

**This manuscript is a Summary, for a full expression of this sermon, please download the audio file.**

John 15:1-17 (NLT)

Illustration- Chocolate Game,

Put the bar of chocolate on the plate with the knives and forks nearby and sit the children around it in a circle. Throw the pile of dressing up clothes into the circle. Give one child the dice. Children take it in turns to roll the dice on the floor in front of them, passing them around the circle to their left. If a child rolls a double, they leap into the center of the circle, put on the dressing up clothes, and start to unwrap, then eat, the bar of chocolate - but only using the knife and fork. That child keeps going until another child rolls a double, at which point they must co-operate in handing over the dressing up clothes so that the next child gets a turn.

This is a fun game, but a hard way to live. If every time you needed to get some food, you had to go through this procedure then you could do it, but wouldn't it be easier if one person could unwrap the chocolate bar and simply give it to the others!

Point- In the times of before Jesus death and resurrection on the cross, the people of God were forced to relate to God through strict measures of the law. People needed to put on the law to face God, yet Jesus came to "fill the law full", to "fulfil" the law. Instead Jesus teaches that now we need to abide in the promise and sacrifice of Jesus and nothing else.

Jesus uses the imagery of vines and branches to show this.

One commentator says this about the symbolism in the Old Testament (Jewish Scriptures)

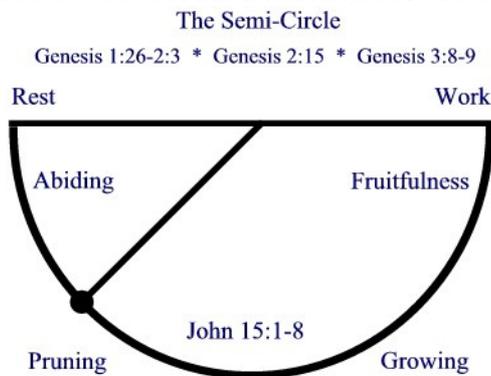
**The olive tree, fig tree and the vine are used to illustrate the religious, national and spiritual privileges afforded by God to the nation of Israel...** God desired to be their king. God,

therefore, gave Israel the privilege to worship Him through prescribed religious relationship (pictured in the Olive Tree). God gave them the privilege of being a nation in His sight (pictured in the Fig Tree). And, finally, He gave them the privilege of having a personal relationship with Him (pictured in the Vine).

Jesus picks up on this imagery to use it to communicate to his disciples the type of relationship he is expecting.

### "Work from Rest"

Trusting in him will produce fruit which will be "discernable in it's actions" as ones that Christ would make.



Jesus identity, and our identity in relation to him is paramount in understanding who we are in this relationship, we are "Friends of the King."

Most people in the world live in a rhythm where we work and then we rest (ie rest from work). However, the biblical pattern (flowing from teaching of about Sabbath) is that we work from rest and that we bear fruit from abiding. This can be seen in:

- Genesis 1-2 where humans were created on the 6th day and by implication, the first thing they did was rest with God on the seventh day.

- In Psalm 23 we lie down in green pastures before walking and facing our enemies.
- In John 15 Jesus teaches that if we abide in Him THEN we will bear much fruit.
- Interestingly the Jewish day begins in the evening - in other words the first thing we do every day is rest/sleep and trust God to run the world while our eyes are closed.

The semi-circle and the pendulum remind us to live in this rhythm of rest and work, abiding and fruitfulness, growth and pruning, at different levels of life - daily, weekly, seasonally, and annually

- An essential component of redemption is that a Christian should be healthy, and this means allowing the Holy Spirit to set the pace of life.
- He is the only one who can enable us to establish a healthy balance between work and rest on a daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal basis.
- The pace of modern life tends to blur our perspective, especially when it comes to managing our time according to the overall plan which God has for our lives.
- Most people are caught up with what they do in life rather than who they are, and the pressure to strive towards that end is usually fairly high. There is no argument against the principle that we are created to do things but we need to remember that our identity comes from our covenant relationship with God and not what we do.

### **A few things about vines.**

"The vines I saw in the Holy Land were large and strong, and it was next to impossible for anyone to break off a mature branch *without injuring the vine itself.*"-Warren W. Wiersbe

"The vinedresser prunes the branches in two ways: he cuts away dead wood that can breed disease and insects, and he cuts away

living tissue so that the life of the vine will not be so dissipated that the quality of the crop will be jeopardized. In fact, the vinedresser will even cut away whole bunches of grapes so that the rest of the crop will be of higher quality. God wants both quantity and quality.

This pruning process is the most important part of the whole enterprise, and the people who do it must be carefully trained or they can destroy an entire crop. Some vineyards invest two or three years in training the “pruners” so they know where to cut, how much to cut, and even at what angle to make the cut.”-

Warren W. Wiersbe

God doesn't desire to cut people off, but sometimes this becomes a necessity for the health of the vine.

"Our union with Christ is a *living* union, so we may bear fruit; a *loving* union, so that we may enjoy Him; and a *lasting* union, so that we need not be afraid. Many of the images of Christ and the believer given in Scripture emphasize this important concept of *union and communion*: the body and its members (1 Cor. 12), the bride and the Bridegroom (Eph. 5:25–33), the sheep and the Shepherd (John 10). A member of the body cut off from the body would die. The marriage creates the union, but it takes daily love and devotion to maintain the communion. The shepherd brings the sheep into the flock, but the sheep must follow the shepherd in order to have protection and provision.”- Warren W. Wiersbe

"Many Christians pray that God will make them more fruitful, but they do not enjoy the pruning process that follows!”- Warren W. Wiersbe

God proving a way to rest is a blessing not a cure. Sometimes, ministries need to close, gifts need to stop being used. Relationships need to wind down. Jobs need to be given away. Some dreams need to be handed over to Christ, so we can enter a period of rest. The pruning of these parts of our life can be painful, but the wise person accepts them with the hope of promise.

"What does it mean to “abide”? It means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us to produce fruit. This certainly involves the Word of God and the confession of sin so that nothing hinders our communion with Him (John 15:3). It also involves obeying Him because we love Him (John 15:9–10).

The believer who is abiding in Christ has his prayers answered (John 15:7) and experiences a deepening love for Christ and for other believers (John 15:9, 12–13). He also experiences joy (John 15:11).

It is not automatic. Abiding in Christ demands worship, meditation on God’s Word, prayer, sacrifice, and service—but what a joyful experience it is!”-Warren W. Wiersbe

"Sometimes He cuts away the dead wood that might cause trouble; but often He cuts off the living tissue that is robbing you of spiritual vigor. Pruning does not simply mean spiritual surgery that removes what is bad. It can also mean cutting away the good and the better so that we might enjoy the best. Yes, pruning hurts, but it also helps. We may not enjoy it, but we need it.”- Warren W. Wiersbe(Books, 1996), 356.

Pruning is- Good, Better and Best.

If we understand that in God’s plans he wants the best for us as a community (and by default this means best for us as an individual), then we can accept and surrender not just bad things, but also good things, to be replaced not just by better things, but the best thing!

Then God produces- Fruit

"*The fruit.* The word *results* is often heard in conversations among Christian workers, but this is not actually a Bible concept. A machine can produce results, and so can a robot, but it takes a *living organism* to produce fruit. It takes time and cultivation to produce fruit; **a good crop does not come overnight.**

We must remember that the branches do not eat the fruit: others do. We are not producing fruit to please ourselves but to serve others. We should be the kind of people who “feed” others by our

words and our works. “The lips of the righteous feed many” (Prov. 10:21).” - Warren W. Wiersbe

Point- "We are exactly the place we desire to be with God"

*"Because we are branches, we can draw life from Jesus the Vine!*  
What we cannot do by ourselves, Jesus can accomplish in us!  
The fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—all these are possible now. As we live in Him, we will become fruitful. As we remain in Jesus, we will become the kind of people who can make the new community a reality here on earth.”- Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards

"Our Lord had spoken about peace (John 14:27); now He mentions love and joy (John 15:9–11). Love, joy, and peace are the first three “fruit of the Spirit” named in Galatians 5:22–23. Our abiding in Christ certainly ought to produce His love, joy, and peace in our hearts.”-Warren W. Wiersbe

If we desire lasting spiritual significance, this is fruit, then we need to surrender to the pruning process, working from rest, and trusting in the hope of future growth with fruit for all to be blessed.