

Fruitful Living Part 1

“The VINE Life: Your Connection to a Fruitful Future”

Text: John 15:1-8 (ESV) *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. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

Spiritual fruit is not a product of human effort but the natural result of a life connected to Jesus Christ. Our job is not to manufacture fruit but to remain in the Vine.

Fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Introduction: How many of us have resolved to be more patient, more loving, or more joyful, only to fail by the time we get to work? We treat the Fruit of the Spirit like a divine self-improvement project. But what if our striving is the very thing stopping the harvest? Jesus reveals that fruitfulness isn't about trying harder, but about connecting deeper. Today, we learn four secrets to the VINE life.

V.I.N.E.

V - Vital Connection

John 15:5 (ESV) *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”*

This isn't a gentle suggestion; it's a strategic warning given on the way to Gethsemane. Jesus is preparing His disciples for life after His ascension. He is establishing the non-negotiable principle of His kingdom: Divine Dependency.

Colossians 1:17 (ESV) *And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

This isn't just cosmic; it's personal. Just as Christ holds the universe together, He is the glue that holds our spiritual lives together. Without this vital connection, everything falls apart.

Acts 17:28a (ESV) *For in him we live and move and have our being...*

Our very existence is contingent upon Him. Fruitfulness is simply the overflow of that fundamental reality.

Samson. He operated on past victories, assuming his strength was his own. **Judges 16:20b** *...He did not know that the LORD had left him.* The tragic result of a severed connection is a life of compromise and captivity.

Imagine a brilliant, powerful lightbulb. It has all the potential for light, but without a connection to the electrical grid, it is utterly dark and useless. We are the bulb; Christ is the power grid. Our potential for fruitfulness is zero without being plugged into Him.

I - Intentional Abiding

John 15:7 (ESV) *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

The Meaning of "Abide": The Greek word is *menō*. It means to remain, to stay, to dwell, to endure. It implies constancy, stability, and persistence. It's not a one-time prayer but a continuous posture.

Psalms 1:2-3 (ESV) *but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

Abiding is this constant meditation, a soul rooted in the continuous flow of God's Word.

Joshua 1:8 (ESV) *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

God directly links success and fruitfulness to the discipline of abiding in His Word.

Daniel. Facing a death decree, Daniel's response was not panic, but purposeful abiding. **Daniel 6:10** *...He went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.* His habit of abiding created unshakable courage.

Abiding is like breathing. You don't take one deep breath in the morning and hope it lasts all day. It's the constant, rhythmic, unconscious intake of oxygen. Likewise, we must develop the rhythm of constantly inhaling God's presence through prayer and exhaling His will through obedience.

N - Nurturing Environment

Matthew 13:23 (ESV) *As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.*

The Parable's Purpose: Jesus identifies the primary obstacle to fruitfulness not as a lack of seed (the Word is always powerful), but as the condition of the soil (the human heart). We are responsible for tending the soil of our hearts.

(The Word = Water): **Jeremiah 17:7-8** (ESV) *Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and it is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.* Consistent Scripture intake creates a root system that accesses nourishment even in hard times.

(The Spirit = Sun): **2 Corinthians 3:18** (ESV) *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* The Spirit's work is to transform us as we gaze upon Christ. This is the sunlight of sanctification.

(The Church = Soil): **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12** (ESV) *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! ¹² And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

We are designed for community. The right soil is rich with the nutrients of fellowship, accountability, and encouragement.

The Early Church in Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-35. They were a picture of perfect soil: “devoted to the apostles' teaching” (Water), “awe came upon every soul” (Spirit's Sun), and “all who believed were together and had all things in common” (Rich Soil). The result? “The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Explosive fruitfulness.

E - Expectant Submission to the Pruner

John 15:2 (ESV) *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.*

The Heart of the Pruner: The vinedresser is the Father (John 15:1). His motive is love and His goal is greater glory. Pruning is not punishment; it is preparation. He cuts away not because He is angry with the branch, but because He is excited about its potential.

Hebrews 12:10b-11 (ESV) *...but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

God's pruning

Isaiah 48:10 (ESV) *Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.*

God often uses the furnace of difficult circumstances to purify our faith and burn away self-reliance.

Joseph (Genesis 37-50). God pruned Joseph's life with brutal precision: betrayed by family, enslaved, falsely accused, forgotten. Yet, Joseph could later say, “*You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...*” (**Genesis 50:20**).

The pruning was painful, but the purpose was national salvation and the preservation of God's promise.

Job. God permitted the ultimate pruning of Job's wealth, family, and health. Yet, through the process, Job's faith was refined, and on the other side, God “*restored the fortunes of Job...and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before*” (**Job 42:10**). The fruit of his tested faith was a deeper revelation of God.

A master gardener doesn't prune a rose bush with anger. He prunes it with vision. He sees the beautiful, full bloom that the plant can't yet see. He carefully cuts away the dead growth and even healthy buds that are draining energy from the main stem, so that all the plant's vitality can be directed toward a spectacular, prize-winning rose. God is the Gardener. We are the rose bush. Trust His pruning scissors

Call to Action: This week, I challenge you to do a daily “VINE Check.”

VITAL CONNECTION: Begin each morning with this prayer: “Lord, I can do nothing without you today. I plug my life into your power.”

INTENTIONAL ABIDING: Open His Word. Even just one verse. Meditate on it. Let it abide in you. Pray it back to Him.

NURTURING ENVIRONMENT: Identify one thing that's making your heart hard, rocky, or thorny. Confess it. And intentionally connect with another believer for encouragement.

EXPECTANT SUBMISSION: When difficulty comes, ask, “Loving Father, what are you pruning in me? I trust your pruning scissors. I yield to your process.”

Fruitfulness is not your burden to carry; it is your destiny to live. Stay connected to the Vine.