

# “I AM” Seven Times

## Session-5: I Am The True Vine

### Notes

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##### Introduction

##### John 15:1-5

**1** "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. **2** He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. **3** You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me as I abide in you. Just 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. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

Analysis of the fourth “I Am” statement:

- ✓ Identity (characteristic): “I am the true vine...”
- ✓ Our respond: “Abide”; “Bear Fruit”
- ✓ What are the results: Whatever you ask for will be done.

The author states that the last three “I Am” statements in John are not spoken before the mixed audiences that include indifferent, skeptical, and hostile people. In the first four “I Am” declarations, he was speaking to such a mixed audience. But the last three statement he speaks only to those who believe in him.

#### I. The Living, Growing, Enduring, Spreading Plant of God

The author asks the question, why a vine and why a “true” vine? The answer given is that in the Old Testament, the vine is symbol of the community of God’s people (Israel). He quotes Psalm 80:8 that says “You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.” to show that the Hebrews that exited Egypt were a vine.

He also uses verses from Hosea 10:1-2 to reinforce the Israelites were referred as the vine.

##### Hosea 10:1-2

**1** Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. **2** Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The Lord will break down their altars, and destroy their pillars.

Note there are also other references in Jeremiah 2:21 and 6:9 plus Ezekiel 17:1-10 and 19:10-14 that use the vine to refer to the Israelites.

However, when Jesus says “I am the true vine” that means the vine is no longer just the Israelites, but that everyone - Jew and gentile - that is connected to Jesus through faith in him is part of the vine. As the author states, the people who belong to God’s community, symbolized by the vine, are not of the flesh, but of the spirit.

The author goes on to say that the vine symbolizes four characteristics of the God’s community:

1. **It is living:** changing and dynamic
2. **It is growing:** always getting larger each day, not staying the same size
3. **It is enduring:** tough, able to survive adverse conditions
4. **It is outreaching:** growing, extending out shoots, branches

## II. The Vine Enables The Branches to Bear Fruit

The four characteristics of vine are only characteristics, not the purpose for the vine; the purpose of the vine is to “bear fruit.”

The vine’s purpose is so important that Jesus admonishes us by saying:

### John 15:2

**2** He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

The author notes that the purpose of bearing fruit is so important to Jesus that in verses 1 through 17 Jesus uses the expression “to bear fruit” seven times. Obviously, Jesus is making the point that God wants us to bear fruit.

The reference is similar to the Parable of the Sower found in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8, as well as the Old Testament such as Isaiah 5 – bear fruit or be destroyed.

### Isaiah 5:4-7

**4** What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? **5** And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. **6** I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. **7** For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!

To bear fruit we need to know what it consists of. So the author lists three things about the fruit we are to bear:

1. **Numerical Growth:** to bring more and more people into the Kingdom of God by being born again in Christ
2. **Spiritual Growth:** to expand and involve our lives more and more in Christ through worship, prayer, and teachings.
3. **Manifest God:** to work to demonstrate or show God’s love and justice in the world we live in

The author further points out that God will also prune or trim the branches of the vine so that it will continue to bear more fruit. That is, God eliminates various characteristics of our behavior so that we can focus on the work at hand – bear more fruit.

### John 15:2

**2** He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

The question the author suggests we need to ask ourselves is: Are we bearing fruit for God or simply maintaining the status quo?

### III. The Vine For The Branches To Stay Connected To

#### John 15:1-5

4 **Abide in me as I abide in you.** Just 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. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 **Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.** 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Jesus tells us to live in or remain in him as he does in us. That is, we the branches must stay connected to him, the vine, in order sustain the spiritual life. The author notes, however, that unlike a plant we have free will and can choose to remain connected or not. It is our choice to maintain our connection with Jesus Christ for it can't be broken against our will - not by his will, but only by our own will. So he commands us to "abide in me" to bear fruit, but the choice is ours.

The consequences of not abiding in Jesus are that we will be disconnected from the vine, wither and die. And as verse six states the branch (us) will wither, be gathered up, thrown in the fire and burned.

However, if we abide in him and his words in us – keep his commandments - then we will be loved and he will do whatever we ask of him.

For Jesus to abide in us, according to the author, we must fill our mind and heart with the words of Jesus Christ. And the author contends that means the whole Bible – both Old and New Testaments. For Moses wrote about him as recorded in John 5:46 – "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me." And that he came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets as stated in Matthew 5:17 - "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." And according to Luke 24:44 "Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Therefore, the words of Jesus that must abide in us must be the whole Bible.

So that means we must abide in Jesus by filling our heart and mind with the Bible and by actively pursuing his commandments in our lives.

### IV. How Should We Respond?

The author tells us that our response must be based on the two action phrases that Jesus told us in his description of "I am the true vine." – **abide** and **bear fruit**.

**"Abide"** is a command Jesus has given us, which discussed previously, is to have Jesus' words in us; to keep his commandments; to love one another.

**"Bear fruit"** is actually dependent on abiding, which as discussed previously is our choice based on our free will. If we "abide" in Jesus then the bearing of fruit will naturally follow.