

this week's walk

A Five Day Devotional Journey

September 24-30, 2006



Why we do what we do

Multiplication

Five Day Devotional

1 Read: John 15:1-4

I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken. Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

Think:

- In your walk with the Lord, are you still in the process of becoming established in the soil, or have you reached the fruit bearing years? What is absolutely essential for a branch to bear fruit? What does a vine-dresser do to help a branch bear more fruit? How strong is your connection with the Vine? Where are you experiencing pruning in your life? Where do you need to experience pruning? What is the fruit the Vinedresser or Farmer is looking for in your life?

Pray:

"Abba, make your home in me, and give me a heart that passionately seeks to be at home in you. Give me the grace to surrender myself into your hands, to trust your timing and ways of pruning me and my life."

Live:

Throughout the day, pray, "Lord, what would you prune in my heart and in my daily habits and routine?"

A good life is a fruit-bearing tree;
a violent life destroys souls.
Proverbs 11:30

The days are coming when Jacob
shall put down roots,
Israel blossom and grow fresh branches,
and fill the world with its fruit.
Isaiah 27:6

Fruit of the Soul

When a grapevine is planted, the vinedresser does not expect the branch to produce fruit the first few years. The plant is only required to grow and mature. It needs time to become established in the soil and as each season passes it becomes more stable. Eventually, the fruit-producing years of the branches will begin. The first year's fruit will be fairly sparse as the plant slowly continues to grow deeper down into the soil looking for more minerals to draw from. All the grapes from that first year's production will be harvested and added in with the older branches' fruit even though the amount of the individual production is rather scarce. As the seasons pass, with each new harvest the quality of the grapes continues to increase. The quantity of the fruit increases as well as the quality. The grapes become more potent with a high sugar content and thus they become better fruit. The vinedresser knows that the branches, at about the ten-year point of the fruit producing years, will reach the point where they are as strong as they are going to be. Now the branches can be relied on. The vinedresser knows what to expect as far as the quality of the fruit from those branches. This is what he intended from the beginning.

Robert Scott Stiner, *Lessons from a Venetian Vinedresser*

Four Daily Devotional Steps

Read

Meditatively read a verse/passage.

Think

Ponder its meaning.

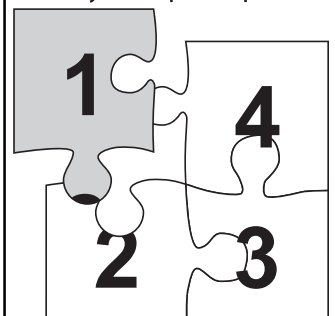
Pray

Talk it over with God.

Live

Pursue life response.

Weekly Discipleship Track



2 **Read:**
John 15:5-8

I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

Think:

- Would you describe your relationship with the Lord as “intimate and organic”? Why or why not? Does this passage, with its contrast between “intimate and organic branches” and “deadwood,” comfort or worry you? Why? According to Jesus, what is the source of fruitfulness? How does he define the “grapes”? What does he say will happen when we as branches are filled with such “grapes”?

Pray:

“Lord, show who you are by how I live today. Give me fresh hunger for your words so that your kingdom and grace may flow through me and produce a harvest that will last.”

Live:

Meditate on the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

4 **Read:**
“Fruitful” Readings from ACTS

More and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women. **5:14**

God's message was preached in ever-widening circles. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too. **6:7**

The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it grew in strength and numbers. The believers were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. **9:31**

God's Good News was spreading rapidly, and there were many new believers. **12:24**

Think:

- How would you account for the remarkable growth of the early church? What clues do you see in these verses from Acts? To what extent are you experiencing this same momentum in your life? in your church? Where would you like to see such divine momentum take place in your life? What step (s) need to be taken on your part to realize this kind of growth and momentum?

Pray:

“Holy Spirit, teach me to walk in your fear and fill me with your comfort as I do. Let your Good News find deep root in me; break up the rocks and thorns that would hinder your movement in and through me today.”

Live:

Read Acts 1-12 and look for roots of fruitfulness.

3 **Read:**
John 15:9-17

I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love. I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father. You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you. But remember the root command: Love one another.

Think:

- What is the “root command” of a believer's life? What is a key byproduct of a healthy connection with God? Take stock: how much love and joy is evident in you?

Pray:

“Father, make my life a fruitful vine overflowing with your love and dripping with ‘joy wholly mature.’”

Live:

Do a ‘gripe’ watch: track the number of sour gripes versus the number of joyful sounds you make today.

5 **Read:**
Philippians 1:7-11

It's not at all fanciful for me to think this way about you. My prayers and hopes have deep roots in reality. You have, after all, stuck with me all the way from the time I was thrown in jail, put on trial, and came out of it in one piece. All along you have experienced with me the most generous help from God. He knows how much I love and miss you these days. Sometimes I think I feel as strongly about you as Christ does! So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God.

Think:

- What is the essence of Paul's prayer for these early believers? What does he identify here as the source, the nature and the ultimate results of a fruit bearing, multiplying life? To what extent is this prayer being realized in you?

Pray:

“Abba, make me bountiful in fruits from the soul. Lord, make yourself attractive through how I live today. Spirit inspire me anew to live a lover's life wherever I may find myself today.”

Live:

Personalize Paul's prayer and pray it throughout the day.