

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

FEBRUARY 21 - 25, 2022

# EPIPHANY

## JESUS REVEALED

SERMON SERIES

Jan 9 - Feb 27

# MONDAY

## John 15:1-5

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*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener." (John 15:1)*

John presents this last "I AM" statement by Jesus as He declares to His disciples, *"I am the true vine."* Vines were visible everywhere in Judea, whether they were decorating the door to the Holy Place of the temple or they grew close to the great walls of the city. The emphasis here is upon the word *"true."* This does not mean that Jesus is true as opposed to that which is false, but that He is the *one, perfect, essential, and enduring vine* before which all other vines are but shadows. The word is used elsewhere where Jesus is declared to be the *"true light"* (1:9), the *"true bread"* (6:32), and the *"true tabernacle"* (Hebrews 8:2).

But there is a deeper reference which certainly would occupy the minds of the disciples. The vine is the preeminent symbol of Israel. The Old Testament has multiple portraits of Israel as God's choice vine or God's vineyard.

The prophet Isaiah told the story of a man with a vineyard on a fertile hill. After the man cultivated the ground so that nothing would hinder growth, he planted only the best vines. He built a tower in the center of the vineyard so that he could watch for wild animals and intruders. He prepared a wine vat ready for the ripe grapes. Then the man waited.

Rather than producing sweet grapes, the vineyard produced bitter ones. What more could God have done for His people? (Isaiah 5:1-7).

God the Father, the Gardener, sent Jesus the Son, the “*true vine*,” to save His people to produce an abundance of spiritual fruit in our lives. God removes our sin so that we are free to serve Him by grace through faith in Christ. He gives us the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). We have access to the Bible in multiple translations. We have more Christian books, videos, music, radio, podcasts, seminars, and television shows than ever before. We have teachers and pastors to encourage us. Most of all, we have direct access to God through prayer (John 14:6; Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18, 3:12; Hebrews 4:16, 10:19).

Jesus said that to whom much is given, much is expected (Luke 12:48). One day God will hold us accountable for all that He has done for us (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 13:16-17).

## **QUESTIONS**

What will God find growing in your vineyard? How would you describe your relationship with Jesus, the “*true vine*”?

## **PRAYERS FOR GEO AND INDRA GARCIA** (Spanish-speaking ECO Church Plant)

Pray for the spiritual life of Geo and Indra that as church planters, they will be permanently in communion with Jesus and His Word so that their service flows as a result of this communion.

# TUESDAY

## John 15:1-5

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*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in Him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."*  
(John 15:5)

Vineyards are scattered across much of the Middle East, often in places you would not expect. But the vineyards of Israel are remarkable. Some stretch for hundreds of yards across barren and inhospitable land, yet they produce a growing crop of delicious grapes. The practice of viticulture—the cultivation of grapevines for the purpose of producing fruit, juice, and wine—is a vital part of the Israeli economy. Wine has been vital to that part of the world as an alternative to hydration with the often-unclean sources of water. Prior to current methods of water purification, wine was safer to drink than water from standing pools and cisterns.

Throughout this segment of the gospel, John makes an important theological use of "the vine and the branches." This analogy bears an essential insight and understanding of the very nature of the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the believing community. Jesus is preparing His disciples, and us, for what lies ahead of them in the long term. *"I am the vine,"* Jesus said. He then went on to teach about the church and its fruitfulness, not due to any human achievement, but the byproduct of spiritual union with Himself.

Jesus is illustrating the integral relationship we have with Him. We don't have to own a vineyard to understand His analogy. Bunches of fine, healthy grapes grow only if the branch is vitally connected to the vine. In a strong, intimate relationship with Jesus, His power, peace, and purpose flow into us and through us, and the Holy Spirit works wonders to transform us and change others we touch.

This vital connection only comes when we trust and believe that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord. Faith in Jesus Christ means forsaking all other means of saving our souls and believing the gospel (Acts 4:12).

When Jesus said, "*apart from Me you can do nothing*," He did not mean we cannot brush our teeth or such things. Plenty of people do all kinds of things without Christ. He means that we can't do anything of eternal significance apart from His direction and power.

## **QUESTIONS**

How can a person tell if he or she has this kind of vital connection with Christ? How has your relationship with Jesus produced fruit of eternal significance?

## **PRAYERS FOR GEO AND INDRA GARCIA** (Spanish-speaking ECO Church Plant)

Pray for direction and guidance. May the Lord give Gio and Indra the wisdom needed to develop a ministry in Spanish. Pray that by this church planting many Latinos may be reached and accept the gospel.

# WEDNESDAY

## John 15:1-5

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*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener." (John 15:1)*

My husband's grape harvest was abundant this last summer. He has worked for years trimming, removing pests, and feeding his small backyard vineyard. Horticulturalists will tell you that a vine will need to be cultivated for at least three years before being allowed to produce fruit at all. This means that it must be trimmed and allowed to grow, then be trimmed and allowed to grow again, and so on for a considerable length of time. Only after this does the vine become useful for producing fruit.

What needs to be trimmed? In spiritual terms this refers to God's work in removing that which is spiritually detrimental to a given Christian's life. It means to have our bad habits stripped away. It means to have our priorities reordered, our values changed. At times it may mean the removal of friends who are hindering rather than maturing our spiritual growth.

*"Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God." —Oswald Chambers*

There are times in our own lives when we seem to go on for considerable

periods of time undergoing radical treatment at the hands of our heavenly Father (the Gardner, 15:1) and seeing little fruit coming from it. In such times, we may doubt there will ever be fruit. But this is because we cannot see as God sees. We do not have His perspective. Do not get discouraged if that has happened to you. Instead, remember that Jesus promises fruit in due time if we truly remain in Him in a close way.

“No true believer is completely satisfied with his spiritual progress. Under the illuminating, sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, all of us are aware of the areas in our lives that still need to be refined and disciplined for the sake of godliness. In fact, the more we mature, the more capable we are of spotting the sin that still remains in our hearts.” —John MacArthur

## **QUESTIONS**

Who in your life needs to be encouraged to remain in Jesus in a close way? How are you encouraged through times of spiritual pruning and cleaning?

## **PRAYERS FOR GEO AND INDRA GARCIA** (Spanish-speaking ECO Church Plant)

Pray for the team that God is building. Pray that each member whom God brings to the team may receive from the Spirit the wisdom and discernment needed to join what God is doing in the midst of the Latino community as they serve with passion and devotion.



# THURSDAY

**John 15:4-7; 1 John 2: 5-6**

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“There is no condition of life in which we cannot abide in Jesus. We have to learn to abide in Him wherever we are placed.”

—Oswald Chambers

The recent windstorm lashed our area leaving homes without power, felled trees, and an abundance of branches strewn across yards, streets, and parks. These branches no longer “abide” or “remain” with or in the tree; they are dead wood, fit for nothing but to be gathered up for disposal.

To *abide* is “to live, continue, or remain”; so, to abide in Christ is to live in Him or remain in Him. When a person is saved, he or she is described as “*in Christ*” (Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17), held secure in a permanent relationship (John 10:28-29). Therefore, abiding in Christ is not a special level of Christian experience, but the position of all true believers.

Abiding in Christ is taught in 1 John 2:5-6, where it is synonymous with “knowing” Christ. Later in the same chapter, John equates “remaining” in the Father and the Son with having the promise of eternal life (vv. 24-25). Biblically, “abiding in,” “remaining in,” and “knowing” Christ are references to the same thing: salvation.



The phrase “*abiding or remaining in Christ*” pictures an intimate, close relationship, not a superficial acquaintance. Jesus tells His disciples (John 15:4-7) that drawing life from Him is as essential as the branches being united to the vine. Without the vital union with Christ that salvation provides, there can be no life and no productivity. Jesus cautioned His disciples that living apart from Him will produce barrenness. What produces fruit is not activity, but relationship with Him.

If we fail to abide in Christ, we forfeit two great blessings that are promised to us. The first is fruitfulness. Do you desire to produce fruit that blesses both yourself and others around you? The second great blessing is that of answered prayer. Jesus’ own words are so encouraging here: “*If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you*” (v. 7).

## QUESTIONS

How would you describe your relationship with Jesus today?  
How have you experienced the great blessings promised by Jesus to those who “remain” in Him?

## PRAYERS FOR GEO AND INDRA GARCIA (Spanish-speaking ECO Church Plant)

Pray for the people whom God is bringing to be a part of this church. Pray that each person who is hearing God through this ministry in Spanish may believe and grow in their relationship with God. May God open the doors to establish contact with new people and prepare their hearts to receive the message.

# FRIDAY

**John 15:5; Luke 10:41-42**

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“How does the branch bear fruit? Not by incessant effort for sunshine and air, not by vain struggles.... It simply abides in the vine, in silent and undisturbed union, and blossoms, and fruit appear as of spontaneous growth.... How, then, shall a Christian bear fruit? By efforts and struggles to obtain that which is freely given? ... No, there must be a full concentration of the thoughts and affections on Christ, a complete surrender of the whole being to Him, a constant looking to Him for grace.” —Harriet Beecher Stowe

Jesus visited the home of His friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Luke recounts Martha's busyness in the kitchen preparing the meal but Mary sits at the feet of Jesus while He teaches. Martha is distracted, and in frustration she complains to Jesus about Mary not helping her. But Jesus' tender response helps us understand what abiding in Jesus can look like in our life today. Jesus replied, *“My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her”* (Luke 10:41-42).

There are those who feel that they must be constantly laboring for the Lord to meet God's high standards. In our fervor to produce “results” for our Lord (like Martha), we sometimes become so intent on fruit

production that we neglect abiding in Christ (like Mary). We may feel that what Mary was doing—spending quality time with Jesus—takes too much time away from more active pursuits. Yet Jesus said it is not our activity that produces fruit; it is our relationship with Him.

Our devotional life is indispensable; it is the one choice we need to make each day. If spending time with Jesus is not our main priority, then Jesus warns us that anything we do apart from Him will result in nothing—nothing of eternal value that will bring glory to God. Jesus promises that if we remain steadfast in fellowship with Him, a great harvest will be the natural byproduct.

## **QUESTIONS**

How would you describe your devotional life—more like Martha’s or Mary’s? How are you challenged to “abide” more with Jesus this week?

## **PRAYERS FOR GEO AND INDRA GARCIA**

(Spanish-speaking ECO Church Plant)

Pray for finances. May God provide the necessary resources for the development of this church planting and may the Holy Spirit bring new donors to join.

## Sources

- Oswald Chambers' quote on Wednesday's devos taken from his book, *Bringing Sons Into Glory and Making All Things New* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1990); also from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/708698-spiritual-maturity-is-not-reached-by-the-passing-of-the>
- Oswald Chambers' quote on Thursday's devo is taken from his book, *Our Brilliant Heritage* (Grand Rapids: Discover House Publishers, 1998); also from <https://www.inspiringquotes.us/author/9496-oswald-chambers/about-jesus#>.
- John MacArthur's quote was taken from his book, *Final Word: Why We Need the Bible* (Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 2019); also from <https://gracequotes.org/author-quote/john-macarthur/>.
- Harriet Beecher Stowe's quotes can be found at <https://michaelrjones.wordpress.com/2021/04/28/how-does-the-branch-bear-fruit-harriet-beecher-stowe/> and <https://www.quotemaster.org/qea7570f-052307b52cbfe977b1909101d>

