



## **The True Vine (John 15)**

*Notes: Week Fifteen*

### **John 15 (HCSB)**

#### **The Vine and the Branches**

**15** “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.

<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be<sup>[a]</sup> My disciples.

#### **Christ-like Love**

<sup>9</sup> “As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love.

<sup>11</sup> “I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are My friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> I do not call you slaves anymore, because a slave doesn’t know what his master<sup>[b]</sup> is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from My Father. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is what I command you: Love one another.

#### **Persecutions Predicted**

<sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word I spoke 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 also keep yours. <sup>21</sup> But they will do all these things to you on account of My name, because they don’t know the One who sent Me. <sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin.<sup>[c]</sup> Now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> The one who hates Me also hates My Father. <sup>24</sup> If I had not done the works among them that no one else has done, they would not have sin. Now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father. <sup>25</sup> But this happened so that the statement written in their scripture might be fulfilled: They hated Me for no reason.<sup>[d]</sup>

#### **Coming Testimony and Rejection**

<sup>26</sup> “When the Counselor comes, the One I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—He will testify about Me. <sup>27</sup> You also will testify, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [John 15:8](#) Or *and become*
- b. [John 15:15](#) Or *lord*
- c. [John 15:22](#) To *have sin* is an idiom that refers to guilt caused by sin.
- d. [John 15:25](#) [Ps 69:4](#)

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

### John 15

**15:1-17** This allegory is at the heart of Jesus' farewell discourse to the disciples. The OT used the vineyard or vine as a symbol for Israel, God's covenant people, especially in two "vineyard songs" ([Isa 5:1-7](#); [27:2-6](#)). However, Israel's failure to produce fruit issued in divine judgment. Jesus, by contrast, is the true vine, and His followers are to remain in Him and produce much fruit for God.

**15:1 I am the true vine** is the last of Jesus' seven "I am" sayings in John's Gospel (see note at [6:35,48](#)). "True" contrasts Jesus with OT Israel (see note at [15:1-17](#)). Joseph was called a "fruitful vine" in [Gen 49:22](#). The reference to the Father as **the vineyard keeper** harks back to Isaiah's first vineyard song, where God is depicted as tending His vineyard, only to be rewarded with sour grapes ([Isa 5:1-7](#); cp. [Ps 80:8-9](#)).

**15:2** To ensure maximal fruit production, the divine vineyard keeper **removes** dead branches and **prunes** all the others ([Heb 6:7-8](#)). In John's Gospel, Judas the betrayer is an example of the former scenario ([Jn 13:10-11](#)). Peter, who denied Jesus three times, is an example of the latter ([18:15-18,25-27](#); [21:15-19](#)).

**15:3** On **you are already clean**, see [13:10-11](#).

**15:4** The **in** terminology harks back to OT covenant theology, including prophetic texts about a future new covenant ([Ex 25:8](#); [29:45](#); [Lv 26:11-12](#); [Ezek 37:27-28](#); [43:9](#)).

**15:4, 5, 8** The repeated reference to **fruit** underscores that fruitfulness is God's primary creative ([Gen 1:11-12,22,28](#)) and redemptive purpose ([Jn 15:8,16](#)). The OT prophets envisioned a time when God's people would "blossom and bloom and fill the whole world with fruit" ([Isa 27:6](#); cp. [Hos 14:4-8](#)).

**15:6** This verse echoes [Ezek 15:1-8](#), where a barren vine is said to be fit only for burning. **Fire** is a common symbol for divine judgment ([Isa 30:27](#); [Mt 3:12](#); [5:22](#); [18:8](#); [25:41](#); see note at [Jn 15:2](#)).

**15:10-11** Obedience is not all gloom and doom; rather, it's a source of **joy**. The OT prophets envisioned a period of great end-time rejoicing ([Isa 25:9](#); [35:10](#); [51:3](#); [61:10](#); [66:10](#); [Zech 9:9](#)).

**15:12-17** On Jesus' "love commandment," see note at [13:34-35](#).

**15:13-14** In the OT, only Abraham ([2Ch 20:7](#); [Isa 41:8](#)), and by implication Moses ([Ex 33:11](#)), are called "friends of God." Jesus extended this privilege to all obedient believers.

**15:16** In first-century Palestine, disciples typically took the initiative in attaching themselves to a particular rabbi, not vice versa. As a well-known dictum declared, "Provide yourself with a teacher." Jesus broke with this custom and called His own disciples. **Appointed** recalls the OT description of God's appointment of Abraham ([Gen 17:5](#); cp. [Rm 4:17](#)), the ordination of Levites ([Num 8:10](#)), and Moses' commissioning of Joshua ([Num 27:18](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "John 15".

[15:18-16:33](#) This final major unit in Jesus' farewell discourse deals with the world's hostility toward Himself and His followers and with the future ministry of the Holy Spirit.

[15:18](#) Jesus' followers are to be known by their love ([13:34-35](#) and note there).

[15:24](#) On Jesus' **works** as a witness to Himself, see note at [5:31-47](#).

[15:25](#) Jesus declared that the Jews' hatred of Him fulfilled OT Scripture, specifically [Ps 69:4](#) (cp. [Ps 35:19](#)). This Davidic psalm depicts a righteous sufferer who is zealous for God but is persecuted by God's enemies **for no reason**. Thus Jesus saw David's experiences as a prefiguration of the hatred and rejection He suffered.

[15:26](#) On Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit, see notes at [14:16-17](#) and [14:26](#).

[15:27](#) The call for Jesus' followers to serve as His witnesses recalls OT prophetic literature, where God's end-time people are called His "witnesses" to the nation ([Isa 43:10-12](#); [44:8](#)). In the NT, believers are promised the Spirit's help in times of persecution ([Mt 10:20](#); [Mk 13:11](#); [Lk 12:12](#)), and the Spirit played a vital part in the church's mission ([Ac 1:8](#); cp. [Lk 24:48](#); [Ac 5:32](#); [6:10](#)).

## The Apologetics Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

### *John 15*

[15:2-8](#) Do [verses 2](#) and [6](#) deny John's promise that God will protect those who are truly His ([6:39](#); [10:29](#))? No, but they are reminders that true believers will persevere ([v. 4](#); see [note on 8:30-31](#)). Those who don't persevere show that they were never truly Christ's ([1 Jn 2:19](#)).

[15:22, 24](#) There are different kinds of guilt. Unwitting sins can be excused more readily than intentional ones. All people sin and are guilty in God's eyes as a result, but not all are held equally accountable ([Lk 12:47-48](#); [Rm 5:13-14](#)).

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<sup>2</sup> Ted Cabal, ed., *The Apologetics Study Bible: Understanding Why You Believe*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1603-1604.

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### John 15

**15:1** The grapevine is a prolific plant; a single vine supports numerous branches and bears many grapes. In the Old Testament, grapes symbolized Israel's fruitfulness in doing God's work on the earth ([Psalm 80:8](#); [Isaiah 5:1-7](#); [Ezekiel 19:10-14](#)). In the Passover meal, the fruit of the vine symbolized God's goodness to his people.

**15:1ff** Christ is the vine, and God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. The branches are all those who claim to be followers of Christ. The fruitful branches are true believers who by their living union with Christ produce much fruit. But those who become unproductive—those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment—will be separated from the vine. Unproductive followers are as good as dead and will be cut off and tossed aside.

**15:2, 3** Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning: (1) cutting off and (2) cutting back branches. Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith. But branches that don't bear fruit are cut off at the trunk not only because they are worthless but also because they often infect the rest of the tree. People who don't bear fruit for God or who try to block the efforts of God's followers will be cut off from his life-giving power.

**15:5** "Fruit" is not limited to soul winning. In this chapter, answered prayer, joy, and love are mentioned as fruit ([15:7](#), [11](#), [12](#)). [Galatians 5:22-24](#) and [2 Peter 1:5-8](#) describe additional fruit: qualities of Christian character.

**15:5, 6** Remaining in Christ means (1) believing that he is God's Son ([1 John 4:15](#)), (2) receiving him as Savior and Lord ([John 1:12](#)), (3) doing what God says ([1 John 3:24](#)), (4) continuing to believe the Good News ([1 John 2:24](#)), and (5) relating in love to the community of believers, Christ's body ([John 15:12](#)).

**15:5-8** Many people try to be good, honest people who do what is right. But Jesus says that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to him, like a branch attached to the vine. Apart from Christ our efforts are unfruitful. Are you receiving the nourishment and life offered by Christ, the vine? If not, you are missing a special gift he has for you.

**15:8** When a vine produces "much fruit," God is glorified, for daily he sent the sunshine and rain to make the crops grow, and constantly he nurtured each tiny plant and prepared it to blossom. What a moment of glory for the Lord of the harvest when the harvest is brought into the barns, mature and ready for use! He made it all happen! This farming analogy shows how God is glorified when people come into a right relationship with him and begin to "produce much fruit" in their lives.

**15:11** When things are going well, we feel elated. When hardships come, we sink into depression. But true joy transcends the rolling waves of circumstance. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. When our lives are intertwined with his, he will help us walk through adversity without sinking into debilitating lows and manage prosperity without moving into deceptive highs. The joy of living with Jesus Christ daily will keep us level headed, no matter how high or low our circumstances.

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<sup>3</sup>, *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 1787-1788.

**15:12, 13** We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, giving. Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.

**15:15** Because Jesus Christ is Lord and Master, he should call us servants; instead, he calls us friends. How comforting and reassuring to be chosen as Christ's friends! Because he is Lord and Master, we owe him our unqualified obedience, but most of all, Jesus asks us to obey him because we love him.

**15:16** Jesus made the first choice—to love and to die for us, to invite us to live with him forever. We make the next choice—to accept or reject his offer. Without *his* choice, we would have no choice to make.

**15:17** Christians will get plenty of hatred from the world; from each other we need love and support. Do you allow small problems to get in the way of loving other believers? Jesus commands that you love them, and he will give you the strength to do it.

**15:26** Once again Jesus offers hope. The Holy Spirit gives strength to endure the unreasonable hatred and evil in our world and the hostility many have toward Christ. This is especially comforting for those facing persecution.

**15:26** Jesus uses two names for the Holy Spirit—"Advocate" and "Spirit of truth." The word *Advocate* conveys the helping, encouraging, and strengthening work of the Spirit. *Spirit of truth* points to the teaching, illuminating, and reminding work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit ministers to both the head and the heart, and both dimensions are important.