SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

John 15

The True Vine — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Jesus is the true vine and I am a branch: my whole job is to stay in Him, and the fruit, the love and the courage come from Him. The world that hated Him will not love me, but I am His friend, chosen by Him, and His Spirit testifies beside me.

00 The Text

JOHN 15 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

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.

3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

10 "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.

11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

14 "You are My friends if you do what I command you.

15 "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things 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 would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

17 "This I command you, that you love one another.

18 “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated
Me before it hated you.

19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its
own; but because you are not of the world, but I
chose you out of the world, because of this the world
hates you.

20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is
not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they
will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will
keep yours also.

21 “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s
sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

22 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not
have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

23 “He who hates Me hates My Father also.

24 “If I had not done among them the works which no one
else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both
seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

25 “But they have done this to fulfill the word that is
written in their Law, ‘THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A
CAUSE.’

26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you
from the Father, that is
the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He
will testify about Me,

27 and you will testify also, because you have been
with Me from the beginning.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “I am the true vine” — God — His character & actions
- **v1** “My Father is the vinedresser” — God — His character & actions
- **v2** “He takes away” — Sin / warning
- **v2** “He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit” — God — His character & actions
- **v3** “You are already clean because of the word” — Promise / blessing
- **v4** “Abide in Me, and I in you” — Command / instruction
- **v5** “apart from Me you can do nothing” — Sin / warning
- **v6** “cast them into the fire” — Sin / warning
- **v7** “ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” — Promise / blessing
- **v8** “My Father is glorified by this” — God — His character & actions
- **v9** “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you” — God — His character & actions
- **v10** “If you keep My commandments” — Command / instruction
- **v11** “that your joy may be made full” — Promise / blessing
- **v12** “love one another, just as I have loved you” — Command / instruction
- **v13** “lay down his life for his friends” — God — His character & actions
- **v15** “I have called you friends” — Promise / blessing
- **v16** “You did not choose Me but I chose you” — God — His character & actions
- **v16** “your fruit would remain” — Promise / blessing
- **v19** “I chose you out of the world” — God — His character & actions
- **v20** “A slave is not greater than his master” — Time / place / contrast
- **v22** “they have no excuse for their sin” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE” — Sin / warning
- **v26** “the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father” — God — His character & actions
- **v27** “you will testify also” — Command / instruction
- **v4** “abide” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v5** “abides” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v18** “world” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · JOHN 15:4

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me."

FIGURE · THREE RELATIONSHIPS IN JOHN 15

TOWARD CHRIST vv1–11 · ABIDE	TOWARD EACH OTHER vv12–17 · LOVE	TOWARD THE WORLD vv18–27 · TESTIFY
THE CALL "Abide in Me, and I in you" (v4)	THE CALL "love one another" (vv12, 17)	THE CALL "you will testify also" (v27)
THE GIFT much fruit, prayer, full joy	THE GIFT friends, not slaves (v15)	THE COST hated, persecuted (vv18–20)
THE WARNING apart from Me — nothing (v5)	THE MEASURE "just as I have loved you"	THE REASON they do not know the Father (v21)

Love among the branches, hatred from the world —
and the Helper, the Spirit of truth, testifying about Christ through both (vv26–27)

The chapter moves outward — from the branch's union with Christ, to the branches' love for one another, to their witness in a world that hates them.

Setting. Thursday night of Passion Week. Judas has left (13:30); Jesus has washed the disciples' feet, given the new commandment, and promised the Helper (ch. 14). At 14:31 He says, "Get up, let us go from here," and 18:1 says He crossed the Kidron only after chapter 17 — so John 15 is spoken as they leave the upper room or walk through Jerusalem toward the garden. All of it is Jesus speaking; the disciples say nothing in this chapter.

Structure:

- vv1–8 — **the vine:** "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." Fruitless branches He takes away; fruitful ones He prunes (v2). "You are already clean because of the word" (v3). "Abide in Me, and I in you" (v4). "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (v5). The branch that does not abide is thrown away, dries up and is burned (v6). Abiding brings answered prayer (v7) and much fruit that glorifies the Father and proves discipleship (v8).
- vv9–11 — **abide in My love:** as the Father loved the Son, so the Son loves us; keep His commandments as He kept the Father's; "so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."

- vv12–17 — **friends:** "love one another, just as I have loved you" (v12); greater love — laying down one's life (v13); friends, not slaves, because He has made known all He heard from the Father (vv14–15); "You did not choose Me but I chose you," appointed to bear lasting fruit (v16); the command repeated (v17).
- vv18–25 — **the world's hatred:** it hated Me first (v18); you are not of the world because I chose you out of it (v19); a slave is not greater than his master (v20); they do not know the One who sent Me (v21); no excuse for their sin (vv22–24); "THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE" (v25, Psalm 69:4).
- vv26–27 — **the witness:** the Helper, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, will testify about Me, "and you will testify also."

Repeated words, with counts (NASB95):

- "Me" ×16 and "My" ×17 — the chapter is centered on Christ: abide in *Me*, *My* words, *My* love, *My* commandments, *My* joy, *My* friends, *My* name.
- "love / loves / loved" ×10 — vv9 (×3), 10 (×2), 12 (×2), 13, 17, 19.
- "Father / Father's" ×10 — vv1, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 23, 24, 26 (×2).
- "abide / abides" ×9 — vv4 (×2), 5, 6, 7 (×2), 9, 10 (×2); plus "remain" (same Greek *menō*) v16.
- "fruit" ×8 — vv2 (×3), 4, 5, 8, 16 (×2).
- "hate / hates / hated" ×8 — vv18 (×3), 19, 23 (×2), 24, 25.
- "world" ×6 — vv18, 19 (×5).
- "branch / branches" ×5 — vv2 (×2), 4, 5, 6.
- "commandment(s) / command" ×5 — vv10 (×2), 12, 14, 17.
- "word / words" ×5 — vv3, 7, 20 (×2), 25.
- "friends" ×3 — vv13, 14, 15; "slave(s)" ×3 — vv15 (×2), 20; "chose" ×3 — vv16 (×2), 19.
- "joy" ×2 — v11; "ask" ×2 — vv7, 16; "testify" ×2 — vv26, 27; "sin" ×3 — vv22 (×2), 24.

Contrasts: the true vine ⟷ Israel's fruitless vine (OT background). Branches that bear fruit ⟷ branches that do not (v2). Abiding ⟷ apart from Me (vv4–6). Slaves ⟷ friends (v15). You chose ⟷ I chose (v16). Loved by Christ ⟷ hated by the world (vv12, 18). Of the world ⟷ chosen out of the world (v19). No sin ⟷ no excuse (vv22, 24).

Shape of the chapter: it moves outward in three circles — union with Christ (1–11), love among the branches (12–17), and witness to a hostile world (18–27). It begins with the Father tending the vine and ends with the Spirit proceeding from the Father to testify.

Chapter theme (my words): Life comes from staying joined to Jesus. Joined to Him, I bear fruit, obey, love my brothers as His friend, and stand when the world hates me — because He chose me and His Spirit testifies through me.

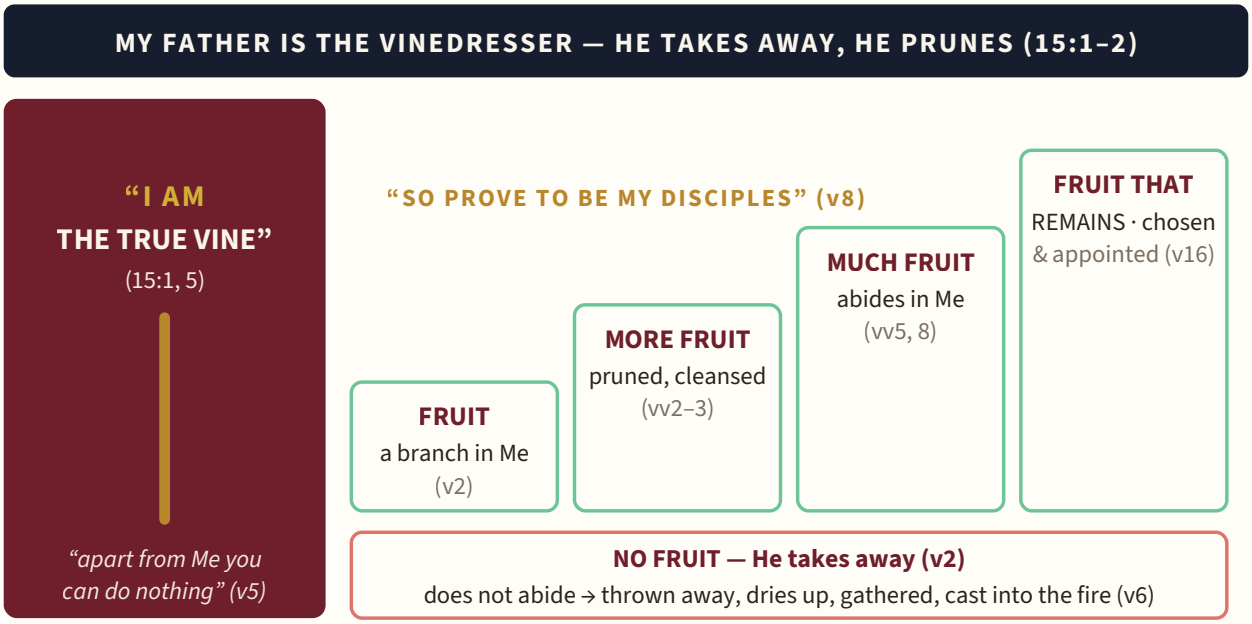
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · JOHN 15:16

"△ You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that ☆ your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

FIGURE · THE VINE, THE VINEDRESSER AND THE BRANCHES



Read the steps left to right: fruit, more fruit, much fruit, fruit that remains — every step comes from the Vine, and the only branch that is lost is the one that bears nothing because it does not abide.

Who is the true vine, and why "true"? The Old Testament calls Israel God's vine (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1–7; Jeremiah 2:21), and every one of those passages laments missing fruit. Guzik: "God repeatedly used a vine as a symbol of His people in the Hebrew Scriptures … In contrast, Jesus is the true vine." Henry opens the same way: "Jesus Christ is the vine, the true vine." *Alēthinos* is "genuine" — the real thing the picture pointed toward.

"He takes away" — or "He lifts up"? (v2) The Greek *airō* can mean either. Guzik keeps "takes away" but says the "lifts up" view (the vinedresser raising a trailing branch out of the dirt) "bears some consideration." Sproul, per Ligonier's summary of his 2003 sermon, stresses "the difference between branch removal and pruning." I take "takes away" as the plain reading because v6 explains it — but the comfort for fruitful branches is unmistakable: they are pruned, not removed. Spurgeon: "What a mercy it is to the believer that it is pruning with him and not cutting off!"

Who are the burned branches of verse 6? This is where Christians differ. Guzik lists three views: true believers who fall away and are lost; people who only looked like disciples, like Judas; and fruitless believers whose lives are wasted though they are saved. He leans toward the second: "The branches that are taken away were never properly abiding in the vine." Sproul raises the same question about the perseverance of the saints, and the Reformed tradition (Sproul, Spurgeon, Henry) reads these as professors, not possessors — Henry: "Unfruitful professors are unfaithful professors; professors, and no more." Arminian readers take the warning as describing real believers who can fall away. Everyone agrees the warning is real and the evidence of life is fruit. Judas had walked out of this very room hours earlier.

What does it mean to abide? Not a mystical state. Verse 7 ties it to His words abiding in us, verse 10 to keeping His commandments. Guzik: "This is not some mystical experience. It is simple obedience." And it is not one-sided effort; Henry: "the communion between Christ and believers never fails on his side." Spurgeon: "You can do nothing if there be not constant union."

"Ask whatever you wish" (v7). The promise is to abiding branches whose desires are being shaped by His words. Henry: "Those that abide in Christ as their heart's delight shall have, through Christ, their heart's desire." It is not a blank check for the flesh; it is a promise that the Vine's life will flow through the branch's prayers.

Joy — whose and how much? (v11) Sproul: "First, the joy that Jesus wants to see in us is His joy." "He wants us to have a permanent joy, not a roller-coaster ride of moods shifting between joy and misery." Guzik: "The joy of Jesus isn't the same as what is commonly understood as happiness or excitement."

Friends, not slaves (v15). The difference is not that friends don't obey (v14) but that friends are told what the Master is doing. Henry: those who do the duty of servants are "advanced to the dignity of his friends." Spurgeon: "friendship needs something from us," and "Familiarity with Jesus ceases when we become familiar with known sin."

"You did not choose Me but I chose you" (v16). In context Jesus speaks of choosing the Eleven as apostles and appointing them to bear fruit — but the principle runs wider (v19, "I chose you out of the world"). Guzik: "They were all rooted in the fact that Jesus chose them, not that they chose Him." Henry: "Christ's choice is prior to theirs and directs and determines it." Readers differ on how far this verse speaks to individual election to salvation; all agree the initiative in this friendship is His.

Why does the world hate? Because it hated Him first, and because the disciples now belong to Him and not to it (vv18–19). Spurgeon: "man naturally hates goodness, because he is so evil that he cannot but detest it," and "Indifference with regard to Christ is a clear impossibility." Henry: "Whom Christ blesseth the world curseth." Verses 22–24 do not say the unevangelized are sinless; they say that rejecting Jesus after His words and works removes every excuse (*prophasis*, "cloak").

The Helper and the witnesses (vv26–27). The Spirit testifies about Christ, and the disciples testify too — one witness, two voices (Tasker, quoted by Guzik). Henry: the Spirit's working "is not to supersede, but to engage and encourage ours." Sproul: "The New Testament clearly identifies the first Helper, or Paraclete, as Jesus Himself." The phrase "proceeds from the Father" lies behind the creed's wording and the East–West dispute over "and the Son"; Guzik notes it without taking sides, and in this verse Jesus also says He Himself will send the Spirit.

Word study (Greek):

- **true — *alēthinos* (G228):** genuine, real — the true light, the true bread, the true vine.
- **vine — *ampelos* (G288):** the grapevine; Israel's emblem.

- **vinedresser — *geōrgos* (G1092):** farmer, tiller of the soil (KJV "husbandman").
- **takes away — *airō* (G142):** take away / lift up (1:29, the Lamb "takes away" sin).
- **prunes — *kathairō* (G2508):** cleanses, prunes; wordplay with *katharos* (G2513), "clean" (v3; 13:10).
- **abide — *menō* (G3306):** remain, stay, dwell; ×9 as "abide" in vv4–10, "remain" in v16.
- **friends — *philos* (G5384):** a loved one; Abraham "the friend of God" (James 2:23).
- **slaves — *doulos* (G1401):** owned, under orders, not told the master's plans.
- **chose — *eklegomai* (G1586):** picked out for Himself (6:70; 13:18).
- **appointed — *tithēmi* (G5087):** set, place, lay down — same verb as "lay down his life" (v13).
- **hate — *miseō* (G3404):** settled hostility; perfect tense in v18, "has hated."
- **excuse — *prophasis* (G4392):** pretext, cloak.
- **without a cause — *dōrean* (G1432):** as a gift, for nothing (Romans 3:24).
- **Helper — *paraklētos* (G3875):** one called alongside; advocate (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1).
- **proceeds — *ekporeuomai* (G1607):** goes out from.
- **testify — *martyreō* (G3140):** bear witness.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Jesus is the vine Israel was meant to be** — every Old Testament vine passage laments missing fruit.
2. **The knife is a mercy** — fruitless branches are taken away, fruitful ones pruned.
3. **The pruning knife is the Word** (v3; Henry: "a cleansing virtue in that word").
4. **Fruit, more fruit, much fruit, fruit that remains** — every rung reached by abiding.
5. **Nothing means nothing** — "apart from Me you can do nothing" (v5).
6. **Abiding is obedience, not a mood** (v10; Guzik).
7. **His joy, made full** — permanent, not a roller-coaster (Sproul).
8. **The One who lays down His life lays us down to bear fruit** — *tithēmi* in vv13 and 16.
9. **Hated for nothing, loved for nothing** — *dōrean* (v25).
10. **The Spirit testifies, and so do we** (vv26–27).

Cross-references: Exod 3:14; 33:11; Ps 35:19; 69:4; 80:8–16; Isa 5:1–7; 41:8; Jer 2:21; Matt 10:8; John 1:29, 38–39; 6:35, 70; 13:10, 18, 34–35; 14:16–17, 26, 31; 16:7; 18:1; Rom 3:24; Gal 5:22–23; Heb 12:11; Jas 2:23; 1 John 2:1, 19; 3:16; 2 Tim 3:12.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · JOHN 15:12

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."

Command to obey — "Abide in Me." I have spent a lot of my life trying to produce fruit by gritting my teeth. Jesus doesn't tell the branch to try harder; He tells it to stay. For me that means His words living in me (v7) — real time in the Word every day, not just on Sundays — and doing what He says when I'd rather not (v10). This week I will start each day with one paragraph of John 15 and one honest prayer before I touch my phone.

Sin to confess — trying to live apart from Him. "Apart from Me you can do nothing." I confess the plans, the ministry, the recovery work I have tried to carry in my own strength, and the pride that wanted the credit. Spurgeon is right: "The power lies with the Master, not with the servant."

Promise to trust — pruning, not cutting off. Some of the men I walk with are under the knife right now — a job lost, a marriage hurting, a body breaking down, a sentence still running. The Vinedresser's knife is not punishment for the fruitful branch; it is preparation for more fruit (v2; Heb 12:11). I want to help my brothers see the difference, and I want to believe it myself when it's my turn.

Example to follow — the love that lays down its life. "Love one another, just as I have loved you" (v12). The measure is the cross. In a men's group that means showing up, telling the truth, carrying a brother's load, forgiving what he did to me, and putting his good ahead of my comfort. Henry: "Christ's love to us should direct and engage our love to each other."

Truth to live in — friends, chosen. So many men I serve have been told they were nobody's choice. Jesus says, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit." I am His friend, not a slave waiting to be fired, and He has told me what He is doing.

Courage to stand — the world will not applaud. If the world hated Him without a cause, it will not cheer for me. My job is to make sure that when I am rejected, it is for His name's sake and not for my own foolishness — and to keep testifying, knowing the Spirit is testifying with me.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Where am I trying to produce fruit by effort instead of by abiding — and what would "staying close to the Vine" look like this week? (15:4–5) *Fruit is the branch's result, not its work. "Apart from Me you can do nothing."*
2. What is the Father pruning in my life right now? Am I calling it punishment when it may be preparation for more fruit? (15:2–3; Heb 12:11) *Spurgeon: pruning is the lot of the fruitful; it is never condemnation.*
3. Verse 6 is a warning. How do I tell the difference between a pruned branch and a dead one — in myself and in the men I walk with? (15:2, 6; 1 John 2:19) *Guzik's three views; fruit and abiding are the evidence.*
4. Jesus says "abide in My love" and "keep My commandments" in the same breath. Which command is He pressing on me right now? (15:9–10, 14) *Not a mystical feeling — simple obedience (Guzik).*

5. What does it change to know that I am His friend, chosen and appointed — not a slave on probation? (15:15–16) *"You did not choose Me but I chose you."*
6. Where am I feeling the world's pressure for following Christ — and is it for His name's sake or for my own foolishness? (15:18–21; 2 Tim 3:12) *Spurgeon: "Take care, if the world does hate you, that it hates you without a cause."*

Worship. The Father tends the vine, the Son is the vine, the Spirit testifies about the Son. The One who said "I am the true vine" went out that same night to be cut down — He laid down His life for His friends — so that branches like me could be grafted in and bear fruit that remains.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, true Vine, keep me in You. Let Your words live in me, and let me keep Your commandments and stay in Your love. Father, prune what needs pruning, and give me grace to trust Your knife. Make my joy full with Your joy. Teach me to love my brothers the way You loved me, and give me courage when the world pushes back. Holy Spirit, testify about Jesus through my life and my words this week. Amen.

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