

“Connected and Fruitful “ Going Deeper Series

Introduction

This will be the final Passover Meal for Jesus and his Disciples

- This is a “mind boggling” time for the disciples, they’re struggling to comprehend all that is going on and all that Jesus is saying
- When you’re at the end, you choose your words carefully, so we need to pay close attention to what Jesus is saying

In past weeks, we’ve discussed how Jesus was very clear about who he was

- “I am” the Life, the Way, the Truth...now he says “I am” the Vine, he will emphasize this 7 times in the book of John
- The key word in our study is: “*Remain*”

Main Text

(John 15:1-8)

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He 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. 3 You 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. 5 “I 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. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

Throughout history, the grapevine was a symbol or metaphor for God’s people

- Joshua and Caleb carrying the grapes, the impressive solid gold grapevine on the entrance to the Temple, etc.
- Jesus is saying with all of the symbolism, I am the real vine, the true vine
- He’s not comparing himself but saying I am the real vine

*“The vineyard of the Lord Almighty
 is the nation of Israel...”*

(Isaiah 5:7)

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- He is saying, I am what Israel was meant to be, a blessing to all nations
- God intended that they be fruitful, he also looks for fruitfulness in our lives
"I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine?" (Jeremiah 2:21)
- We will look at 3 purposes or ways of looking at the branches;
Remain...Pruning...Burning

1) Remaining (Abiding)

At first glance, we see this is a verb, but not an action verb, fruit doesn't happen in a hurry

- He will emphasize "remain" 7 times
- The key is "*connectedness*" remaining, the branch is dependent on the vine
- When there is no connection, there is no fruitfulness...be the branch
- It is like a water hose which is a conduit that needs to be hooked to the water source
- The branch doesn't *produce* the fruit, but it is *evidence* that we're connected to him.
- Our world is *production oriented*; Jesus wants us to be focused on the connection. Then fruit will come because of the connection
- Don't try to produce, seek connection with the true vine

"When a branch abides, the fruit is inevitable"

- a) Deciding; if you remain, the choice is ours, some will try to connect to other life sources

"If you remain in me" (:5)

"If you do not remain in me" (:6)

- b) Meditating; I John 2:24 "abide in you" his words become a flow of life. Our roots go deep into God's Word

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you..."

"Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and the Father." (1 John 2:24)

- c) Praying; ask, he will hear you...

"...ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (:7b)

2) PRUNING

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There are two types of branches, fruitful and unfruitful one is cut away one is cut back

- The world says; you have potential, you are promoted
- God says; you have potential, I will prune you
- For God pruning is a loving thing because it maximizes fruitfulness
- At our church we prune, our Gardiner carefully prunes things out of our lives also

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: 2a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, 3a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, 4a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, 5a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain (to stop embracing what you’ve embraced), 6a time to search and a time to give up (as lost), a time to keep and a time to throw (things) away, 7a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, 8a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

We are fairly comfortable with God beginning new things in our lives this is very Biblical

- But it is also Biblical when things stop or we let go of things
- Things can pile up on us, sometimes we say “no”

“Don’t hold on to things beyond their season”

“Necessary endings”

You may even need to even let go of people, which may be there for a season

“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable.” (1 Corinthians 6:12)

- ✓ *Good Things*; some of the things (or people) we let go of are good things. Not everything that is pruned or let go of is bad.
- ✓ *Sick Things*; things that can’t get well. (Titus 3:10) Things can drain the life or even kill you, so you let go
- ✓ *Dead Things*; Their season has come and gone, they will drag us down. Hebrews tells us to set aside those things that weight us down.

3) BURNING

These are branches that have become disconnected and lifeless and fruitless

“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.” (: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.” (:6)

“God is not going to ask you if you were busy in this life, but he is going to ask if you were fruitful”

Life Group Sermon Application Curriculum Leader's Guide

Week of **02/15/15**

Going Deeper Part 7" (Connected and Fruitful)

"Love is a fruit in season at all times, and within reach of every hand"

Mother Teresa

"The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil, and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine; and at the right time, and in the right way, is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus."

Taylor, Hudson

"God is not going to ask you if you were busy in this life, but he is going to ask if you were fruitful"

Main Sermon text: (John 15:1-8)

There are some **consistent themes**, and key points, that emerge from these passages:

- The crucifixion is hours away; normally when the end is near people don't waste words. Jesus identifies himself as the true vine; this would be very familiar language to the disciples. He is not only confirming that he is the "I am" but is about to give them crucial insight into their ongoing relationship with him.
- The first important theme we see between the vine and branches is "*connectedness*" remaining or abiding. The branch is dependent on the vine, when there is no connection there is no fruitfulness. The branch doesn't *produce* the fruit, but it is *evidence* that we're connected to him. Don't try to produce, seek connection with the true vine, when a branch abides the fruit is inevitable.
- The second theme that emerges out of John 15 is about *pruning*. Even though this sounds very negative, even painful, we learn that there are two types of branches; fruitful and unfruitful, one is cut away one is cut back. For God, pruning is a loving thing because it maximizes fruitfulness, he carefully prunes things out of our lives. These can include things that are good, but were intended for a season; this can also include people...Good things, sick things or dead things.
- In the third major theme, we learned about things that will be burnt. These are branches that have become disconnected and lifeless and fruitless. Verse 6 says that any branch that doesn't remain connected to the vine will be thrown away and burnt. We need to stay connected to our life source, Jesus. "God is not going to ask you if you were busy in this life, but he is going to ask if you were fruitful"

Discussion questions/prompts for your group: (These questions are designed to help your group go deeper, understanding and applying the Bible passage(s) and the sermon)

- 1) As you read our text, knowing that this is one of the final conversations Jesus will have with his Disciples, what sticks out to you?
It can be very exciting to see how the Holy Spirit will show us new and fresh things in his word.
- 2) Pastor Randy talked about the importance of “connectedness” about remaining and abiding. Why are these so important? *Remember the branch is completely dependent on the vine and without the vine cannot be fruitful.*
- 3) How can we be believers that produce fruit? If we are fruitful what does that say about us?
Remember that the branch doesn't produce the fruit on it's own but only as we are connected to the vine. So if our lives are fruitful it is evidence that they are connected to him. So we shouldn't try to produce fruit but seek connection with the true vine. We must remember when a branch abides the fruit is inevitable.
- 4) For most of us, pruning doesn't sound very exciting, in fact might sound pretty scary. So we are branches connected to the real vine; why does God need to prune us?
The scriptures allude to two types of branches, fruitful, which is cut back and unfruitful, which is cut away. Assure your group that God lovingly and carefully prunes things in our lives so we will reach a maximum fruitfulness.
- 5) Continuing to consider the pruning aspect, what are some things that God has pruned from your life? And if you are aware, why were they pruned from your life?
These can be things that are hindering our walk and progress but they may include things that are good. Some of the good things may have been intended for a season; this can also include people. So they can be good things, sick things or dead things.
- 6) Lastly we read about things that will be burnt. Although this is a sobering part of our text, what are some of those things that are going to be burnt?
These are branches that have become disconnected and lifeless and fruitless. Verse 6 says “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.” This is any branch that doesn't remain connected to the vine; it will be thrown away and burnt. We need to stay connected to our life source, Jesus our true vine.

For those who might like to use visual aids in their Bible storying, or study preparation, especially for groups with children, here are some helpful links:

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<http://ministry-to-children.com/many-silent-years/>

<http://www.raisingourkids.com/coloring-pages/printable/bible/index-Q2.html>

Log on and check “Right now Media” there are several good resources that will relate to this study for the kids. Some are for pre-school and older, so go surfing and see if you can find something for your group.