me (AMP)**

- The problem with "Abide" is that it's a bit too general. Another frustration is that it's difficult to measure. **Josh Houston**, in his book, **The Abiding Life**, says that there are three important components to living the abiding life that Jesus is describing in John 15. Here they are:

- **Identity** in Jesus..."Abiding shamelessly asserts if you root identity in anything but Jesus, he is not your source, which means the fruit of your life is not being nourished from him." (2 Cor 5:17, Gal 2:20)



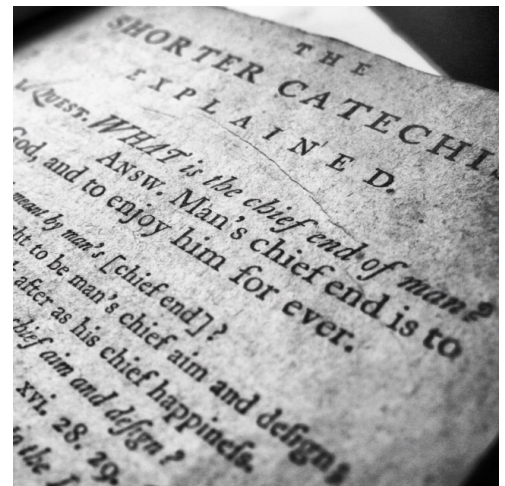
- **Intimacy** with Jesus... "He's asking us to model our pursuit of intimacy with him after his pursuit of intimacy with us. The reason: a branch not intimate with its vine has no chance of fulfilling what it was destined to be or do. Even if we take fruit out of the picture for a second, without intimacy between the vine and branch, the branch dries up and dies. End of story." (Ps 63:1-11, John 17:22-23)
- **Obedience** to Jesus... "Whatever you want to do with me, in whatever time, and for whatever purpose, my answer is yes." That is obedience." (John 14:15, 1 Sam 15:22)

- DIVINE PRUNING

- ¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:1-2 ESV)
- Let's talk grapes. If a fruit bearing tree or vine is allowed to grow untouched, **both the quality and the quantity of the fruit suffer**. A wild grape vine will actually produce fewer grapes and fewer healthy grapes than a consistently pruned vine.
- The purpose of **cutting off unnecessary material**, then, is to circulate the vine's life and nutrition to the vinedresser's chosen fruit.
- **Josh Houston** found another reason for pruning. "Pruning is a necessity in fruit production because it ensures **proper access to sunlight** throughout the plant or tree. Have you ever noticed that often, the best fruit seems to be where the light is? One could argue pruning or cleaning a vine open to light is a chief consideration when working with grape vines. Creating access for light to move throughout the previously hidden places of the vine greatly increases the capacity of the branch to bear fruit."
- There are two elements at play here: One is keeping things **hidden from God**; the other is keeping things **hidden from those we're called to journey with**.
- The book of James urges us to "confess" our sins to one another. If you look closely at the passage, we don't confess our sins to each other to be forgiven; that's what the cross was for. **We confess our sins to each other to be healed**.
- **The Vinedresser** doesn't just prune branches and leaves, but **fruit off the vine as well**. Fruit can be the people in our lives, our material possessions, job or school opportunities, the state of our health or finances, and even the current reality of our spiritual formation; which means fruit is not necessarily good or bad- it just is.
- **Larry Crabb**, in his book, *Soul Talk: The Language God Longs for Us to Speak*, describes it like this: "Every follower of Christ has two sets of competing desires—to love God and be loved by him, and for this life to go well. The battle is in prioritizing. The question you need to ask yourself is, **"Do you want what God has prepared for you, or do you want what you think you need?"**

- CULTIVATING FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS:

- Though I am vastly higher and greater than you, I am training you to think My thoughts. As you spend time in My Presence, My thoughts gradually form in your mind. **My Spirit is the Director of this process**. Sometimes He brings Bible verses to mind. Sometimes He enables you to hear Me "speak" directly to you. These communications strengthen you and prepare you for whatever is before you on your life-path. Take time to listen to My voice. ~ Jesus Calling - Dec. 4



- Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but **let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.** Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Rom. 12:2 NLT-SE)
- **Question:** Can we or should we "cultivate the soil" of our own lives? I heard this from the Lord today..."**My words stir up the soil of your heart!"**