

How to determine if you are "VINEWORTHY" (John 15:1-25)

We now enter the portion of the text of John referred to as the "Vine-grower". Before reading the text of John 15, it is important to know that the Bible had a perspective of vines in relation to the people of God.

- Ps 80:8-9 Thou didst remove a vine from Egypt; Thou didst drive out the nations, and didst plant it. 9 Thou didst clear {the ground} before it, and it took deep root and filled the land.
- Ps 80:14 O God {of} hosts, turn again now, we beseech Thee; look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine,
- Ezek 17:8 "It was planted in good soil beside abundant waters, that it might yield branches and bear fruit, {and} become a splendid vine."
- Isa 5:1-7 Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. 2 And He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; then He expected {it} to produce {good} grapes, but it produced {only} worthless ones. 3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between me and My vineyard. 4 "What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected {it} to produce {good} grapes did it produce worthless ones? 5 "So now let me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. 6 "And I will lay it waste; it will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it." 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.
- Herod the Great actually had a large golden vine hanging over the entrance into the Holy Place.
- The Lord had just partaken in the fruit of the vine during the Lord's Supper.
- God used these and other verses to illustrate that He planted His people like a vine. They were dependent on Him for a life source, they were rooted in Him and He was their life source. He took care of them just like a husbandman takes care of their vineyard.
- In the same way, we as Christians are in God's vineyard. We are taken care of by the Father, for He waters us, causes His glorious light to shine upon us, He fertilizes us, prunes us and removes the weeds from around us. All the people of God can relate to the vineyard process.

Questions: How can you know whether or not you are part of God's vineyard? How can you have comfort in knowing you are on the vine of the Lord? How do you know if you are really "Vine-worthy"?

Test #1 "Are you bearing fruit for the kingdom?"

John 15:1-8 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every {branch} that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither {can} you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. 8 "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples.

- Jesus said that He was the true and that the Father is expecting fruit from those that are part of the vine. He expects the fruit of good works and a good life to be rendered unto Him.
- In ancient Palestine, just like today and in all parts of the world, grapes are produced the same way. A seeding is planted and a vine grows out from there. Over the course of weeks and months, an actual vine spreads out and begins to bring forth fruit. It is this fruit that explains the very existence of the plant to begin with, for no fruit was a bad issue. When a branch is not bearing fruit or if it was just plain dried out, the keeper of the vineyard would cut off the non-producing branches so as not to take away nutrients from the productive branches. This process is called pruning. Without the pruning, the entire vine could be rendered useless. When they were done with the pruning of the vine, the trimmings would be thrown in the fire, for they were good for only that.
- How does the fruit abound in the life of the individual and even the church? As Jesus said, "...and My words abide in you..." It is through the words of Jesus that we are even to expect the fruit to come. It is not about me, but Jesus. It is not through my strength, but to trust in the life-saving words of Jesus Christ. If we do that, then there will be fruit in our lives.

Jesus is looking at the church members to see who is "Vine-Worthy".

- He is looking to see if there is fruit of repentance.
 - Matt 3:8 "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance;
 - Matt 7:19-20 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.
 - Matt 12:33 "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.

- We are to bear spiritual fruit.
 - Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
 - Col 1:10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please {Him} in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;
- This fruit comes through the vine, which is the Son.
 - James 3:18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
 - Phil 1:11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which {comes} through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
 - Rom 7:4 "...Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God."

How do you know if you are "Vine-Worthy" and part of the VINE process? The first test is to look at our lives. Are we bearing the good fruit of Jesus in our everyday lives?

Test #2 "Are you loving the other people around you?"

John 15:9-17 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and {that} your joy may be made full. 12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends, if you do what I command you. 15 "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and {that} your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. 17 "This I command you, that you love one another.

- One of the key words to describe Christianity is LOVE. Without it, the church would be nothing more than a club. With it we are defined. They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
 - 1 Cor 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind, {and} is not jealous; love does not brag {and} is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong {suffered,} 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- It was the love of Jesus that defines the love we are to have for each other. A simple scan of 1 John 4 certainly illustrates this.

- I Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son {to be} the propitiation for our sins.
- I Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.
- I Jn 4:19 We love, because He first loved us.
- This is not a simple love, but a love that is willing to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - I Jn 3:16-18 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

How do you know you are "Vine-Worthy" in God's eyes? Look at how one is treating their fellow saints and even those outside the church family. Are you "Vine Worthy" when applying this test to yourself? How do you treat others? Do you help them in their hour of need or bail at the first opportunity? Do you take the time to be your brother's keeper? Do you take the time to visit them in the hospital, the prison, their deathbed and in correction? This is all about loving your fellow man, but are you doing it?

Test #3 Are you being persecuted for your faith?

John 15:18-25 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before {it hated} you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 "Remember the word that I said 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 keep yours also. 21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 "He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 "But {they have done this} in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

- Jesus warned the apostles that the world was going to hate them, for they hated Jesus and He was their leader. A slave is not greater than the Master. If they kill the Master, in this case Jesus, then why would they think they would have it any easier?
- The problem is not with them personally, but between the persecutors and God Himself. That is why they will not like the apostles or Jesus, for they hate God who sent them and stands for something in their

lives. There is going to be persecution for those that are truly following Jesus.

- What is the persecution we can receive today?
 - In many of the foreign countries throughout the world there is persecution to the point of death.
 - In some of the Muslim countries, the church is always at risk of being blown up or burned down.
 - Even though it might not be as violent in this country yet, but there is still persecution. Look at all the hostilities toward Christians in the media. Television show after television show poke fun at people of faith.
 - There is evil humanism creeping into the colleges and going contrary to what the Bible teaches. Christian students are ridiculed by teachers, yet if a Christian badgered a humanist, you would not hear the end of it.
 - Look at all the friend that you could have had if you only gave up on Christ.
 - Look at the violent hostilities that the church faces from the homosexuals, atheists and government officials.
- When we stand up for Jesus and what is right in God's eyes, the evil will not sit still for it. The result will be persecution. God did not save us to be quiet, but to be salt and light to the world. We are to stand up for the ways of God. When we do that, there will always be persecution.

Jesus is the Vine; we are the branches. How do you know you are "Vine-Worthy" for the kingdom of God? Ask yourself three questions and you will know the answer.

1. Are we bearing the good fruit of Jesus in our everyday lives?
2. Are we loving our neighbors?
3. Are we being persecuted?

Anything but YES to these questions should generate terror in the hearts of those that ponder them.