

2. JESUS

—Abiding in Jesus

Jesus often used familiar metaphors to teach deep truths about His kingdom. In His day, vineyards flourished all over the Judean countryside, even in poor soil. Without a vinedresser, vines would spread along the ground, allowing moisture, pests, and dense weeds to ruin the fruit.

The careful tending of an experienced vinedresser increases the possibility of a bumper crop of grapes. The vinedresser walks among the vines daily, checking for pests and making sure the vines receive the right amount of water. He cleans any fruit lying on the ground so that mold and fungus won't damage the harvest. He cuts most of the leaves off the branches, allowing sunlight to ripen the grape clusters. After the harvest, he cuts the branches all the way back to the vine so that nutrients are directed to deepening the roots. His careful and timely touch in pruning the branches throughout the growing season and after the harvest helps the vine to be fruitful in the upcoming year.

Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. (John 15:4-5)

The life of the Vine - *Read and meditate on John 15:1-17 in your favorite translation.*

- *What do you observe about the vine, the vinedresser, the process of tending the vine, the fruit?.*
- *Define "abiding in Christ." What is the believer's role in abiding in Christ?*
- *How are "abiding", "joy", and "love" interrelated in this section?*

Prayer and intimacy - *Jesus said that if we abide in him, and he in us, we can ask him about anything and it will be done. (John 15:7) What do you observe about prayer from the following passages:*

Mark 1:35

Luke 11:1-4

John 16:24

Philippians 4:6-7

Growth - *It is clear that Jesus expects his followers to grow to maturity. What do we learn about spiritual growth from the following passages:*

Ephesians 4:15

I Peter 2:2

I Timothy 4:15

Fruit - Jesus said that we should bear "much fruit" and "remaining fruit." (John 15:8,16). What do you think that fruit is? What insights do the following verses add? What is the fruit you would like to see in your life?

Galatians 5:22-23

Philippians 1:11

Colossians 1:6,10

Proverbs 13:23, 29:7

James 3:17-18

APPLICATION : The way to grow in intimacy with Christ is to spend time with him. What time, place and method will you use to do so? Is there a friend who can encourage you as you do so?