

Hey, you know what, I'm wondering something though. We just sang out in this room, "I just want You, nothing else will do." Let's be honest with ourselves for a minute, a lot of other things we've done this week. Right? And a lot of those things have been fine. A lot of other things have been like the priority in our life. Here's the question I want to ask just stepping in here and right into it this morning: How do you do this? I mean, it's one thing to step in here Sunday morning and sing out those words, "I just want You, Jesus, nothing else will do," and yet step right out of here and a whole lot of other things are priority—how do we do that? Probably the most exclusive verse in the Scripture is when Jesus said the words, "I am the way." You're not getting to God in any other way than Jesus. "I am the truth," there is no other truth other than Jesus' truth. And then He says, "I am the life." If you want to have life, it's only through Jesus.

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

~ JOHN 14:6

And a lot of people are like, "I'm looking for purpose in life," "I'm looking for meaning in life." And, you know, books this thick on how to find purpose and how to find meaning in life and how to do life never mention Jesus once. Jesus says I am the life, no one comes to the Father but by me. We think about life for a moment; when you think, like, when is life really, really good. Like, when is it at its best? Is it at that moment that you just sang about, "I only want You. I only want to be seated at your feet taking it all in"—is that when life is at its best? Then how is it the daily on social I see you guys, it drives me nuts because I want to be there sitting on some sandy beach in front of the ocean taking a picture from here [chest high] down your legs with your painted toenails down there. [Laughter] Now



we're living! Now we're doing the good life! Your boat's named that. And even your lake house that isn't along the lake and it isn't along the ocean, it's inland somewhere and it's a dump, it has some sort of thing

like now we're living, some sort of nameplate on the wall that says what a great life we have. And you're dying when you go there because you're spending all sorts of time cleaning it, fixing it, and getting it all right. But that's life.



Then we sit in here and we sing, "God, I only want to be with You. Jesus, You're the only way." Jesus says I AM the way. I am the truth. And I am the life. You want to have life, it's only gonna be through Jesus. John Chapter 15, if you have your Bible turn there because He works it out there to help us figure out how can I have that kind of life. Because I understand, you and I—I live in this world where all sorts of other pressures are coming upon me, calling my name, wanting my attention, saying that if you have me, if you interact with me then you're gonna have life to the fullest and it's gonna be a great life! And so we keep on reaching for it and stretching for it and when all of a sudden we get it and we finally get that perfect picture down our beautifully tanned legs with the tow and the boat in the background, all of a sudden a baby cries next to us, someone's cursing next to us and we have to get up and move. We never see that on social, but it wasn't the life. The wind picks up, the sun's too strong, run out of sunscreen, and it wasn't the life.

And we're trying so hard to find that life and there is something in this moment where you go, "Yes, it is Jesus. In Jesus I have life." But we don't know how to get it. Jesus is sitting with His disciples, when we get to John Chapter 15, it's a week before He's about ready to go to the cross. He says to His disciples, by the way, one's missing at this point, you're only dealing with eleven. Judas has already gone off; he's doing his thing getting ready to betray Jesus. And as Jesus is talking to them, He's gonna brief them on what's about ready to come. He says I'm gonna go into Jerusalem, they're gonna hang Me on a cross, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna be buried, I'm gonna raise from the dead. I'm gonna send you a Helper. I'm gonna send you God Himself, God's Holy Spirit, to be by your side. Thomas says, one of his disciples, you know, how can we have this life? How can we know where You're at? How can we come to You? And Jesus says it's through Me. Then He begins in Chapter 15 to explain.

Matthew 20:17-19 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

17 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, **18 "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death 19 and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."**

See also: Matthew 17:12 & 17:22-23,
Mark 8:31-9:1, Luke 9:22-27

So you're left here behind after I die and raised from the dead, you have my Holy Spirit. How are you going to have life? How can you really have the good life? The real life, life as it was meant to be in its absolute fullest. When all these other things are being offered to you, how do you negotiate life in the midst of that? So if you have your Bibles open to Chapter 15, I want to just start reading Chapter 15, verse 1, Jesus says:

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

— other translations say, "my Father is the gardener." He goes on right after that to say:

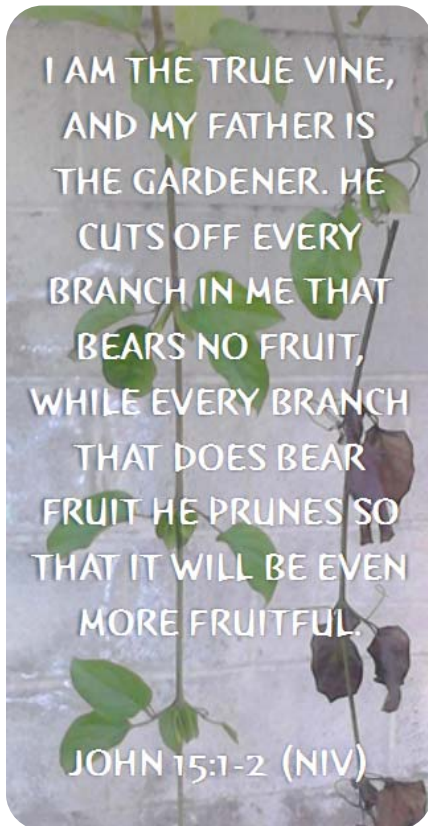
2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

~ JOHN 15:1-3

So let me get right back to the beginning here. He says, "I am the true vine," so for these disciples listening on they understood what it meant. One, because they grew up around vineyards or there were vineyards all around. They also, having grown up as part of Israel and the Jewish faith, they would have understood that Israel was very oftentimes referred to in their history as the vine. Interestingly enough and if you have a chance, if you're a student of the Word or you're gonna have a further conversation about this in your group this week, write down Psalm 80.^A Fascinating little write up there where basically it speaks of the vine being Israel and how things haven't gone well. They've gone away from the path they should have been on and bad things happened to them. And at the very end of Psalm 80 it resolves in going my son is going to be the vine. Jesus is going to—it puts this picture, this prediction forward to this true vine who's actually going to be there to make everything right.

And so when Jesus speaks out here and He says, "I am the true vine," He's talking to guys who know vines and know vineyards, they know this metaphor and this picture of Israel. It was even a logo on the side of the temple, a vine, they get this. But now Jesus shocks them, sort of overwhelms them. I mean, when you're sort of grabbed by something that doesn't seem to be your normal way of thinking you start listening, and He says I am the vine. Not only am I the vine, He goes, "I am the true vine." And what He's going to say here in this text is if you want to know where the real source of life is, where you're

gonna get your nourishment, where you're going to get your strength, where your hope comes from, you're gonna come to the vine. You're gonna be the branches. You're gonna be the fruit that comes from those branches, the flower on that branch, but you're going to have to grab onto Me, Jesus, the true vine, if you really want to understand life.



And then He just jumps into this whole thing about His Father, God, being the gardener who prunes those branches. So here you've got a picture of Jesus being the vine, the one that's deeply rooted and sustaining us. We are coming out from that vine and producing fruit and He says His father comes along and He takes those dead branches and He cuts them off. We all get that. We actually understand that, maybe we don't like it but we want that; if there is something that's not producing fruit to cut it off because it's dead. But then He says there's even some live parts that we thought were just fine that get trimmed off. And most of us at one point or another have had to go outside of our homes with a trimmer and trim the bushes. I hope that comes soon, I really do. At that time I might be whining about it, but for right now, I wish it would come soon. And as we go over that with—we cut every branch on there and some of those branches look nice, and if we do it in the spring there's going to be even some new budding branches coming out of that—and He says my Father trims that off to make it even grow fuller and richer in that time.

And so I get it. When you think about something being, like, like it's bad that God chops that off and removes that, but that He actually takes stuff that you and I look at and go, “Oh, it looks nice. That looks new. In fact, it looks like a new growth there.” And He takes that off because He knows something that we don't fully grasp or

understand, but when that's taken off it is going to grow fuller. And so there's things going on in our lives right now that don't necessarily make sense but they nonetheless are God trimming them back and so God's working on us, working on us to make us become who He wants us to be. So He says, Jesus says, I am the vine. I am the source of life and you are attached to that vine.

Let's look at verse 4, the next word written there is the word “abide”—you're gonna see that word over and over and over and over through the rest of this passage, I think it's 12 times. He says:

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you.

— and then He says this —

As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

~ JOHN 15:4-5

So He says this: He is the vine, we are the branches, our job is to bear fruit; that flower, that fruit that comes as a result of living. And He says listen, here's what you need to know – apart from Me, apart from Jesus, you can't do any of that. There's a lot of things we can do in our life. We try to do a lot of

things. We're involved in doing a lot of things and none of that matters. In fact, the next verse says those things that don't matter, they're like dead wood. He chops them off, throws them into the fire, and He burns them up. They're worthless.

⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

~ JOHN 15:6-7

The only things that we can do that have any matter are the things that God does inside of us. And quite truthfully here's the deal, this is what He says clearly: The only way we will stay alive is to be attached to the vine. We cannot for a moment be attached to the vine, Jesus, for an hour a day then detach and go

and do our own thing and think that we're going to get our source, our power, our strength and hope from the vine. You can't have just a few minutes of quiet time and a little prayer, detach, and go out and live.



You go home and that live flower on the countertop, clip off that flower, come back this afternoon, try taping it back on and see how it goes. It has to stay on there to stay alive, so we're going to talk about how to have this life when you can't just come and go. How in the world are we going to stay attached to that vine? We are gonna talk about that a little bit here today. For the flower to remain a blooming productive beautiful flower, or fruit, to be removed from the vine is unconscionable. You can't think of that, it just makes no sense. You just see it, all you have to do, like I said, is clip it off.



I spoke with someone this week and he said to me, he says, “Yeah, I’m taking a break from God right now.” Now I guess he was hoping I’d say, “Oh, cool dude. I understand, sometimes you just need a break from God.” Now why would he take a break from God? Well, he was quick to tell me he was irritated at some stuff that happened in his life and he was hurting over that and he was just angry at God and blamed God on it. And some of God's people were part of it and so he was just done, but he knew better but he wasn't gonna do it. You think of the gardener, God the Father, trimming that bush and going, “You can't trim me. I'm out. I'm done. Well, I'll be back.” No, it doesn't work that way. And here's what we need to realize, we can't attach to Jesus on Sunday morning and say that does the trick. And that's why I started out the message way I did. Is that just a Sunday song? “I just want to be with You” – or is it like, “God, I hope You get it, I'm like cool with You now, and so hopefully I'll get us through till next week.” Or, “Oh, shoot, next week is Super Bowl and we gotta cook prior to that. And well, I'll try to think that's true if I want to—.” What?! But – for many it's just like, “We'll connect when we get here.”

Some are really committed because oftentimes we'll say hey, you know, we'd love for you to, you know, sit in here and be a part of the service one hour but also serve an hour,” and you're like rocking and you're serving an hour, so you're connected to the vine here and you're connected to the vine here. And some of you actually are getting up and reading your Bible or taking some time before you go to bed or sometime, so you're connected to the vine here and you're connected to the vine here and you're connected vine here and you're like, “Man, I'm golden.” We've been talking about next steps and we've

been talking about growth. Maybe you've taken your next step and you're like, "Okay, attached here," and now you're off. "But wait until I get my next step and then I'll attach there." As opposed to somehow staying attached to the vine at all times.

I read this statement this week and I thought, *Oh, that works*. It says frequency is the key to growth.

And I think in many cases that makes sense. You think about practicing and you think about practicing an instrument or practicing a sport and the more often that you do it the better you get at it. And so frequency is the key to growth. Well, as I got to thinking about this that breaks down all over the place

here. If we're gonna be attached to the vine, it isn't how frequently I can show up at the vine. So what if you came every night for something here. I bet you we could figure out how to pull that off. Is that it? Or what if we had an early morning thing, would that be it? What if we had something right after lunch, would that be it? He's talking here not about frequency, so now we do it three times a day or prayers five times a day, but He's talking about what I believe Jesus says when He's talking about being attached to the vine, He's talking about *constancy* is the key to growth because the moment you step back from the vine and you take your hands off the

vine you cut yourself off the vine, you're dead, you're done. If you're constantly attached to the vine, you're blooming. I mean, it's just written all over you. Why? Because Jesus' power is flowing through you; the life of Jesus is shining through you. If this thing works, if this thing – Bible – if God's ways are right, then something ought to be radically different for a person that's attached to the vine. So much so that some people are just looking at you, "What – I'm sorry, but there's something different about you, what is that?"

Galatians 2:20 says this:

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

~ GALATIANS 2:20

It's no longer I that lives, but Christ lives in me. Wouldn't that be the right answer? It has to be the right answer. He says, "I am the true vine," and when you are in Me and I am in you, you are attached to the vine. That's what He says here in these verses. Christ in me – that's the answer. No longer I that lives, but Christ lives in me. Can you say Christ lives in me? Does He? Okay. Some of us are thinking that through a little bit right now. Hey, listen, you're not doing well today? I get it, a whole bunch of us in this room aren't doing well today. And you're feeling even a little bit convicted right now because you're like yeah, I start coming on and off the vine. I come and I swing on it for a while and I feel a little bit better, it's euphoric.

Have you ever swung on a vine? I mean it is a powerful – it is a cool moment. But then I let go and I go do my own thing for a while and I come back and I grab onto that vine. Here's what I'm going to tell you: If you're not doing well today, grab onto the vine, let the source and the power in your life be Jesus Christ and Jesus alone, and stop letting go of it. I'm gonna tell you today and I'm gonna encourage you today that what He's saying in this text is never let go of the vine.



How are you gonna figure out your life so that you're always living Jesus? So that He is at the center of your life? Listen to these words in verse 8:

⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I 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."

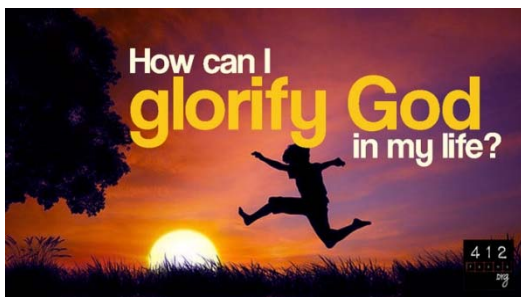
~ JOHN 15:8-10

That flower on that plant, and I'm using a plant as an illustration now just so because you and I can picture that more than a grapevine, I've seen them but I'm just not like a connoisseur of grapevines, that flower on that plant only stays a blooming flower as long as it stays attached to the plant. When it drops off you see it quickly wilting and dying. First Corinthians 10:31 says:

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

~ I CORINTHIANS 10:31

Here is the message: Somehow – you and I – are going to have to figure out how not to categorize our lives or compartmentalize our lives so that we come and grab onto the vine and let go, but that the vine is at the center of our lives and the glorifying of God is a constant, never-ending thing in our lives. You see, when we glorify God we're doing what we were called to do. We're doing what we were created to do; God created us to glorify Him. Now when we're glorifying ourselves or we're living to glorify our kids or we're living to glorify our work, we're not doing what we're created to do. Now let me clarify something here. So oftentimes when this gets said here's what I think, it's like, *Okay, I don't know what to do with this. God gave me kids to raise and I'm supposed to pour my life into them and if I didn't pour my life into them they'd be in my face about that. Now they're telling me that because I'm pouring my life into them that I'm glorifying them and I'm glorifying myself and I want it to be all about me, and I want to be—do you follow what I'm saying? And so like how can I glorify God through my kids, or how can I glorify God through my job?*



Here's the answer to that: Anything that replaces God in your life is an idol, so the moment that our kids have become our god or for that matter, you know, our house becomes our god because we're just constantly fixing it or cleaning it or building onto it or adding and making it better or whatever, you know, or whatever is our focus or our job is our god because we're just – it's all about just getting to that next level. When our job becomes our god then it has nothing to do with being connected to the vine. But think of it in a different way

here. Our kids are not an idol when we are with them and the whole time we're with them we're putting God at the center of that relationship, and we're praying with them, we're teaching them spiritual things, we're modeling spiritual godly character, we pray together.

You can use the same thing with your spouse. There's probably some people here who have, you know, made their spouse their god, has put their spouse as a replacement to God. The flip side of that is no, Jesus is at the center of your marriage relationship. It's what you talk about, you pray through things together, you seek God together, you want to know God's will in your life, and your whole life is lived to bring glory to God. Your possessions, your house, your car, if you have those things they're great,

they're a part of your life, but they're meant to give back to God, they're meant to bring glory to God, so you use them for the good of pleasing God and glorifying God with those things. So our goal is to do what we were made to do; that everything that's God's given us. First Corinthians 10:31, whether eat or drink, whatever we do, it's all done to bring glory to God.

And so one of the things I just throw out to you, last week we used the three words Come Grow Serve, and so we talked about coming to Jesus. We talked about coming here to the church together and serving together. We talked about coming here and growing together. And one of the problems I had is this inner conversation that was going on in my head, I might even have said it, but what I was struggling with is that when I say to you, "Come," sometimes what it sounds like is: Here's how you'll grow—if you'll come, show up here at Calvary and get involved. Here's how you'll serve—come here and jump into our Kidz ministry. Come out here and greet and that's how you serve. And all of a sudden in my mind I was having this tension because what I wanted to explain to us is that in our lives we need to come to Jesus.



It's not about coming to Calvary, it's not about this organization, it's not about making this organization grow, it's not trying to bring glory to this organization. What good is that? But when the church—the saved people, that's the church—God's children get together, we have a way of doing things together that really stimulate each other to go further faster with Jesus. And that's why coming here this morning you hear someone singing next to you, you came in and you just weren't there and you're sort of going along with it, and all of a sudden, you know, you start hearing a bunch of people around you, all of a sudden it starts changing your own heart and mind. You go out here and you just see a bunch of people serving, I mean, it's just so cool to see people coming up to the tables, cleaning up the napkins and bagel mess and stickiness behind you, and you think, *Why are they doing that?* You know, you know they're not paid. You know they just got out of bed early and came here and did that early this morning, and you realize, *Wait a minute, they're doing that to serve because they love Jesus and they love me and they want to make this a place where I can hear Jesus more comfortably.* And all of a sudden you go, *You know, I probably ought to be doing that.* And because we're stimulating each other to love and good deeds we move forward in our faith.

I talked to someone this week that's working with a group of junior high girls up in our student ministry, went on the retreat last week and she's like, "This is the thing, I mean, all I do is think about how to help them and help them grow and be there for them, help make them make great decisions," but she goes, "I'm making better decisions as a result of being a part of this. I'm growing. This has challenged the socks off of me." I was walking through the reception this week and I don't know how many women were up there but some were sitting on the chairs and the couches and some were just sitting on the floor and I was trying to not interrupt their meeting, they were having a meeting about the retreat that was coming up, I overheard that, but I went through the door and I heard them just talking about, you know, *How can we help the ladies really understand* – I mean, it was all about how they can help other ladies grow. And so the reason why we gather is because we are convinced that God has put us together as the body of Christ to be a part of something bigger than ourselves and to help us as a group. As a group we can move forward in powerful, powerful ways.

And so here's the deal, we're all glorifying God together. That's what we're trying to do in here, not glorifying myself, but that's why a lot of the people you work with, a lot of people that you're neighbors with, people that you run across, some family members you have, they're not real happy. So there was

this thought at one point, like, [*counts these off on his fingers*] if they had all the right clothing to wear, and they had that and they weren't happy. Live in the right place and they finally lived in the right place and had the right job but that didn't bring them happiness. And, you know, went on the right vacations to the right places and that didn't bring happiness. And knew the right people, were connected to the right people and that didn't bring happiness. But all along those things were promised that they would bring happiness but they still feel so disconnected and so empty. And they'll even sometimes use those words, *Uh, I just don't feel connected*, and they think that somehow that finding this connectedness with who they really are might get there, but as you've observed it never did. And what we learn here and what we're reminded of is if I want life, I'm going to have to be connected to the vine, to Jesus. And see, the bottom line is the more that we try to glorify ourselves the less satisfied we are and more miserable we are.

You know, you want to meet Lee? You know, Lee is a sinner and I'm just not who I should be. And here's what normally happens in these moments it's like, "Oh, don't put yourself down," because that's what that's all society says, you know, "Like yourself, believe in yourself, know yourself, you'll feel better, come on. Take a deep breath, you can do it, you're a lot better than you think you are." No, no, no, I'm a sinner, the Bible tells me. But I'm a sinner saved by Jesus Christ and when I grab onto that vine and hold onto that vine I have something that no one and nothing else can give me of the power Jesus. If you see me on a day where you're like, "Man, he's living," it's only because I'm attached to the vine. You see me on a day where it's stinking, it's not going well, it's because I've just detached from the vine.



And again, I'll repeat it again, that's why you get further faster in groups. It's why we continually push groups. In fact, Jesus says when we bear this kind of fruit and we start looking like Jesus because we're attached to the vine, He says in that you prove you're my disciples. And when I try to explain what disciples are I use the word *follower* – being a disciple is being a follower of Jesus. When we're following Jesus we're trying to do things Jesus' way and live like Jesus. I use the word *obey*, this text uses the word *obey*, because we know that God's

way is the best way so when we follow that way we're living in God's way. You know our groups, they're just discipleship.

Next week you have an opportunity, we just, we hope that all of you jump into a group. Again, because you can get further faster together in a group, and we'd love to see you all jump into a group. So next week you're gonna have some opportunity to see all of our different groups so you're gonna see signs, categories over many of the different groups. You're gonna see care groups, you're gonna see sports groups, you're gonna see groups that follow the sermon, you're gonna see women's groups, you're gonna see men's groups, you're gonna see students groups, you're gonna see groups that are like based on activities that people like to do together. And so sometimes we can go, "Oh, well, when we get into a group this group's about our addiction or about our problem" – I would say no-no-no-no. Maybe we all have that similar thing that we're all dealing with, maybe we're all dealing with grief together, maybe we're dealing with loss together, maybe we all just like riding bikes together or running together. But the reality is when we all get together we're all trying to figure out how to follow Jesus together, how to obey Jesus together more because we were drawn together by this specific thing together, we're able to grow and follow Jesus more. That is discipleship.

When we have this mindset in the church where discipleship is a certain type of a group, I would tell you that all of our groups are discipleship. We are as a group, our big group, we're trying to figure out how to follow Jesus more, how to obey Jesus more, and we keep on encouraging each other to do it. And as the other one does it we grow and we keep on rising because that's what happens in these groups.

Now some of you been in a group you hated and it was because of one person in that group. Have any of you been in that group, when that one person caused you to jump out and you're like, "I hate this group because they just drive me nuts." What happens? They talk all the time, they know everything, they're loud, they're obnoxious, they're so smart and they want to be heard constantly. What's the deal is their trusting in themselves. It's all about them and they're not attached to the vine. But when we get in a group of people and we challenge each other, become attached to the vine, we become about Jesus.

Now here's what I know and this is how we started. There are a whole bunch of us in this room today, I don't know who they are, only God knows who they are, that you came in here today and maybe your words for it would be, *I want to get my God dose for the week*, or *I want to hook my jumper cables up to God today*, or maybe you're trying to push the Holy Spirit vending machine. And when you come here you leave feeling good, you leave feeling pumped up, you get a little bit of hope to get you through the week. I'm just gonna tell you that is just [*he pauses*] – it doesn't work that way. There is no God vending machine. There's no Holy Spirit vending machine.



We don't have jumper cables. And I'm just telling you if you're coming into this room today hoping to get a little bit of emotion and passion and to grab onto Lee a little bit, that is going to last you just about to the time I'm done talking, unless I get really boring pretty soon which I might, or until you walk out that door after the last note of the song of this church. We are not a place where you can just latch onto that and make that happen. The bottom line is you need to be attached to Jesus. He says here in this text you need to abide in Him.



You see, what you don't see here is the fruit struggling, the flower struggling to become more beautiful. Have you ever looked at that flower in the pot on your kitchen island and you see that flower on that beautiful plant? They're going [*he deeply inhales and exhales*], and you go, "Oh, now it's more beautiful." No, it's just abiding in the vine and the vine is providing all those nutrients to make it beautiful, to make it the way God wants it to look.

Here's what I'm just gonna throw out to each of you: Some of you put a lot of pressure on yourselves and you're discouraged right now. You're at your limit right now. You're exhausted right now. You're depressed right now. You're anxious right now – because there's just one more thing that you have to do and one more way in which you need to perform. And this text tells us to abide means to come and just grab onto Jesus and make Him the center of your life. So many of us are trying to find value in our work, trying to perform in our daily lives, and Jesus says this and I think you need to hear it, it's how we began our message last week, He says I love you, I created you, I made you. You're fearfully and wonderfully made. I love you, I love you, I love you. I've forgiven you, and – grab onto Me. I'll give you the power, I'll give you the source, and I will produce the fruit in you. I will make beautiful fruit from you and awesome things are going to happen, just grab on and stay connected.

I'm gonna read one more verse and quit, verse 11 says this:

11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

~ JOHN 15:11

Everyone's looking for happiness. That photo, that moment. Joy is something that God creates within you that wells up, that doesn't leave, that creates that fruit that everyone says, and what is that they ask and you respond, "It's no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me."

So let me end with a question that I'd like you to take from here. A question that maybe you want to think of in your own head and come up with the answer to; maybe it's a question that you want to talk about in your groups, maybe you just want to chat about at lunch. If this were true, if I could make Jesus the center of my life all the time where everything I was doing—*everything* I was doing—whether I was coming to church, whether I was in a group, whether it's driving down the road, whether I was eating lunch and dinner, whether I was in a contentious business meeting tomorrow, whether we're sitting in a football game, everything I do is meant to bring glory to God, where I'm trying to put Him at the center of it—what would that look like? What would it look like in my marriage if I was holding onto the vine?

My life would be starting to look a lot more like Jesus, or what do the Scripture say? It said that He loved the church, He loved His bride so much that He gave His life for her [SEE EPHESIANS 5:25]. It changes the way I treat my wife. It changes the conversations we have. We start thinking about what He's done for us and how He's provided it. It changes the worry that we have among each other and the fears that we have because we know He got us here, He'll get us there, He'll get us through this. What about our parenting? Boy, we'd start to be teaching our children to grab onto that vine. When they fell and hurt their knee and it started bleeding, we'd be praying about those things together. When we're walking through life we'd be doing like Deuteronomy says, we would just be teaching about God in everything that we do; just constantly bringing Him into the conversation.

I hear a lot of people are like, "Is there a book on that? I don't know what to say." I get it, but when all of a sudden it's just like He becomes our center, it isn't about what you say it's about continuing to bringing Him in on everything. It's about teaching them the stories of Bible, praying with them, trying to answer the questions of life. I remember those questions, they were the hardest questions I was ever asked in my life, the questions a two-year-old asked or a four-year-old or whatever they were by the time they were asking. I'm like, "That stumps me." I'd be turning to my wife, "What's the answer to that question?" and she'd lead them to Jesus.

What about at work? When all of a sudden we're operating on the principles of Scripture and integrity and honesty, when we're not fearful and we're not overly anxious because we're just trusting in Him and we know He's got this even though that there's something big and bad coming down, there always is, but we're just going, "He's got it. He got me to be at this point, if this all falls apart, He's got the next step." Putting our trust in Him because we're just constantly grabbing on Him, the vine.

I'll invite you to put your, just, hands around Him right now and grab onto Him, just keep on making Him the center of your life, that you're glorifying Him with everything you say and do today. Let me pray for you.

Jesus,

There are people in this room trying to figure out how to do that and I pray that You'll help them. I pray that some people here that have never grabbed onto You, never saw your love, never saw your forgiveness, right now would ask You for forgiveness, would ask You to come into their life and save them from their sins.

WE'RE HAPPIEST WHEN WE GLORIFY GOD

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And many of us in this room that we grabbed on one day but a long time ago, we're just sort of barely touching once in a while. Jesus, we need your help right now. We want it to all be all about You. We want everything to be everything Jesus. We want You to be first in our lives. And Jesus, we ask for forgiveness. We've struggled with this and today I just pray that You would just help us grab onto that vine and stay on this vine here.

Help us encourage each other. Help us – the guys coming to this thing next Saturday and the women coming to the retreat, not because they come to one more event but just jumping into a group or whatever it may be to be around a group of people, encourage us to do that. Help us to make some decisions along that line so we can be in with You completely, but not just here – every day, every hour with You, Jesus.

It's in your Name we pray. Amen.

Listen, um, as you think about what you're gonna give right now in your tithes and offerings, just remember He provided it all. It's all His. He gave you everything you have, He's going to give you everything you have in the future. Because the biggest fear right now when you give is that, “Yikes! I don't know if I'll have enough. I don't know if I'll have enough left over. I don't know if I'll be able to make everything.” There's so many of us here give the first 10% back to God and we've just learned that you just can't out-give Him. It's just like you keep on giving and He keeps on blessing more. I've experienced that in my life. My wife and I give every time we get paid, we give our gifts back to God because we just—we've seen that blessing and we love Him and we want His work to go forward because He's first, we're grabbing on first in our lives.

By the way, in the seatbacks in front of you is a card and if you see that card there, there's opportunity. There's actually an envelope there if you want to put your tithe in that envelope, that's great. But there's also a SAY YES TO JESUS card. There's a serving card, a way to get involved; a way to get connected if it's your first time here. You can just pop those in the bucket as it goes around. If you don't get a chance to get it filled out in time you can just give it to one of us afterwards.

As we go into this next song as you give, grab onto Jesus' heart. Make that commitment even as we're leaving here today. They're gonna pass the buckets right now.

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END NOTES

^A Psalm 80:3-19

