

"I AM: The True Vine" – Craig Miles

John 15 is oftentimes called the "Abide" chapter. We are called to abide with Jesus. The Greek word for abide also means remain.

John 15:1-14 (NIV) – **1** "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. **9** "As 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. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command.

- Jesus' "I AM" statements all happened at a specific time, on purpose.
- Jesus was coming to the end of his time on earth and knew his disciples would face great disappointment in his death, and trials and persecution from others. (**John 15:18-21**)

EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN PREPARE FOR TRIALS BY "REMAINING" IN 3 WAYS:

1) Remain in Jesus – Verse 4

- Jesus tells us to remain or abide in Him, the TRUE VINE and He uses this metaphor that everyone listening would have understood - Israel was an agrarian society.
- In the same way a branch is of no use if it isn't connected to the vine, neither are we as Believers. But connected, we have purpose and meaning! (**2 Corinthians 5:17-19**)

2) Remain in Jesus' words – Verse 7

- **If we do, we can ask for whatever we wish, and it will be given to us.**
 - That's because we are remaining in His Words and we will know the right things to ask for, therefore, when we ask for something, it will be given.
 - If you are not getting the answer to the prayer you are praying, it could be you are praying for something that "isn't remaining in Jesus' words."

3) Remain in Jesus' Love – Verse 9

- As we are the recipients of God's love, we also should be showing that same love to those around us. Jesus goes on to explain, in verse 10, that His love has to do with obedience, not just affectionate feelings.
- In many places in scripture, God equates loving Him with obeying Him
- **Our definition of a disciple talks about what is required to follow Jesus.**

Matthew 4:19 (NIV84) – **19** "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

- o **Jesus had been changing the ones who were following him.** Now he was getting ready to send them out to be fishers of men.
- o **When we obey God, He transforms our heart.** The apostle Paul called the evidence that we are in Jesus, the Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV) – 22 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.

- o The Holy Spirit has a part, but we also have a part. We throw off our old nature, and exchange what we think we desire for what God says is best. As we do that, He transforms us. (**Ephesians 4:17-25**)
- **Verse 6 tells us those who do not remain are like branches that are cast away**
 - o This is talking about rejecting Jesus as Lord, not about when we mess up and sin.
 - I can struggle with my belief and not be an Unbeliever. I can struggle with sin, and not be defined by my sin.
 - But this passage makes it clear that if we are truly connected to Jesus, there will be fruit for people to see
- **Verse 2 says that for all of us who are in Christ, a pruning occurs.**
 - o He does it so that we will bear even more fruit!
 - o God's pruning is oftentimes painful because He is taking out old harmful habits and replacing them with new healthy ones
 - o What God is really doing is removing impurities. The Greek word for pruning can also mean cleaning. (**John 15:3**)
 - o Fortunately for us, God doesn't do it all at the same time. He is gentle with us.
 - o **How does God prune** - Through experiences, trials and the sanctification process.
- **What does it look like to remain/abide in Jesus?**
 - o Allow him to change you
 - o Walk in obedience
 - o Listen to God's Word

For Small Group Discussion: What have you learned from the "I Am" series?

Opening Question: Gardening experience: What have you failed at or been successful in growing?

Main Point: After Jesus has declared who He is, we are charged to share the truth of His identity with a hostile world. God provides the Holy Spirit to help and sustain us through persecution.

Head: Main Scripture: John 15

- Why does God prune us?
- What is Jesus preparing His followers to experience? How is He preparing them?

Heart:

- What or who helps you to remain in the vine?
- How has obedience played a role in your spiritual growth?

Hands:

- In light of all seven of Jesus' "I Am" statements, who is God identifying in your life that needs to know Jesus in this way?
- What support do you need in order to persevere in the midst of persecution?

Other Scriptures: Gal. 5:22-23, Rom.10:14-15 // **Tips & Resources:** *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis

Sermon Series Resources: <https://bit.ly/RLcurrentseries>

