

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

- ◆ **Intro:** What do you think of when I say the words, “Can you hear me now?” (Verizon cell service) You click a button on your web browser expecting to be immediately linked to that all important web site that enables you to buy exotic bicycle parts for your Serbian 7 speed. But a popup window informs you that the server is down, or you are not currently connected to the internet. You’re driving with both hands on the wheel sporting that cute little ear-thing that makes you look like someone from Star Trek, and lets you talk on your cell. But your provider’s coverage isn’t perfect and there’s that little spot on the highway where you get, what, cut off. Maybe you have three daughters and it’s within your budget to supply them with cell phones too. (Samsung loves you.) So you do, because after all, you want to stay connected. I was goose hunting in Saskatchewan, Canada one winter, on a prairie miles from other human life, and one of the fellows next to me was buying sugar by the train load, on his cell phone. Between the blast of shot guns one could make out the hoots of sandhill cranes and the beeps of his cell phone announcing he had received yet another email.
- ◆ We know about being connected. Goodness sakes, we Tweet and Twitter and announce ourselves on Facebook as though the world out there needs to know we just washed our coffee cup and are now thinking about licking a stamp to put on a letter. We’re all about connection, am I right?

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

- ◆ So this text should make a lot of sense to us. It's a text about connection. It's a kind of, "Can you hear me now?" text. Jesus is preparing to part with the disciples. He warns them to stay in touch, stay connected.
 - ◆ He's like a 911 operator with a slowly dying caller trapped in a snow storm and he's saying, "Stay with me now. Don't hang up. Stay awake."
 - ◆ He's like a cop with a terrorist holed up in a bank whose trying to keep him on the line so he can talk him down, prevent a tragedy.
 - ◆ He's like parents going out on a date and leaving the kids home: "Here's where we'll be. You know our number. If anything goes wrong you call us, you hear?" That's this text.
- ◆ (read text)
- ◆ **1.** One of the things we learn from this text is that **consulting Jesus on many small details in my moments will make my life fruitful.** Let me explain. (This is the command to remain.)
 - ◆ **A.** Jesus' claim to be the vine is the claim to keep you online with God!
 - ◆ What does Jesus mean when he says he is the "real vine", the "true vine? Why not a tree? Like, "I am the True Cedar!" Vines crawl along the ground, or on other's things like your cucumber, or squash, or ivy. We'll we need to remember that the Vine is the Old Testament image of Israel.

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

- ◆ *•Ps. 80:8-11 You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. It sent out its boughs to the Sea, its shoots as far as the River.*
- ◆ Other nations put pictures of leaders on their coins, like George Washington on our quarter. Israel put a vine on their coins.
- ◆ Other nations hang big posters of their leader on their capital buildings. Israel carved a vine of gold with leaves of jewels on their temple.
- ◆ On the more negative side...
 - ◆ Isa.5 pictures Israel as God's vine that he cared for but which failed to produce a crop.
 - ◆ Ezekiel 15 likens Israel to a vine that turns out to be worthless because they had not been faithful.
- ◆ So Jesus claim to be the TRUE vine is the claim that he's the TRUE Israel. And what was Israel? They were the light to the world. The connection of God with the people of the Earth. They were charged from the very beginning as the world's spiritual internet provider.
 - ◆ "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3, NIV).
- ◆ So Jesus is telling them He's the core of the "people connected to God." You want to be God's people? You want connection with the Holy? You need him. In technological terms instead of ancient

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

hebrew terms, Jesus is the modem, you are the computer. Jesus is the server, his followers are the ethernet cables. Jesus is the cell tower, you are the cell phone. You want to be connected with God, you need an account through him.

◆ B. I have a really good idea: Think of Jesus like you think of Google, only on a personal, spiritual level. Go to him with your queries. You know what Google is. Its even become a verb though it started out as a number. Up until 1998 it was purely a mathematical term for 10 to the 100th power, or an inconceivable number. Then the search engine Google came on the scene and it became a verb:

* “Hey, anyone know where we can by brake pads around here?”

- “I dunno, google it.”

* “How many presidents have we had, mom?” -”Just google it.”

◆ [It’s really strange to hear your grandma use the term.

• I bought this new Polynesian corn at the market but I’m not sure how to cook it. Oh I know, I’ll just go ask The Google.” It’s kinda creepy, huh? Like it’s a guru a being in the next room. Go ask “The Google.”]

◆ Well what if we treated God like we treat Google? What if we went to him as often as we boot up Firefox, or Internet Explorer? People say all the time that they believe in God but they live like he doesn’t exist.

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

- ◆ When we're channel surfing do we ask God if we should watch this?
- ◆ When we see that kid at school that's been giving us a hard time, do we whisper, "Jesus tell me what to do."?
- ◆ No. We save Jesus for the big things. Cancer. Car accidents. But what's the single most repeated word in the whole text? "Remain"! I count 12 times! ("fruit that will last" in v16 = fruit that "will remain".)
- ◆ **C.** This is why I said our first concept in the text is to consult Jesus about the small details of our moments. This creates the habit of "remaining".
 - ◆ Might God have something to say about what you eat? Sure he might. Might you ask God if you should have that elbow injury looked at or not? What about consulting Jesus before a purchase? Many folk wish they heard from God in their lives more often but are not asking him anything. Jesus' promise is this: if you remain, you will be fruitful. Claim the promise.
- ◆ **2. Obeying Jesus voice will make my life fruitful.** (This is the "love" command, the second most repeated term in our text.)
- ◆ **A.** Listen, every time you or I act in line with God's directions we create lasting fruit. Every time you or I choose in accordance with God's laws and commands, we raise our joy quotient. The converse is also true: Every time we choose contrary to God's guidance, we decrease our joy and our fruitfulness.

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

- ◆ Take for example, anything people find to be addictive in nature: sex, pornography, alcohol, medications, tobacco. In every case a little is never enough. One naked picture does not satisfy the soul. In fact the more you look, the more you want, and the less you're satisfied. One drink doesn't end the craving, it only leads to the next one. And so on. We all know this to be true.
- ◆ That's the way it is with sin vs obedience. That's why the Bible consistently speaks of God's laws as "love". It is his love that tells us the best way to live, not his anger, or his downer personality. It is your love that tells your child not to eat that gold fish, or not to lick the curling iron! To obey is to walk in the way of love.
- ◆ **B.** Look at v10 and v14: essentially they tell us that we are 1) in God's love when we obey his commands and 2) we are friends of God when we obey commands. Next question: what are his commands?
 - ◆ Look at v 12 & 17. He says it twice: his commands boil down to "love each other."
 - ◆ Verse 13 says the greatest love is to lay your life down for someone.
 - ◆ *"But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5, 6, NIV.*

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

- ◆ *“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.” 1 John 2:9, 10, NIV.*
- ◆ Jesus promise here is that when you obey him, you live out love, and your life is fruitful when you live out love.
- ◆ **3. Memorizing God’s word will help me both remain, and obey his commands.**
- ◆ Much of how we experience life is in our minds. One person feels the drudgery of laying bricks. Another is thrilled to be building a cathedral. One sees a unsuccessful experiment as a failure. Another sees it as marking off the ways that don’t work, getting ever closer to the way that does.
 - ◆ [Popular history says that Edison tried thousands of substances for lightbulb filament before finding practical success. Some people say 700. Other’s say 10,000. I found one quote from Edison saying he tested fiber from over 6000 plant growths from all over the world. He’s almost universally quoted as saying these were not failures so much as learnings as to how not to make a lightbulb. Know how I know this? I asked “The Google”!;-)]
- ◆ Can I ask you something? What words are you filling your mind with? What do you pour over your spirit? Is it Lady Gaga’s philosophy about the way she was born? (Born This Way). Is it the news media’s find-everything-that’s-going-wrong-and-talk-about-that view of the world? Is it negative self-talk about how you’ll probably never amount to anything, because that originates in the

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

dark spiritual realm. What is it that pops into your head in automatic response to the curve balls life throws at you?

◆ So let me take a few minutes to talk about the benefits of reading and memorizing Scriptures. We memorize things all the time. You know commercial, and songs backwards and forwards. So don't pretend you can't do this.

- ◆ 1. Memorization helps me resist temptation. *"I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Ps. 119:11*
- ◆ 2. It helps me make wise decisions. *"Your Word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path.Ps. 119:105*
- ◆ 3. It strengthens me when I'm under stress. (like a shocking loss, or the discovery of cancer) *"... Your promises to me are my hope. They give me strength in all my troubles; how they refresh and revive me!" Ps. 119:49 (LB)*
- ◆ 4. It comforts me when I'm sad. (when you find yourself in deep depression the words you think/learned will make the difference. Here are two opposing samples: "You too can strike it rich." or "a man's life does not consist in abundance of his possessions".) *"Your words are what sustain me ... They bring joy to my sorrowing heart and delight me." Jer. 15:16 (LB)*
- ◆ 5. It helps me witness to unbelievers. *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."1 Peter 3:15*

◆ **Conclusion:**

I am the True Vine, Jn.15:1-17

- ◆ When you see the image of the Vine, think connection. Think being linked. Jesus is saying, “You want to know about your life’s purpose, your meaning, where this is all going and why? Get to know me. Put me on your daily calendar.
- ◆ I think you can sense from this text that remaining is more than “having been raised” a certain way. Ask someone about their spiritual belief and many will say something like, “Well, I was raised a Methodist.” But think about it, that’s like floating in a canoe on a lake with no paddle and saying, “Well, I got a push from the shore over there.” The question is, what are you doing to move, grow, live now? Perhaps the single best thing you can do to have an alive spirit, and to counter the flood of other words we are bombarded with daily, is to fill you mind with the words of God. ‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.’ (Jeremiah 33:3, NIV).