

WEEK 3: REMAIN IN ME

Jesus, the True Vine

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.” – John 15:4

John 15:1-17

It's in our nature to want easy answers. We're used to getting what we want quickly – fast food and microwave ovens, easy and quick research on the internet, and newly-released movies available with a click. If we have a problem, our first instinct is to Google it or find a book to help solve the problem in 5 easy steps. We want to grow and improve, but we'd prefer it be simple and painless.

Jesus tells us in this week's passage that the key to growth is to be closely and intimately connected to him. This is both easier and more difficult than we could imagine. It's easier because it means God doesn't have a list of impossible demands that we have to accomplish in order to meet his standards and stay in relationship with him. But it's harder because it requires something we're not used to doing: slowing down. We can only grow if we are willing to spend time with him. There isn't any quick answer or any manual with 5 easy steps to follow to find intimacy with God. It's just our willingness to be with him through prayer, reading his Word, and spending time with others who know him.

Jesus used the illustration of the vine and the branches because he knew it would be obvious to his followers that a branch can't bear fruit or be productive unless it's connected to the vine. In the same way, we can't be the people God made us to be unless we are living in close connection to Him.

The good news is that as we practice living in close connection to God, he begins to change us and make us more like him. All those admirable character traits that we want more of in our lives, like patience, joy, and gentleness, we can develop by simply getting to know Jesus better. It's a lifelong journey, but worth every step.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. What are some distractions in your life that keep you from staying connected to Jesus throughout your day? What steps can you take to remove or minimize these distractions?
2. In what ways do you need to connect more with Jesus? Do you need more focused times of prayer and reading his Word? Or do you need more continual awareness of him throughout your day? What steps can you take to be more consciously connected to him?
3. What “fruit” do you need more of in your life? How can being more closely connected to Jesus produce that fruit in you?