

## The True Vine

JOHN 15:1-16:4

- ❖ The vine is often used in the OT to represent Israel (e.g. Ps 80:8, 14, Jer 2:21, 6:9, 8:13, Ezek 15:1-8, 17, etc.), as is the vineyard (Is 3:14, 5:1-17, Jer 2:10). Occasionally the vine is used to refer not only to Israel but to its king, as in Ps 80:8-19 (esp. 17) and Ezek 17:1-21. Most of these references include a theme of judgment against Israel. The image is almost always associated with the contrast between God's people and his ideal for them.
1. Read Isaiah 5:1-7. This passage is an oracle against Judah prior to the fall of the Northern kingdom of Israel. What does the vineyard represent? What is the prophet's message for Judah? What makes the vineyard a good symbol or allegory for this?

*Read John 15:1-17*

- ❖ The word translated *abide* (Gr. *menein*) is sometimes also translated *remain*. (Remember that the place where one *abides* is one's *abode*.) It is used to describe the immutable or abiding character of God and, in NT times, of his Messiah (12:34), who abides forever (8:35), gives us food that abides for eternal life (6:27), and enables us to produce fruit that abides (15:16).
2. In light of the OT imagery of the vine, what does it mean for Jesus to be the true vine? What does it mean for his disciples to be part of him? How does Jesus as Prophet differ from Isaiah in his message?
  3. In verse 15:3, the word translated "cleansed" (NRSV) or "clean" (NIV) can also be translated "pruned". In the context of the prophetic vine and vineyard allegory, what does it mean for the disciples to be pruned? How did Jesus' word accomplish this? (Cf. also Rev. 2-3.)
  4. In v. 11's "I have told you all this", what does Jesus mean by "all this"? What was the context of this passage? In this context, how would Jesus' words to his disciples have affected them?
  5. Jesus says that his disciples *abide* in him by obeying his commands (10), and then commands them to love one another (12). He also says that his disciples will bear fruit *only* by abiding in him (19, 30). Evaluate this assertion:

You can "take the temperature" of the spiritual lives of individuals in a Christian community by watching how well its members show love to one another.

6. In ancient times the church distinguished itself by remarkable acts of mercy, such as staying behind (when others fled plague or pestilence) and caring for the sick; or by adopting abandoned female babies. In modern times, the Church in America, independent of denomination, is notable sociologically for its contributions to the poor. What examples have you seen of the Body of Christ's abiding love?

*Read John 15:18-6:4*

7. Jesus calls his disciples his friends, rather than servants (14-15). Paul, in contrast, refers to himself as Jesus' servant (Gr. *doulos*, e.g. Rom 1:1, Eph 3:7, Col 1:23, etc.). Indeed, Jesus' teaching here follows closely on the heels of his serving the disciples by washing their feet. Why does Jesus choose this point to call his disciples *friends*, and how does this differ from his relationship with Paul? How or when is it better to say "What a friend I have in Jesus" rather than (following 13:14-6), "What a master I have in Jesus"?