

# Connected to the Vine

Laura Urista

**H**ave you ever been reading a familiar scripture and suddenly it's as if someone flips on the proverbial light switch? I experienced one of those "Aha!" moments recently when reading John 15:1-12. I thought to myself, "Hey wait a minute, did it **always** say that?" So I checked several translations just to make sure! In John 15:1-12, Jesus is talking to his disciples about "The Vine and the Branches."

<sup>1</sup> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> "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. <sup>6</sup> If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

<sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

I always thought this passage was mainly about us doing good works and keeping the commandments. But now that I read it with the "light on," I can see it's really about us abiding (living/hanging out) in Jesus' love!

The fruit we will naturally bear by abiding/remaining in his love is not produced because of our own human efforts. It's the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23—*love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*—the embodiment of **God's agape love**.



In his book *In My Father's Vineyard*, Wayne Jacobsen says, "The call to fruitfulness and the command to love one another are one and the same. *By this all men will know that*

*you are my disciples, if you love one another*' (John 13:35). The fruit the Father desires is the fruit of love. He wants to see his character filling our lives, spilling out like grape bunches on an overloaded vine.

When we love the way God loves, we are bearing the fruit of his kingdom.... The fruit of the Spirit is not what we can make ourselves do for a moment, but what God makes us to be for a lifetime" (p. 60, emphasis mine).

A few years ago, I experienced another incredible "Aha!" moment during a break at a women's retreat. I was passionately praying, "Lord, what do I need to do?" I was focused on trying to do my own good works.

But a thought came into my mind, opposite to what I'd been focused on—like the old Monty Python TV show intro, "And now for something completely different!"

The thought (answer) that came to mind was, "Let **ME** live in you and love through you!" In other words, "Set your mind on things above." *Stop focusing on what you can do and focus on allowing Christ to live in you and love through you.*

Since then I've been daily praying "Lord, please live in me and love through me." It takes less than five seconds, but that prayer has drastically changed my life.

Since I started asking Jesus to live in me and love through me, I have begun to see others by "looking through the eyes of love."

If you're like me and for years *tried* to "bear fruit" (do good works) by your own effort, struggling and failing time after time, why not start asking Jesus to live in you and love through you? □

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