

# I AM — The Vine

**Text:** John 15:5 (KJV)

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

## Introduction

- You can stand next to a fire and still be cold. You can sit beside a river and still be thirsty. You can spend your life in the presence of something that has life in it and never actually have that life in you.
- Most of us have — because somewhere along the way we made a mistake we never identified: we confused proximity with connection.
- **Proximity is not connection.**
- Between a vine and a branch there is no gap, no distance. Everything the branch is, produces, and becomes flows from the vine through something that has determined to stay connected.
- The question underneath the question: you believe in the vine, but are you living as a branch?

## 1. Effort Produces Growth; Only Abiding Produces Fruit

- Abide is a relational word — to remain, to stay, to be in union. It is not activity; it is posture.
- A branch left to itself will always favor new growth over fruit production. It sends shoots in every direction and looks, from a distance, like something thriving and abundant.
- But a branch can become so dense, so full of its own growth, that the sun cannot reach the place where the fruit is supposed to form. To the untrained eye, majestic. To the knowledgeable, an empty basket.
- A lot of people know exactly what that feels like — a life that looks full, active, growing, successful, yet something that was supposed to be there isn't.
- The reason is not that you need to do more. You have been growing in every direction except the one that produces fruit. The only answer is not more effort. It is abiding.

**Reflection:** Vines grow vigorously. Vigorously looks impressive. Vigorous does not produce fruit. More effort cannot do what abiding does. Abide.

## 2. Pressure Is Not Punishment; It Is the Vinedresser Lifting You

- “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” A branch in Him that bears no fruit, the Father takes away — but the idea is not immediate destruction. It is the Vinedresser lifting a branch out of the dirt so it can live again.
- In first-century Israel, branches often trailed along the ground. When heavy rains came, fruitless branches were caked in mud, choked out by dust, and hidden from the sun.
- The Vinedresser did not walk through the rows with a blade. He walked through with a bucket of water — lifting sagging branches out of the dirt, washing the mud off their leaves, propping them up on rocks so they could catch the light.
- You have a Father who refuses to let you stay in a condition beneath what you were made for. If it feels like pressure, like God is dealing firmly with you, that is not punishment. That is the Vinedresser lifting you, because He has plans for you.
- If the branch is already bearing fruit, He prunes it — cuts away the excess leaves and wild tendrils, takes away the things that are good, so the branch has the energy to produce what is great.

**Reflection:** He doesn’t walk through with a blade. He walks through with a bucket. Pressure is not punishment. It is a Father who refuses to let you stay beneath what you were made for. Let Him work.

### 3. Disconnection Looks Fine, Then Green Fades

- There is a massive difference between a fruitful branch going through a tough season and a branch that has cut itself off from the Source.
- If you disconnect, you might look green for a while. You might survive for a season. A disconnected branch right after it’s cut still has its color, still has its shape. You’d have to look close to see something was wrong.
- But the vine knows — because the vine stopped feeling it.
- **Green fades**
- A branch with no source has nowhere to go but down. Eventually it withers, becomes useless, and is cast into the fire.
- There is nothing more important in your life than abiding in Him. Nothing.

**Reflection:** A cut branch still has color. Still has shape. But the vine knows. Green fades. Don’t let that be your story.

### 4. Abiding Is Not a Feeling; It Is Loving God and Loving People

- “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.” Abiding is not a feeling. You don’t wait until you feel connected, or until you feel like praying, or until you feel like studying. Branches don’t feel their way into connection; they stay in connection.

- Jesus reduced the entire life of abiding to two directions: love God and love people.
- Loving God is how proximity becomes connection. It is dependence — you stop trying to live the Christ life from your own strength, stop generating your own spiritual energy, and ask God to bless what you've already decided. You bring your emptiness, confusion, weakness, desire, and ambition to the Source before you take it anywhere else. Your connection to the vine is not a supplement to your life. It is your life.
- Loving people is what grows out of you when you are genuinely abiding. At some point, your own love runs dry. But when you stay connected to the vine, you find yourself with grace you know isn't yours — grace that shows up for people you had decided didn't deserve it, a softening toward someone you had written off.
- **The branch that stays never produces independently.**

**Reflection:** Branches don't feel their way into connection. They stay in connection. Love God. Love people. Abide.

## **Conclusion: The Vine Is Alive; You Were Made to Be a Branch**

- Hours before the cross — knowing about the betrayal, the arrest, the nails — Jesus chose this as His final I AM: I am the vine. Abide in me.
- Of all the final instructions He could have left, He chose this. Because He knew the thing that would destroy them was the same thing that had always threatened them: going through the motions, being near Him without being in Him. Proximity without connection.
- So He gave them the one thing they could not afford to lose. Himself.
- The branch does not fight to manufacture life. Life is already in the vine. Joy is already in the vine. Strength is already in the vine. Fruit is already in the vine.
- Abide when you feel full. Abide when you feel empty. Abide when you feel strong. Abide when you feel weak. The vine does not change based on how the branch feels.

**Reflection:** Everything Jesus promised would grow in you and flow out of you requires nothing more than this. Stay connected to Him. He is already there. He has always been there. The vine is alive. And you were made to be a branch. So, abide. Just abide.