

## **LIFE SPEAKS TO US!**

By Bill C. Dotson

**VINES...**are quite diverse in nature. One of my earliest heroes was Tarzan, swinging through the dense forest on vines, from tree to tree. He, Jane and Cheeta, his sidekick chimpanzee, were there to maintain justice in their part of the world. Not once did those vines break. Amazing! Of course, George of the Jungle was not so fortunate..."*watch out for that tree!*"



Some familiar vines are tomato, cucumber, melon and grape, Boston, honeysuckle, gourds, Virginia Creeper and poison ivy. They are evergreen climbing or ground-creeping woody plants. Our home has six species on the chimney, fences and lawn.

When I was a youngster, my grandfather had a grape vineyard; not a large one, but it did produce enough grapes to use for canning jellies and preserves. It was fun to pick them as a kid and consume a few. I hated the seeds. My hero is the person who developed the seedless grape. They did a marvelous service to mankind's enjoyment of the grape. You can eat twice as many in half the time.

Many parts of the world display incredible vines that cover houses, cafes, barns and gazebos, to name a few. Certain trees attract vines that wrap themselves around the trunk and limbs. Just ask anyone from the deep South about Kudzu. Some mature vines are massive at their base. Vines adhere to the surfaces and become a part of the structure. We've all heard of someone described as a 'clinging vine', one who grabs hold and won't let go.



'Abiding', 'as one'

Isn't that what God says in His word? **"I am the vine, you are the branches"** ([Jn. 15.5a](#)). This presents a picture of the small branches extending from the vine. But I can also see a tree with its trunk and branches encircled by vines. The vine clinging to the branches, like they were one! This is a word picture for '*abiding*', 'as one'. While studying and teaching [John 15](#) recently, a life lesson just jumped out at me.

Jesus was speaking to His disciples so the message was to believers. He spoke of four distinct persons in Christ. I assume a grape vineyard may have been nearby, possibly one that was being worked at the time He was teaching. It is a progressive illustration.

*First*, Jesus addressed people who are what I would call--'saved and satisfied', **bearing no fruit**. The vinedresser ([vs. 1](#)) inspected his vineyard, and cut off dead branches and disposed of them. ([vs. 2a](#))

*Second*, there are those branches that **bear some fruit**, therefore encouraging the owner.

*Third*, He directs his attention to this second group of branches and starts *pruning* them

believing they will **bear more fruit** anticipating a good harvest in the near term. ([vs. 2b](#))

Finally, after seeing the production by the pruned branches, the vinedresser starts spending time developing them into branches that **bear much fruit**. ([vs. 5b](#))

To summarize: *no fruit, some fruit, more fruit, much fruit!*

The Vinedresser (Father) knows that a bountiful harvest cannot be accomplished without healthy branches that are fed by the Vine (Jesus thru The Spirit). The Lord says; **"for without Me you can do nothing"** ([vs. 5b](#)). But **"he who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit"** ([vs. 5a](#)). A grape does not just sprout on its own. It is the result of the sources of nutrients flowing from the ground up through the vine, through the branch creating the blossom or fruit. The sun, rain and right temperatures direct the nutrients to produce their fruit. That might be compared to trials in our lives.

And before we leave this lesson, we need to see what the 'fruit' Jesus is describing really is. You would do well to read all of [Chapter 15](#). Now! His entire parable concludes with the directive--**"Love one another!"** ([vs. 17b](#)). The fruit is *love*! He is saying that if we love God with all our being and others as ourselves in obedience to His commands, then He will be glorified because people will be drawn to Him through our love, for Him and for them. The early church described in [Acts 2](#) grew primarily because they took this admonition seriously.

How's the harvest looking lately in your life? Let's examine ourselves using a sporting analogy based on Jesus' parable:

- 1 is 'not in, a bench-warmer';
- 2 is 'in the game';
- 3 is 'getting the hang of it'; and
- 4 is '**all in**'!

So, where are you in this picture? More important, where do you wish to be? Meantime, submit to the pruning and stick to the abiding! **And may your crop of grapes be abundant and seedless!**



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Bill C. Dotson

[www.lifespeakstous.com](http://www.lifespeakstous.com)

[bill@abidingfathers.org](mailto:bill@abidingfathers.org)

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