Lesson 43– John 15:1-17 Life in God's Vineyard: Vines & Branches
English Standard Version (ESV) Bethel Bible Resources

(1) "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the Word that I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

(5) "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

(8) "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

(12) "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

(16) "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another."

**NOTE**: Chapter 13 is the Lord's Supper, held earlier the night of Jesus' arrest (Thursday) and crucifixion the next day (Friday). Though we are breaking Jesus' teachings to the disciples down into small lessons, John, Chapters 14-17, are essentially ONE teaching event that Jesus spoke about before heading to the Garden of Gethsemane where He will be arrested (Chapter 18). Thus, chapters 14-17 were likely taught to them across an hour or two, with some topics revisited several times (e.g., prayer in Jesus' Name).

Think on these things:

1) Notice that in v.2 **ALL** believers in Jesus are subject to God the Father's pruning shears. He uses them in two ways; what are the two ways? What do you think it means for a productive believer to be "pruned" so as to become more productive? Remember that in farming, pruning trees is an annual process --- therefore, God the Father's pruning can happen again and again….

   Negatively? **Every believer NOT producing fruit, He prunes OFF the vine and throws away.**
   Positively? **Every believer who produces fruit will be pruned so as to produce even more.**

   Meaning of productive pruning? **Opinion question. Author's thought is that God continues to work with us to remove un-Christlike qualities over time so that we conform to the image of His Son more and more --- in holiness! The more Christlike we become, the more productive.**

2) As you look at the first 11 verses about branches, grapevines and producing fruit, what other action word (a verb) keeps popping up (9X)? How do you understand and apply it to your life?

   Other word = **Abide** Application to me? **Staying and sticking with Jesus through the thick and thins of life. A self-disciplined commitment to be in fellowship with Him. Sin may block fellowship at times, but when I confess it, He restores me. (1 John 1:8-10)**

3) "Producing fruit" for Christians carries two connotations. Take a look at these passages: Matthew 13:18-23; Luke 10:1-11; Acts 2:1-12 and 41-47, and Galatians 5:22-23. What are these two concepts of fruit-production, and which one do you think Jesus is talking about here?

   Fruit Type 1? **Numerical growth in new believers by sharing the Gospel with the unsaved.**
   Fruit Type 2? **Personal, inward growth as a disciple (follower) of Jesus. Character growth.**
   Which is Jesus speaking to? **An opinion question, but likely numerical growth.**

4) Do you think producing fruit is a requirement for believers (v.16)? How are you doing this?

   **Yes, "producing fruit" is <u>possible and expected</u> as we believe in Jesus, and it is the Father who is identified as monitoring and taking pruning shears to us either to remove us for failing or helping us to become even more productive.**

5) If **<u>we</u>** are the branches, how do you understand being removed, allowed to dry out and wither, and then being burned up by fire (vs.2, 6)? We're talking in context about believers, right…?

   **This is a tough opinion question for class discussion. Wesleyan (Arminian) perspective is that it is possible to lose one's salvation by choosing to walk away (free will, see Romans 11:11-24). Calvinist perspective is that true believers can't lose salvation, so they would lose out only on heavenly rewards (1 Corinthians 3:5-15). The Salvation Army is of the Wesleyan persuasion. A key to the discussion might be, "Why does God allow the cut branches to wither and dry up?" Do we know believers who seem to have a withered and dried faith…?**

6) Christ's commandment is that we should "love one another as I have loved you" (vs.12, 17). In addition, there are three more commands identified in the passage. Identify them:

   v.4 – **Abide in Jesus.**
   v.7b – **Ask in prayer in Jesus name --- and it will be done.**
   v.9b – **Abide in Jesus' love. (When we abide in Jesus' love, it is natural to love one another.)**

7) How do believers go from being Jesus' servants to being His friends (v.14)?

   **We become Jesus' friends when we live by and obey (do) His commands.**

8) Why do you think Jesus choose YOU (i.e., why are you so special to Him)? See Matthew 22:14; Romans 11:5; Ephesians 1:11; Colossians 3:12-14; James 2:5; and 1 Peter 2:9. Being among God's chosen, what benefit do we all receive (vs.7, 16b)?

   **Though many are invited, few respond (Matthew). God has a plan (Ephesians) for the common and poor (disdained) people of the earth (James). The 'chosen' are selected by God's grace (Romans). God's people are known for humility and compassion (Colossians) --- NOT accomplishment or wealth --- and they exist to praise Him in holiness (1 Peter). --- It's not about us at all.**
   **In the world's eyes, most everybody is a nobody; people live, people die, and soon nobody remembers our earthly presence for that brief lifetime. We are saved by God's grace only when we choose to respond to Jesus in faith. We then become eternal vessels of godly praise!**

   The benefit? **My prayers to the Father, in Jesus' name, will be answered.**

People and situations I want to pray for this week: