

15:1 vine: This word can describe a single grapevine or an entire vineyard. Either way, the image evokes the picture of corporate dependence. Israel was the vine of God's planting, but it failed to bear the proper fruit (Is. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:19–21).

- Jesus, with His believers incorporated in Him, is the true vine—the true fulfillment and actualization of the vine. As the entire race of Israel sprang from the patriarch Israel, the new generation of God's people is here viewed as originating from Christ, organically united to Him, as branches emanating from the vine.
- This is a fulfillment of Ps. 80, in which “the son of man” (Ps. 80:17) is said to be the vine planted by God.

15:2, 3 Every branch is said to be *in* Christ. Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” to speak of a Christian's legal and family position as a result of God's grace. The emphasis of **in Me** in this passage, however, is on deep, abiding fellowship.

- Jesus' purpose was to move His disciples from servants to friends (vv. 13–15).
- This would involve a process of discipline in regard to His commandments. **not bear fruit:** No plant produces fruit instantaneously; fruit is the result of a process. Such is also the case with believers.
- Those who are not bearing fruit the vinedresser **takes away** (Gk. *airo*) which has as its basic meaning “to lift up.”
- When the winter weather was over and the time for productivity was approaching, the vinedresser would move through the vineyard lifting the branches from the ground, where they had been for the winter, and propping them up with stakes where they would receive the warmth of the sun. The heat promotes the ripening of the fruit. Furthermore, by getting the branches off the ground, it keeps them from sinking many little roots directly from the branch into the surface of the soil where the moisture is not sufficient to produce anything but hard, sour grapes.
- If the branch is lifted out of the dirt, however, it is forced to get its moisture from the deep roots of the vine and produces luscious fruit.

Prunes (Gk. *kathairo*) means “cleanses.” Once the fruit is on the vine, the vinedresser cleanses the fruit of bugs and diseases.

- The spiritual counterpart is cleansing which is done through the Word (v. 3).

- The primary reference here is the words that He has just been lifting them with in the Upper Room, especially ch. 14.
- It is that word which is going to transform the disciples from shrinking, cowardly disciples to stalwart soldiers for Christ. But it will be a process over time. The noun form of this word is rendered “clean” in v. 3. Thus, the vinedresser lifts up fruitless branches and cleanses fruitful ones so they can be more fruitful.
- The point of the figure is not union but communion and consequent fruit.

15:4 For the branch to produce more fruit, it must **abide**, which means to dwell, to stay, to settle in, to sink deeper. The way to abide in Christ is to obey (15:10; 1 John 3:24). The believer who lovingly obeys the Word of God produces much fruit.

15:5 can do nothing: Apart from Christ, a believer cannot accomplish anything of permanent spiritual value.

15:6 Not abiding in Christ has serious consequences:

- (1) The person is **cast out as a branch**, indicating the loss of fellowship;
- (2) the person is **withered**, indicating a loss of vitality;
- (3) the person is **burned**, indicating a loss of reward.
- (4) **The fire** here is figurative, symbolizing either fiery trials (1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12) or the fire at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–15).
- (5) Failure to abide produces spiritual disaster. **they gather them:** Note the movement from “He” (the Father who is the vinedresser, v. 2) to “you” (the believer who does or does not abide, v. 4) to “they” (unbelievers looking for signs of life, 13:35).

15:7 abide in Me, and My words: There are five results of abiding in Christ: answered prayer (v. 7), fruit (v. 8), a fulfilled purpose, my Father is glorified (v. 8), experiencing love (vv. 9, 10), fullness of joy (v. 11) and effective evangelism (13:35; 15:8). Abiding in Christ involves personal communion with Him. Abiding in His Word includes obedience. Getting to know the Savior makes believing in Him an obvious response which leads to loving obedience. Notice how the apostle Paul presented this process (Phil. 3:10).

15:8 By this: Notice the striking parallel between this verse and 13:35. The love of 13:35 is pictured as **fruit** here. The text has come full circle in showing how strategic it is for disciples to love each other, as Christ’s method of evangelizing the lost. “They shall know” becomes **so you will be** Christ’s disciples. Where there is good fruit, there are also seeds for propagation.

15:9 As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you: The love of God the Father for God the Son is the measure of the love of the Son for believers.

15:10 abide in My love: Christ loves believers unconditionally (v. 9). But as believers obey Christ's Word and abide in His love, they come to experience and understand His love for them more and more (Eph. 3:14–19).

Evaluate Your relationship with the Lord

Using the first 10 verses of scripture and word definitions how do you relate your relationship with the Lord

1-5 1 low5 high