

## Talks – Connection – myfishbites.com

### John 15 – The Bible (MSG version)

“I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken. “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.” I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.”

Jesus introduces us to a few things in John 15 and they are all things we can learn from in our lives. But mainly it’s about connection.

### Matthias Media – ‘One Forever’ (Rory Shiner) Video

Direct Link to Matthias Media – ‘One Forever’ – <https://youtu.be/Y7AKATss18s> (checked May 2019)

## Connection

God is the real vine (MSG). There are a number of things that help people to grow and develop and many of those are good but God is the true vine. The best thing to help you grow is the true vine. Elsewhere in the Bible (eg Psalm 1) we read all about trees planted by living waters giving their fruit in season, their leaves not withering and whatever that person does succeeding. This is the picture of someone who is attached to the true vine – the best source of nourishment.

This is all about connection. Jesus is the vine but he himself is connected to the Father who is the one that tends for and helps the vine grow. So there is an order of divine connection here. The Father is at the top and he looks after the vine. Jesus is the vine. Then we as followers of Jesus are the branches or the grapes on the vine. We need this connection so our first role in life is to stay connected.

A vine grows up and does what it can to maximize its exposure to the sun. We should be like that – growing up and maximizing our connection, light, nourishment and watering to the son, Jesus.

The nutrients (food) goes up the vine and then to the branches, which is where the food grows – the fruit – the grapes. But these branches only bear fruit when they’re connected to the vine and the grapes only grow if they’re connected to the branches. This is what

Jesus says later in John 15. We can do nothing (that's worthwhile or lasting) except in connection to him.

If you've ever been in a place needing good data or WiFi connection and you can't get it, then you cannot connect to the internet. If we imagine God as the internet (except an all-knowing one), when that data signal is lost or that connection breaks, this is what it's like when we're not connected to God.

In climbing, when someone is climbing or belaying they are attached to each other. There shouldn't be a time when they are not connected together. No connection can mean big problems and cause someone to fall.

## The Vine is Solid

If I come to a climbing analogy, there are a wide variety of ropes and pieces of equipment that you can use to keep you safe. A rope should be in condition and ready to use. Any wear and tear or faults then we'd have to think very hard about using it. A thin rope wouldn't take much weight either and of course a drop of 50m wouldn't be very good with a 40m rope...

But God is nothing like this. He is our rock, our anchor and is absolutely sure.

A rope is a group of yarns, plies, fibres or strands that are twisted or braided together into a larger and stronger form ([from Wikipedia](#)). This is a picture of the body of Christ who should be wound together and connected so that together they make up the body of Christ here on earth. In order to do that we have to be obedient, follow God, find our place, play our part, have integrity etc. The good news is that we don't have to follow rules to do this – we simply have to allow ourselves to be changed on the inside. We play our part and God plays his part.

## God moves the vines to where they're best placed

In the Greek the phrase 'take away' can mean remove but it also means 'raise up' or 'lift up'. If you want the vine to bear good fruit, it's no use if it's facing downwards onto the floor and can't get any sun or gets saturated! At times God also helps us up directly (I cried out to the Lord and he answered me... And he lifted me from the pit onto a solid rock) etc. God helps us up when we can't help ourselves up. God will do this in different ways.

I've been re-directed in life through bad circumstances, through a job finishing, or a feeling it's time to move on. Or when a new opportunity comes up. Other times God withdraws friends, finances or other things to draw us closer to him. Or God does extraordinary things in or through us. All these can be signs of God's directing. Of course God's Word is the best – Psalm 119 says 'lead me according to your word'.

And there are times where God moves us. God asked Abraham to go to a country he didn't know. Paul tried to get into part of what is now Turkey but couldn't. But later God opened the door to go in. Maybe God is in a time of preparing you to move. This is all part of God taking away from one place and placing you somewhere else or with a slight shift of focus. Or a total focus!

# You're pruned if you do and you're pruned if you don't

Joyce Meyer makes the point that you're pruned if you do and you're pruned if you don't. In the Greek, the word actually means 'purge' or 'purified' – making clean by removing undesirable elements.

Are there undesirable elements in your life or your world?

There are times where a shrub needs a real prune in order to make way for the next growing season in spring or even for a time 2 years away when the shrub or plant will flourish way more than it did before. This is the kind of thing that God does sometimes. He removed (we don't remove – he does) and then he goes to work to produce an even more fruitful you and I.

Andrew Wommack points out that very often we see this as God bringing drastic pruning like he's got a pair of shears and is just waiting to chop us down. But this isn't quite the picture of how God operates. It may be that he has to do this and sometimes he does. But in verse 2 we also see that Jesus says,

*Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you*

So God shows that he does his work in us best when we live according to his Word and get that Word in us and through us.

Eph 5.26 – to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

2 Tim 3.16 – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness

## The new is always needed

One of the ways we remain fresh is by always being connected to the vine. If we don't stay connected to the vine then the life can drain from us. Do you remember a time when you were a new Christian and there was a passion that doesn't seem to be there now? Sometimes it's life taking its toll. But other times we can get distracted and drift.

I was once doing youth work at a church but if I was really honest, things began to get slightly 'stale'. The church then appointed a new youth worker who came in. He breathed new life into the youth work and God moved me back into schools work. The new was needed.

Sometimes old moves of church rise up, do great things and then seem to subside. But this doesn't always mean they're wrong or dying but we need to see the church constantly release young people into new and fresh things. At a church I know they were trying to keep a children's work going and wanted it to be the same as it had always been. For years, loads of money was invested and they did a good work. But what was really needed was a fresh move of God that was invested into.

Canon Andrew White said that the Christians in Iraq were passionate about God because they had nothing and no-one else. It was God or nothing. Now God won't necessarily do this to us (take everything away) but we can make a choice to go for God in a full way. And actually this is what revival looks like – or 'alival' as we should see it.

**'Alival' is God's people fully dedicated to his purposes!**

It is sometimes good when things come to an end and new things start. But we must always remember that God is also doing things in the existing churches. We should never say 'God is finished with X or Y' etc because God is always at work!

## **So what does a disciple look like?**

A disciple looks like someone who produces fruit. When Jesus wanted to identify the bad fruits in his day (Pharisees), he said 'by their fruit you'll know them' and he meant bad fruit. But the opposite is also true: by your good fruit people will know you and know God.

## **Keep The Connection**

So we need to keep the connection with God so that we can produce God's kind of fruit. If a baby apple said, "I don't like this apple tree, I'm off" then the apple would stop growing into the fullness of what it would be but would just wither and die. So we need to stay connected.

But we also need to know when it's time to move – to 'drop off' a branch and move to another branch. And we need to be ready sometimes for things to die so that 'seeds' can drop off and fall to the ground and then spring up to bring new life.

Staying connected isn't just a good thing – it's essential. So make a commitment to God today and ask him to help you to stay connected!