



**Relationships: The Importance of Being Fruity  
The Believer and Jesus  
John 15:1-11**

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Jesus and the disciples have left the site of the last supper. They are enroute to Gethsemane, but they have already had some rather heavy things laid out for them.

Jesus is going to the cross, He told them that very plainly and clearly, but they didn't hear Him. He has also told them what He is about to change:

- The way to God is going to change.
- The way to relate with other believers is going to change.
- And the way believers relate to the world is going to change.

It is now going to all be about who you know.



This all means relationship. And that is what He is now talking about.

Time to learn about growing grapes and learning how to be fruity.

Back in Isaiah 5, Isaiah introduced us to one of his heavy hits of the day, this one was a song about a vineyard.

The song reflects God carefully cultivating His vineyard, which we learn in Isaiah 5:7 is Israel. The intentional picture being drawn is how God expected the nation of Israel to produce fruit and lots of it. His intent was for Israel to reflect Him to the world. But there was a problem.

Isaiah 5:1–2

“I will sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded rotten grapes.” (NRSVue)

Or as translated by the NASB, worthless grapes. In other words, Israel had failed in the mission of pointing the world to YAHWEH. So, God allowed the vineyard, Israel, to be laid waste (Isaiah 5:6).

Here in John 15, Jesus claims to be the replacement for that vine. He is the true vine. Where Israel failed, He will not.

This has been a picture being developed over the life of Jesus. Just as the nation had to go into Egypt for a time, so did the family of Jesus because of Herod seeking to kill Him. Just as the nation returned from Egypt, so did Jesus.

The nation spent 40 years in the wilderness due to unbelief and then failed as they entered the land to cast out the usurper in the land.

Jesus though succeeds after spending 40 days in the wilderness and then comes back across the Jordan in the power of the Holy Spirit beginning His ministry leading up to this point. On the cross, Jesus will further succeed in once and for all defeating the usurper, Satan.

Israel was supposed to be the one who would point the nations back to God. They failed.

Where they failed as the vine, Jesus would not.

Jesus picks up that imagery of the vine, drawing it from Isaiah 5.

Jesus claims to be the vine, the true one. This is true not as distinguished from the false (cf. Rev. 14:16–18), although He is, but the ideal or finest expression of a vine in contrast to what falls short of that. God’s people were His vineyard from which He desired fruit (Isa. 5), now Jesus is the ideal vine from which “much fruit” will come (Jn. 15:4, 8). (Rosscup 2008, 1838)

Jesus has already outlined for the disciples the change in how one comes to the Father, it is no longer through the sacrificial system or through following Torah, it will be through Him.

He made this clear in His earlier conversation with Thomas. “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6, NASB 2020)

Jesus then proclaimed that if you have seen Him, watching how He does life, you have seen the Father.



He promised that those who believe in Him, will do and exceed the things He did in His ministry here on earth and the Holy Spirit has been promised to make that promise a potential reality for all who believe. He also promises to answer prayer made in His name.

John 14:13–15

“And whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (NASB 2020)

Ask in His name, He will do it so that the Father is glorified in the Son, and there is the expectation that we are loving Him by keeping His commandments and being faithful to Him.

This is not a *carte blanche* answer to all prayers made no matter what, but those which are “in His name” meaning not frivolous self-centered prayers. “Answers to prayer are in close harmony with loving availability that obeys Christ’s Word.” (Rosscup 2008, 1836)

As we follow Him and His commandments, loving Jesus in the process, we are promised He will reveal Himself to us. This involves the Holy Spirit as two more times Jesus promised the Holy Spirit and He also promised His peace.

As the team is moving on to the Garden, there is a question, unspoken, but still there. How should we live in order to experience that abundant life (John 10:10) He talked about last winter and what does obedience look like so that our prayers are answered?

Jesus is about to answer that but does so by bringing them back to Isaiah 5. Israel rejected relationship, but it still is all about relationship.

It really is all about who you know and now that will become clarified as the only way in. He already said so. There is only one way to heaven, and it is through Jesus Christ and no one else. Jesus is now pulling all the pieces He has taught about, together for the disciples.

At the heart of His “Upper Room Discourse,” the Lord gives one of His most vivid pictures of the close relationship He wants with believers. It is the analogy of Christ as the Vine and His people as branches, and the fruit His life produces in them. It joins other intimate pictures of His closeness to His own—Shepherd and sheep, Water of life and those who drink (4:14; 7:37–39), Bread and those who assimilate Him, Resurrection and Life and those who live by Him, Light and those who walk in His light. (Rosscup 2008, 1837)

John 15:1–5

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus begins with another I am statement here in John. Remember, John’s intent was to show us clearly that Jesus is God. The 7 “I am” statements, “ἐγώ εἰμι followed by a predicate noun.” (Hutchison 2011, 63)

This is the last of the ‘I am ...’ sayings, and the only one that runs on into an additional assertion, and my Father is the gardener. (Carson 1991, 513)



## The “I Am” Statements in John

1. “I am the bread of life” John 6:35, 48
2. “I am the Light of the world” John 8:12, 9:5
3. “I am the door for the sheep” John 10:7
4. “I am the good shepherd” John 10:11, 14
5. “I am the resurrection and the life” John 11:25-26
6. “I am the way, and the truth and the life” John 14:6
7. “I am the true vine” John 15:1

Here, Jesus tells His disciples that He is the true vine. Later, as they are removed by their own people and the Temple leadership from everything their Jewish culture would say is important, they would reflect on this statement and realize that Israel is no longer the vine, Jesus is. He is the true vine, and they are indeed branches on that vine now, not Israel.

In Isaiah 5, God was the vinedresser, He still is, but where Israel failed to produce fruit, Jesus will succeed.

Jesus gets right down to business and describes something that everyone in an agrarian culture would understand, non-fruiting branches are totally worthless for a vine that is expected to produce fruit. All you want are branches that produce fruit. Fruiting branches are cared for and trimmed to enable them to continue to do so and produce even more fruit in the future.

I used to watch my Grandpa Ike prune his fruit trees. He had marked those branches that had no fruit the past year and those that did, did not have a mark on them. After the first freeze of the season, he would go out and cut off all those branches that were marked.

Size and history did not matter. If they produced no fruit in the past year, they were gone. If the whole tree or vine was like that, then he would fertilize and put mulch into the soil to better the chances for next year. No fruit for two years and the tree was cut down and replaced. He was rather relentless, but he had a wonderfully producing orchard, grapevines and olive tree. He also kept the trees height down to reasonable, in other words, three steps of a ladder up, except for the olive tree. Harvesting olives was very different from the other trees. He made a device that would shake the tree and make the olives fall to the ground to be picked up.

We need to remember this picture as we read what Jesus is saying.

Jesus is the true vine, and He has replaced the fruitless nation of Israel. All through the Old Testament the vine is a common symbol for Israel. “Most remarkable is the fact that whenever historic Israel is referred to under this figure it is the vine’s failure to produce good fruit that is emphasized, along with the corresponding threat of God’s judgment on the nation.” (Carson 1991, 513)

Probably the clearest passage to look at for this picture of Israel is in Psalm 80:7 – 17. I will leave that for you to study later, consider it homework.

This passage establishes the “vine” motif for Israel, depicting God as the Gardener. Israel was in a state of judgment and destruction, calling to God to restore them. (Hutchison 2011, 69)

Isaiah expands on that and takes the prophecy in Psalm 80 further to reflect the judgment yet to come.



John 15:2

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” (NASB 2020)

And seen here is the relentless nature of the vinedresser to focus on fruit. Grape vines are not being grown for greenery; they are being grown for fruit. They are fertilized and cared for solely for that purpose. Jesus is clearly saying here that healthy believers produce fruit and begin to do so naturally as we become part of the vine, part of Him.

Jesus is talking about believers, and He is identifying them as being either fruitful or fruitless.

Here in verse 2, there are two actions that Jesus says takes place regarding the branches. There are those disciples that produce fruit, they wind up being pruned. Then there are those disciples that are currently producing no fruit; by the way, we were all there at least once.

The word for pruned used here is *kathairō*. It means “to make pure or clean, cleanse, clean, purge...to cleanse, purify...to prune a tree.” (Liddell 1996, 338)

The word for removed or take away is *airō*. The word means to raise to a higher place or position, lift up, take up, pick up...to lift up and move from one place to another...take/carry (along)...carry away, remove literally...to take away, remove, or seize control without suggestion of lifting up, take away, remove. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 28)

Let's look at the pruning aspect first.

What is Jesus saying? “As the vinedresser cuts away what would hinder the productivity of the vine, so God the Father, through loving discipline (cleansing, purging, purifying), removes things from the lives of believers that do not contribute to their spiritual fruitfulness.” (Laney 1989, 57)

Job 5:17

“Therefore, blessed is the man whom God corrects, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Hebrews 12:7–8

“It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.” (ESV)

Jesus is saying that as we identify with Him and become believers, it is important that we also produce fruit. We are grafted (Romans 11:17) into the vine and lovingly cared for as we grow with the intent being to produce fruit. Pruning is not always the result of sin, in fact, in many cases it may be simply the Lord making us prepared for how He wants to use us in what He has next.

Pruning may also be beneficial in that it prevents us from falling into a specific type of sin, like Paul and his throne in the flesh.

Just as Jesus has pointed out to us that the relationship, He has with the Father is demonstrated by the works, the fruit He demonstrated to all; the same idea will be reflected with those who have a true relationship with Jesus. The fruit will demonstrate the nature of the relationship they have with Jesus.

“Therefore people are to believe what the Son says because what He says is the same as what the Father says. So the “in Me” relationship speaks not of organic connection or commonality of essence, but



of commonality of purpose and commitment.” Our fruit reflects whether we are in Him or not in Him. (Dillow 1990, 46)

But what about “every branch in Me that does not bear fruit.” This goes back to the meaning of the Greek word used here, *airō*.

Just as those who produce fruit are in Him, so are those who are not producing fruit. As we became believers and were grafted in, we were not producing a whole lot of fruit, maybe none. But we were growing and maturing. When we first read the text, it sounds like He gets rid of unproductive vines. Here, we need to unpack this a bit more. First, the context of who Jesus is talking to. Jesus is talking to His disciples, Judas is not there, those who are listening are believers and they are all in. This is not a mixed group that has unbelievers in it. They all are believers, so this message is to those who know and love Jesus, who are “in Him.”

Now if there is one form of expression, which, by invariable and unexceptional use, indicates a believer more emphatically and explicitly than another, it is this:—“in me,” “in him,” “in Christ.” Never are these expressions used loosely; never are they applied to any but the children of God: “If any one be in Christ (he is) a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). (Pink 1923-1945, 807)

Based on all we see then, we are talking about a true believer, a born again saved individual, who is not producing fruit.

I find that I must agree with AW Pink and James Boice when it comes to the meaning of the word, we see here in verse 2, the word *aireō* should not be translated “He takes away,” but would be better translated “He lifts up.”

“This translation makes better sense of the passage in every way, and in addition it is much better theology. First, the emphasis of this opening section of the parable is, quite rightly, upon the care of the vine by the Father. It would be strange, granting this emphasis, if the first thing mentioned is the carrying away of unproductive branches. But it is not at all strange to emphasize that the gardener first lifts the branches up so that they may be better exposed to the sun and so the fruit will develop properly. Second, this lifting up is precisely what is first done with vines, as any one who has watched them being cared for knows.” (Boice 2005, 1161)

My translation of this verse from the Greek would be as follows.

John 15:2

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He lifts up; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” (KB)

What does the Father do in order to help a believer, one who is in Christ, to become fruitful? He lifts that believer up to the light. It is not unusual for a grapevine to produce branches that are on the ground, and when that happens, they don’t do well. A normal practice, which I witnessed my grandpa do, was to set up a lower line for training the vine and then lift it up off the ground so it would be exposed to the sun, receive more light and then become fruitful.

As we are, per Paul, living sacrifices, we have the daily choice of remaining on the line the Father has set up for us to be trained and grow and become more like Jesus, or we have the choice of moving downwards back to the ground.

Normally, when a vine shoot is lifted up and placed on its own line, it must also be temporarily attached to the line in order to keep it there so growth will take place in the light and the new shoot become



productive. The Father raises us up to the light through the power of the Holy Spirit and it is our choice whether to remain there or not. We will discover in verse 6 what happens to those who continue to reject this level of loving discipline.

John 15:3–4

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.” (NASB 2020)

To clear up any potential for misunderstanding what He has just said, Jesus tells His disciples that they are already clean. Implying that they are already in Christ and part of the vine and have been trimmed up clean by the Father already. They had already heard, after having their feet washed, that they were clean, but not Judas. Judas is gone, now they are all clean.

It isn't foot washing that does it. “Confirming what he said then, he now makes it clear that they are clean not because of the footwashing itself, nor because of baptism, but “because of the word which I have spoken to you.” Jesus’ “word,” or spoken “words,”<sup>14</sup> are the means by which the Father has “given” or “drawn” the disciples to Jesus (see 6:37, 44, 65), trimming them “clean” to be his messengers. The implication is that now they are ready to bear “more fruit.”” (Michaels 2010, 803)

You and I need to remember this. As we come to Christ and become grafted into the vine, we are in Him. We know this because He has given each of us the Holy Spirit as a down payment that what He has started in us, He will finish upon His return for us.

Because of His spirit being in us, we are in Him and now have the capability to grow and become fruitful because we are now in Him.

That is a normal and natural thing for us to do as believers. Growing in Christ and being in Him means we are fruitful people. We just naturally and organically produce fruit.

This simply happen as long as we grow and allow Him to provide the lead for us as He trains us along the lead and gives us more light to be fruitful.

We see changes take place in our lives. Things we used to do are not as attractive anymore as the things we now want to do. We want to produce fruit. We want to pray. We want to read His word.

We love to serve, we love to share, we love to invite others to hear about Him. It is all scary at first, but, as we allow Him to lift us up into the light of the Son, we are then able to begin to grow and as we feed off the word and become fruitier.

Here is the thing, we cannot do any of this if we decide we can do it on our won without remaining grafted into the vine. The vine, Jesus Christ, He is the one who supplies life and light to us. The Father has done all He can do in order to ensure we have been lifted up and given the optimal chance to produce fruit. But it still boils down to a choice for each of us.

We must remain “in Him.” We must, abide in Him. As we choose to do this, then we see changes in our lives.

John 15:4–8

“Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me,



he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” (NASB 2020)

Abiding, or being in Him happens on at least three different levels for us. “These are relating by faith to Christ the Vine, His Person and will; in rejecting by faith what is against His Person and will (cf. Lk. 9:23); and in receiving by faith the sufficiency His Vine life provides. This is made good by the Spirit (14:26; 16:14; Eph. 5:18–21).” (Rosscup 2008, 1839)

There is no such thing as instant spirituality, maturity, and fruitiness. It takes time, it takes a willful choice to remain abiding in the vine.

Becoming fruity looks like this. As we abide in the vine and remain in Him. We grow, and we mature. We produce a little bit of fruit. For example, we decide to carve out some time each day to spend with the Lord and His word.

As we do that, His word, His light, acting on us, encourages you and me to go further. You decide to tell someone you love and who loves you, what the Lord is doing in that time you have carved out for Him. In my case, dad was not a believer and was not as encouraging as I would like, but I told a friend from church the same thing and they were encouraging.

This little fruit leads the Father to do a bit of pruning to encourage even more production. The Holy Spirit begins laying on our heart, those in our circle, who need to hear about what the Lord is doing in our life. We carved out the time, He has shown up, He is answering prayer, the Holy Spirit is growing us, and the next step is to share with others or even go next door and invite others to church.

The Father takes that fruit, examines the shoot, and trims us a bit in order to make us even more productive for Him. We step out and begin serving, we see Him working through us as we do so and are blown away that He has shown up and guess what, we want more.

Now we are talking about this little growing shoot beginning to have all the characteristics of a heavy producing part of the vine and for that to happen, as the shoot, which was grafted in began to grow, more and more of the vine’s nutrients filled the shoot helping us to grow. The Holy Spirit was indeed in us, but now we want Him to empower and use us as Jesus promised to.

Now we can access all the vine has to offer so we decide we want the Holy Spirit to empower us and enable us for even more fruit, we need the connection to the mainline and we know it.

Let me remind us though, that this path, is all subject to us and our decisions and how we live or not live in obedience to Christ. There are those who were not producing, have been given the chance to produce, but continue on to willfully not produce.

Suckers, those who were never in the vine to begin with, well they get cut away and burned. Now they are most likely mulched, but burning was the rule when I was growing up in the central valley of California.

But what about that unproductive branch that no matter what is done to encourage production, just will not produce fruit.

The issue has become the believer who has willingly determined that they will not abide in, they will not maintain communion with Jesus Christ.





Dr Chafer put it this way, “When communion with Christ is preserved on the part of one in Christ, the sap of spiritual vitality is imparted which results in fruit being borne. This verse declares plainly that there are those in Christ, by so much therefore saved and safe forever, who at a given time are not bearing fruit. Respecting such, God reserves the right to remove them from their place in this world (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16), directly to heaven’s glory. It should not be supposed that any ever go to heaven because they are fruitful, because they keep the commandments of Christ, or because they abide in Christ. Entrance into heaven depends only on union with Christ. A branch in Him will go to heaven without being fruitful, though unfruitfulness must be accounted for in the loss of rewards before Christ’s judgment seat in heaven.” (Chafer 1993, 4)

When we willingly, as a believer in Christ, walk away from Jesus, He will do everything He can to draw us and bring us back to Himself knowing the path we are on will lead to our own destruction.

I have been asked, more than once, how can a believer do “name your favorite fallen saint here.” If they were in Christ, the Holy Spirit is working to draw them back. Life is not happy for them until they return to Him. But they can keep on path and eventually be taken in death.

As with Samson, there is a point where the usefulness is gone, and the self-will leads to death.

John 15:6

“If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” (NASB 2020)

John’s commentary on what Jesus is saying in verse 6 is found in 1 John. Paul also talks about it as well as he references the Bema seat of Christ.

1 John 5:16–17

“If anyone sees his fellow Christian committing a sin not resulting in death, he should ask, and God will grant life to the person who commits a sin not resulting in death. There is a sin resulting in death. I do not say that he should ask about that. All unrighteousness is sin, but there is sin not resulting in death.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Falling away into apostasy is a real thing.

1 Corinthians 3:12–13

“Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person’s work has any value.” (NLT)

John 15:7–11

“If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” (NASB 2020)

Once again, we have the promise of answered prayer and once again, there are conditions attached.

As believers who are abiding in Him, literally seeing Christ’s words so much a part of us that our will becomes His will, we have this promise that whatever we ask, it will be done. Answered prayer is clearly wrapped up in obedience and abiding in Christ. Are there prayers, as a Christian, He will answer if we have strayed from this? Yes. It would include the following.



1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (NASB 2020)

As we do life with Jesus, it is normal to bear fruit and when that happens the Father is glorified, and we are proving to the world that we are indeed disciples of Jesus Christ.

As elsewhere in John’s writings, “remain” never signifies the initial event of saving faith in Christ but the enduring relationship of walking in fellowship with Him. The word “remain” implies staying in a position already obtained, not entering for the first time. (Dillow 1990, 49)

As we follow Christ, we have communion with Him and are obedient to His commands. We are in Him and abiding in Him. The evidence shows up as loving our brothers and sisters, peace, joy, all of the fruits of the Spirit. Jesus tells us by living this way, we bring joy to Him.

Imagine, by following Jesus, He get emotionally jazzed and filled with joy simply because you and are are faithful to Him. You and I have the power to cause pain to God which is what grieving the Holy Spirit means, but we also have the power to cause God to have joy.

Here is the thing, He shares that joy we bring Him, with us.

John 15:11

“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” (NASB 2020)

Let me ask this question, how fruity are we? Where are we on the overall fruitiness scale.

Here at Calvary, all of us want to be as fruity as we possibly can be.



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