

# Growing Grapes and Cultivating Christians

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet Sources)

## Introduction:

### A. John 15:1-9

1. Jesus and the apostles are about to leave the upper room where they ate the Passover. They are going to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will pray and later be arrested. Jesus tells them the things in chapters 15 and 16 as they walk to the garden.
2. As they left the city walking toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus began to talk to His men about vines and fruit. They would have passed near the temple which had great vines carved into its doors, and then walked through the city's Gold Gate which also had ornate vines carved into it. It was April, and the grape vines would be beginning to blossom with the promise of a good harvest.
3. Jesus frequently used objects at hand to teach profound lessons.
4. One symbol for the nation of Israel was a vine
  - a. Psalm 80:8-11; Isa. 5:1-4; Jer. 2:21
5. What Israel had failed to do, God would accomplish through His Son, the True Vine

B. How can we, 2000 years later, produce fruit and remain part of the True Vine?

## I. IT'S ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

### A. John 15:2 - "in Me"

1. No one can be a branch in the Lord's Vine unless there is a vital connection to Him. No one can bear fruit for the glory of the Lord unless they are attached to the Vine.

B. How does one get to be in Jesus? Rom. 10:9-10; Gal. 3:26-27

C. There are plenty of people in religions and in churches. There are many moral people, but that does not mean they are in Jesus - Matt. 7:21-23

## II. IT'S ABOUT REPRODUCTION

A. A grape vine has a singular purpose: bearing fruit. But the vine itself does not bear the fruit; fruit bearing takes place on the branches.

1. So it is with Jesus Christ; He saved us to be grafted into His vine so that we might bear fruit.
2. Jesus preached the gospel and baptized how many people? None; that's our work
3. Mark 10:45, 16:15-16

B. Notice that there is a progression in fruit bearing: "no fruit," to "bears fruit," to "more fruit," to "much fruit." - John 15:2, 8

C. There are three kinds of fruit we bear:

1. Sanctification: we become more like Him - Rom. 6:22; Phil. 1:11
2. Spirituality: we behave more like Him - Gal. 5:22-23
3. Souls: we are busy like Him - Rom. 1:13; Col. 1:10

D. The fruit we bear says much about our souls' condition - Matt. 7:16-20, 12:33

### III. IT'S ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY

- A. Many tend to think that fruit bearing is for special Christians and preachers.
  - 1. Bearing fruit for the Lord is not that difficult.
  - 2. It starts with one thing mentioned six times in the passage: abide in Jesus. If the branches will abide in Jesus, they will bear fruit for the glory of God. The branches yield to the will of the vine; its life flows through them and fruit develops
- B. How does a person abide in Jesus? Pray, study His Word, meditate on Him, His nature, and His will, worship and praise Him, a complete surrender of our will and life to Him - Rom. 12:1-2
- C. Second, take the initiative and find uses and purposes for yourself, and then give it your all - Titus 3:8; Col. 3:17; Ecc. 9:10
- D. Third, ask yourself: "What will glorify my God and Savior?"
  - 1. 1Cor. 10:31; John 15:8
- E. Fourth, trust God for the amount He will harvest - 1Cor. 3:6, 15:10; 2Cor. 3:5

### IV. IT'S ABOUT REALITY

- A. Not all branches bear fruit at the same level of productivity. God measures the fruit based on His determination of each branch's capacity.
  - 1. The branches do not measure themselves against other branches, either to exalt or abase themselves - 2Cor. 10:12
- B. John 15:2 - "every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away"
  - 1. It has no purpose but to draw resources from the vine without making good use of them
  - 2. The vine dresser is not sentimental about cutting off and casting away branches that will not produce fruit.
  - 3. As a thinking, self-determining being, I have the choice to use the resources given to me by the vine and produce fruit; if I choose not to, the consequences are mine to carry. It is either bear fruit or bear with the consequences
  - 4. It is not enough to be merely attached to the vine
- C. John 15:2 - "every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."
  - 1. When the Vine Dresser sees a branch that is producing fruit, He removes things from it that sap its vitality and takes up space that could be filled with fruit.
  - 2. There are things in our lives that can hamper our work in the Lord.
    - a. 2Tim. 2:4
  - 3. This is performed on every branch. No one is excluded
  - 4. It will never be enough to just produce fruit; we must prune our lives to produce more fruit.
  - 5. Purging and pruning our lives can be painful.
    - a. It is done by the Vine Dresser who loves us - John 15:9
    - b. It is done for our benefit - John 15:7
    - c. It is done to help ensure we remain in the vine - John 15:8
    - d. It is done to glorify our Great God - John 15:8