

Stay connected

John 15.1-8

Jesus describes himself as the true vine, his Father (God) as the gardener, and his disciples as the branches. He urges his followers to stay connected to him as the only way to be fruitful, and explains that we must expect and accept some 'pruning' to enable us to grow.

Now read **John 15.1-8** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

In the Old Testament, Israel was described as the vine and yet often failed in its calling, so it is significant that Jesus calls himself the true vine. He emphasises the need for the disciples to stay connected to the vine because, of course, unattached branches cannot bear fruit. He goes on to explain that any fruitfulness we experience is not an end in itself, but for the purpose of bringing glory to God.

EXPERIMENT

You will need: a glass of water, bright food colouring, a stick of celery or a white flower with a long stem. Add a few drops of food colouring to the water; stir until the colour is uniform.

Place the celery/flower in the water. Watch what happens during the day as the plant sucks up the water. How might this be a symbol of abiding in Jesus? Pray about the effect Jesus could have on you – and others – if you 'stay connected'.

What might help you to remain in the right place to grow?



OUTDOORS

Try and connect with God outdoors through creation, perhaps by doing something unusual e.g. hug a tree (if you're with other people, find the biggest tree you can and see if you can hold hands round it); lie/roll on the grass; splash in a stream; watch an insect closely; look at the stars through binoculars (DON'T LOOK AT THE SUN!). How do you feel connected to God as you do this?

Daily Prayer

Use these three simple prayers at the same time each day this week.

Morning

Lord, help me to abide in you today, especially when I am doing...

Lunchtime

Lord, help me to know whether or not I am connecting to you today.

Evening

Lord, I am sorry for any times when I drifted away from you today; especially...



Take the opportunity this bank holiday weekend to do some 'lifestyle pruning'.

For example: go through your wardrobe or cupboards to find where you have too much 'stuff'; take some to a charity shop, to be loved and used by someone else (or, if it is rubbish, to a recycling centre).

If you have a garden, do some weeding and, as you do this, ask God to show you where there is 'stuff' in your life that might be hindering your relationship with him.

Invite God to help you clear it out.

STAY CONNECTED

Is there anyone you haven't spoken or written to in a while? Make time to contact them this week. Perhaps you could send a picture of a part of God's creation that you have felt closely connected to recently, explaining what it has meant for you and inviting them to respond with their thoughts.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Let us imagine that God is a gardener, and in God's garden there is a plant: a vine. The vine is rooted in the soil, and the soil is rich and nutritious, full of God's goodness. The gardener pours all his love into it, so the vine has plenty of water and food, and everything else it needs to grow well.



There are many branches on the vine. Some have fruit, some do not. God cuts off all the branches that are dry and weak, and have no fruit. Then he looks at the branches that are fruitful and cuts those branches back, so that they will bear even more fruit.

Jesus is like a vine. We are the branches. If the branches stay firmly attached to the root of the plant, they can draw on the goodness in the soil and produce sweet, juicy grapes. If we abide in Jesus and stay as close to him as the branches of the vine, we will grow well. Jesus will give us all the nourishment we need and we will produce wonderful fruit, like love, kindness and helpfulness. Jesus says that if we abide in him, we can ask for whatever we want, and it will be done for us.

John 15.1-8

Did you know?

- A vine is a plant that produces grapes; it needs pruning (cutting back) every year to produce good grapes.
- 'Abide' means to stay or remain.

John 15.1-8 (NRSV)

Jesus said: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.