

I AM the Vine

Message 4 of 5 in the series: "I AM"

A. God revealed to Moses that His name is "I AM" and Jesus claimed to be "I AM" in the flesh.

"Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?' God said to Moses, '**I AM WHO I AM**. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "**I AM** has sent me to you.'"" Exodus 3:13-14 (NIV)

"Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, **I AM!**'" John 8:58 (NLT)

Note: In the Bible a name is more than how someone should address a person. A name reveals the person's character.

B. Jesus said, "I AM the vine."

1. Jesus is the vine, the only source for the Christian life.

"I am the true grapevine...Yes, I am the vine..." John 15:1a,5a (NLT)

"I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life...The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son." John 5:24,26 (NLT)

Life Application: Trust Jesus for **LIFE**. "They replied, 'We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?' Jesus told them, 'This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.'" John 6:28-29 (NLT)

2. We are branches: unfruitful, weak, and useless apart from Jesus, the 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. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me **you can do nothing**. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a **useless** branch..." John 15:4-6 (NLT)

"Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life." John 3:6 (NLT)

"The Spirit alone gives eternal life. **Human effort accomplishes nothing**..." John 6:63 (NLT)

Life Application: Stop relying upon yourself. The Christian life is not hard; it is impossible in your own strength.

"My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

3. The Father is the gardener, the caretaker of the branches. He ensures our fruitfulness.

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified **by the message I have given you**...When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father." John 15:1-3,8 (NLT)

"...and you do not have his message in your hearts, because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you. You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life." John 5:38-40 (NLT)

C. Jesus said we must remain in Him to experience a fruitful life.

1. Remaining, or abiding, is our responsibility in the Christian life.

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you...you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:4-5 (NLT)

2. God wants us to experience His life; however, our lack of remaining in Him causes our lives to be fruitless.

“He cuts off every branch of mine that **doesn’t produce fruit**, and he prunes the branches that **do bear fruit** so they will produce **even more**. When you produce **much fruit**...I appointed you to go and produce **lasting fruit**...” John 15:2,8a,16b (NLT)

Note: Fruit is the evidence of His life; it proves we are his disciples. “When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples...” John 15:8a (NLT)

Life Application: Learn to remain/abide in Him. It is an act of the will. Abiding is not our automatic default setting, self-reliance is. Fruitfulness is conditional (“But if you remain in me...”).



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3. How can we know that we are remaining in Him?

- **Fruit:** “I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.” John 15:11-12 (NLT)
- **Pruning:** “...and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit so that they will produce even more.” John 15:2b (NLT)
- **Answered Prayer:** “But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!...I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.” John 15:7,16b (NLT)
- **Obedience:** “When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love.” John 15:10 (NLT)

Life Application: Do a quick “fruit check.”

“Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you (in you); if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.” 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NLT)

Connect Group Questions:

1. Read and discuss the verses below. What do these verses teach you about the life God wants you to have?
 - John 3:16
 - John 4:14
 - John 10:10
 - Romans 8:1-2
2. John 15:1-8 clearly lays out three persons and their responsibilities:
 - Jesus is the Vine. His responsibility is to provide the life (the source) for the fruit in the Christian life.
 - The Father is the Gardener. His responsibility is to prune us to ensure that we will bear increasing amounts of fruit in our lives.
 - The Christian is the branch. The Christian's responsibility is to remain/abide, trusting the Vine to produce the fruit and the Gardener to ensure and inspect our fruitfulness.

Do you find yourself focusing on the other persons' responsibilities more than your own? Do you assume fruit-making responsibilities (the Vine's and the Gardener's ability) more than your responsibility to remain in Him. Why do we do that? Why is it always easier to focus on someone else's responsibility over our own responsibilities?

3. There are an endless number of specific reasons why a person might fail to remain in the Vine. Most of those reasons fall under the larger headings of ignorance, rebellion, or self-reliance. Which one of those larger reasons causes you the most difficulty in abiding? Why?
4. When we rely upon self or the flesh, our natural resources to produce the Christian life, we will be frustrated and fruitless. Read Proverbs 3:5-6. We are told not to depend upon our own understanding for life but instead to focus on Him. Our understanding about what really produces fruit is wrong.
 - Why will changing our circumstances not bring about His fruit in our lives?
 - Why will our emotions/feelings not produce His fruit in our lives?
 - Why will our limited understanding and knowledge not produce His fruit in our lives?
 - Why will our will power or strength not bring about His fruit in our lives?
5. We want more fruit in our lives, but we don't always appreciate the pruning process. How and why does God prune us? When have you experienced God pruning you, and how did you respond? Do you think pruning is painful?