

How To Be A Fruitful Christian

Text: John 15:1–8

Introduction

The grapevine presents a fitting metaphor for the Lord Jesus Christ. The grapevine:

- is a hearty plant.
- is a limber plant.
- grows rapidly.
- is essential to many cultures.

The vine was a symbol of the nation Israel (Isaiah 5:1–7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1–8).

- Vineyards are common in Israel.
- A vine was on the Maccabean coins.
- A vine was on the front of the Holy Place.
- However, a vine was always used of Israel in a negative way.
- And nationality does not attach anyone to the True Vine (Jesus assumes the role of Israel. A person must possess a personal relationship with Him. To carry the metaphor further, we are the branches on the Vine.).

Message

1. As a gardener tends to the branches so God tends to believers (John 15:1–3).

- a. Christ provides the source of spiritual life.
- b. The Father provides the nurture for spiritual life.
- c. A gardener prunes dead branches to allow more sap for the healthy branches (verse 2). The gardener also prunes dead wood to avoid disease. He prunes live wood to avoid excessive foliage. Judas serves as an example of one cut off because of his being spiritually withered. Thus, former believers can lose their salvation. Job is an example of the latter pruned back because of excessive foliage.
- d. Likewise, God cleanses the lives of believers to make them more productive (verse 2). From the context, the fruit Jesus refers to is answered prayers, obedience, joy, and love.¹ “Pruned” or holy lives bear more fruit for God (Galatians 5:22,23).
- e. God’s Word provides the means whereby believers are cleansed (verse 3). The Bible is like a knife that God uses to cut off the sin in our lives (Hebrews 4:12).

2. As branches respond to the vine so believers respond to Christ (15:4–8).

- a. Branches must stay on the vine to produce fruit (verses 4,5). Branches closest to the trunk or roots usually bear the most fruit. The Greek, *ou dúnasqe poiein oudén*, reads, “You are not able to do **nothing!**” The double negative does not cancel itself out like in English. Instead, it provides for emphasis.²
- b. Believers that remain unfruitful must be warned about the consequences (verse 6). Laziness, doubt, or sin can result in unfruitfulness. How can believers become like useless branches?
 - (1) By refusing to listen to Christ.
 - (2) By listening, but then only offering lip service.
 - (3) By accepting Him as Master, but being overtaken by cares.³
- c. In this case, prayer supplies the means whereby believers become fruitful (verse 7). In such cases, a believer will not ask anything contrary to God’s will.

Conclusion

In summary, Christians are like branches on a vine. Christians should bear fruit for God (verse 8).

Discipleship is a continual process.

1. Some may object, “But I’m a broken branch.” God can **mend** you.
2. Others may object, “But I’m a sickly branch.” God can **heal** you.
3. A few may object, “But I’m a dying branch.” God can **revive** you.

Steve D. Eutsler, Springfield, Missouri

Endnote

1. Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief the Analytic Study of the Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 228–29.
2. A.T. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1947), 1164–65.
3. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John, vol. 2* (Louisville: Westminster, 1956), 204–5.