

"Growing in Grace: Part 2"

John 15: 1-5

5/15/22

Discussion Guide

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

1. Looking at your life, how have you grown recently? How is God stretching you, refining you, forcing you out of your comfort zones?
2. How true is this passage when it comes to growing in your relationship with the Lord and growing as a person in your character?
3. Recall the early years of your walk with Christ. Can you remember a characteristic, habit, or quality that you disliked or discovered was contrary to God's Word that you wanted him to change? What was it? If not, is there something you are praying on currently that you'd like God to change in your life?
4. How important is it to have a vital connection with Jesus and not merely a formal or mechanical connection? Does it really make a difference in a person's life? Isn't it enough that we are connected to Him?
5. From your perspective or observation, what is the difference between a person who is religious and a person who has a personal relationship with God?
6. Have you examined your connection to God? What's your conclusion about it? Why do you make this conclusion? How do you know if you have a formal connection with God verses a vital connection?
7. How's your love life with God?
8. What's the difference between loving others the way Jesus loved us and just loving a person, undefined?
9. Read Psalm 1:1-3 and reflect on it.
10. What's the difference between obeying God out of love and obeying God out of duty?

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11. Read these words from *"Love Constrained to Obedience"* by William Cowper. How true are they?

*"To see the Law by Christ fulfilled,
and hear his pardoning voice,
changes a slave into a child
and duty into choice."*

12. Have you ever grown grapes or fruit trees? What's it like pruning a vine or tree? Is Jesus' description of pruning and its results accurate? Does it seem counter-intuitive to you that the way to more is less, and that loss, is actually gain?

13. Before you meet for discussion, take some time to think of a time in your life that God pruned you. You may not have thought of it as a pruning experience at the time. It probably felt as if God was attacking you, or was allowing you to be attacked by life mercilessly.

What happened? How did you initially respond? How did God use the experience to actually bring out the best in you, make you more productive, and fruitful in your life?

14. Share ways that hardship, adversity, trials have been beneficial to your life.

15. When going through adversity, how hard is it to have the perspective of the skilled and wise gardener instead of the perspective of a child?