

PROOF OF LIFE

(John 15:1-11)

Why are the Mount Joy Church of God logo, colors, newsletter, and sign rooted in this metaphor?

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that **bears no fruit**, while every branch that does **bear fruit** he prunes so that it will be even **more fruitful**. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴**Remain** in me, as I also **remain** in you. No branch can **bear fruit** by itself; it must **remain** in the vine. Neither can you **bear fruit** unless you **remain** in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. **If you remain** in me and I in you, you will **bear much fruit**; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶**If you do not remain** in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷**If you remain** in me and my words **remain** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you **bear much fruit**, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now **remain** in my love. ¹⁰**If you keep my commands**, you will **remain** in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and **remain** in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

The VINE is the secret to vitality

- Being **connected** to the Vine brings life, NOT being **affiliated** with his people
- Many branches **appear** connected, NOT all **are** connected
- **Fruit** is a branch's proof of life, NOT **affiliation** with a vineyard
- Fruit is the result of **habitual choices**, NOT of a **single choice**
- What's true about **branches** is true about **vineyards**

*Call to action: the six-week commitment...

Time:

Place:

Plan:

Goal:

Accountability partner:

UNDERSTANDING THE VINE AND BRANCHES METAPHOR IN JOHN 15:1-11

All the spiritual-life teaching which our Lord gave in the gospel of John and the upper room discourse reaches its apex in the illustration of the vine and the branches.... In the figure of the vine the *intimacy* of the Savior with his people is deepest.... The vine as a living organism beautifully illustrates the closeness of Christ's *union* and *communion* in life with those related to Him.... Relating closely with the idea of communion is *dependence*. The vine is also ideal to illustrate that people united with Christ *bear fruit* that reflects Him. In a literal vine, the branches are not there just to decorate or to benefit themselves only. (James Rosscup, *Abiding in Christ*)

Fruit is not simply nice; it is necessary. It does not merit salvation, but does manifest it once it is really there. It does not earn it, but does express it; it does not secure it, but it is a sign of it; it is not a condition of conversion, but a consequence of it. (James Rosscup, *Abiding in Christ*)

There are a great many believers who bear very little fruit for God, but all bear some fruit for him. There are many people in the Vine (and the Vine speaks of profession here on earth) who bear no fruit for Him, and who will eventually be cut out altogether when Jesus comes. There will be no place with Him because there is no union with Him.... It is one thing for a person to be outwardly linked with Him, quite another for that person to have life in Christ. What is the test that proves whether he is really in the vine? If he bears fruit. All who have life bear some fruit for God. If there is not fruit, you can be sure there is no life, no real union with Christ. (Harry Ironside, *The Eternal Security of the Believer*)

The evidence of being a true believer, a true branch in the vine is fruit bearing. Those who claim to be Christians, also branches in the vine, and bear no fruit prove thereby that their profession is a false profession. These professing Christians, by saying that they are branches also in the vine, cannot abide in Christ, bear no fruit, and will be treated as dead branches. (Arno C. Gaebelein, *Our Hope*)

FOR DEEPER STUDY (James Rosscup, *Abiding in Christ*, 246-249)

Fruit is so important in one of Christ's branches that He emphasizes the subject immediately (v. 2) and mentions it eight times in the passage. He draws a point-blank contrast between two types of branches (persons). The first does not bear fruit, but the second does.

In speaking of the person with no fruit, Christ means who is not really saved to begin with. Such a person therefore does not show forth the fruit that will in some measure be manifested when a relationship with the living Christ is authentic.... The crux of the problem involving this person is that our Lord speaks of him as being "in me." To some it seems a natural meaning that this absolutely must mean only a saved man....

We honestly concluded that the realm of professing persons is in view of being "in me." Some persons under this designation are indeed genuine, others are only seemingly so or claim to be so. This is the most satisfactory interpretation.... Some of the reasons are summarized now.

- (1) The person bears no fruit at all as far as the verse describes him. This does not easily identify him with the truly saved who in most other Scriptures are thought of as bearing *some* fruit.
- (2) The sharp contrast in verse two between two types of persons is consistent with an overall pattern of contrasts in the gospel of John where the distinction is between unsaved and saved. Verse two fits within a larger picture then.
- (3) When Christ views Himself as the ideal Vine, the true Israel, it is natural for Him to speak even of those who merely profess a relationship to Him as being "in me" (in a sense). The Old Testament background to which we ought to look for help in explaining Christ's meaning shows that mere *professors* were mingled in with *possessors* in the vine of the Lord, Israel.
- (4) When the Father takes away the unfruitful person, *removal* is the most likely meaning of the verb *airo* from the standpoint of word usage, the Old Testament background of judging Israel the vine, and the vine culture itself.
- (5) Christ's contrast in 15:2a and 2b, 3 appears to be the same type as in 13:10-11, where He clearly distinguishes Judas (unclean, unsaved) from the eleven disciples (clean, saved).
- (6) Removal of the branch not bearing fruit is very similar to the picture of removing branches from the olive tree in Romans 11:16-24. There, certain Israelites were "in" the tree and yet they were such in a sense in which they were unsaved all the while. Those removed were "in" in a different sense than those not removed.
- (7) The first part of verse two that talks about the branch being taken away seems in context to be referring to the same type judgment later described in greater detail in verse six. Significantly, this would tie together quite naturally the same ideas we find in the Old Testament passages about the vine—the vine with its branches, removal, and burning. [Ps 80; Is 5:1-7]
- (8) The "in me" relationship for some could be understood in the way in which many Jews were in the covenant bond by outward circumcision (one sense) but not by inward circumcision of the heart (another sense).
- (9) Christ shows elsewhere that there must be a distinction between what a man really has and what he may seem to have for a while (Luke 8:18).

For these and added reasons we feel that we have gathered up the true perspective of verse two. The branch that bears no fruit represents the person who professes to be in a relationship with Christ just as others for whom this profession is real. Christ, for the sake of the contrasts in the illustration, conceives of him for the time being as related even though for him it is only nominal, of course. His failure to abide and bear fruit shows his actual status. In reality, he is not saved and never has been.