

If Jesus asked you this question, what would you reply?

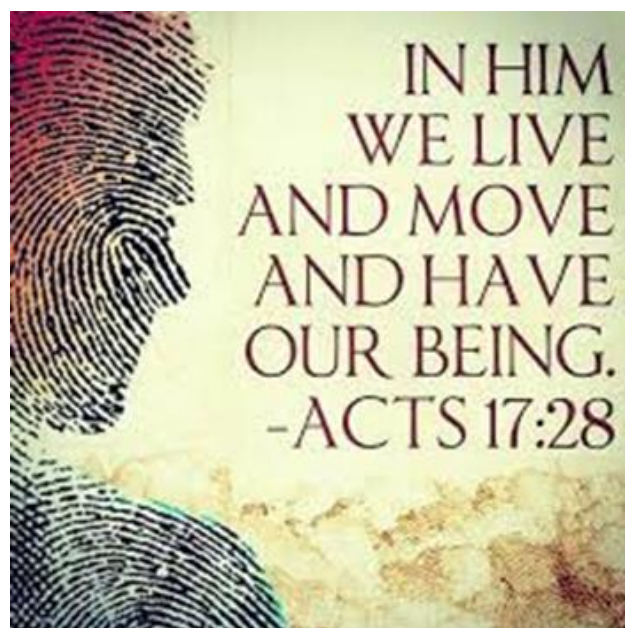
Would it come from your knowledge (head) or the way you live your life (heart)?

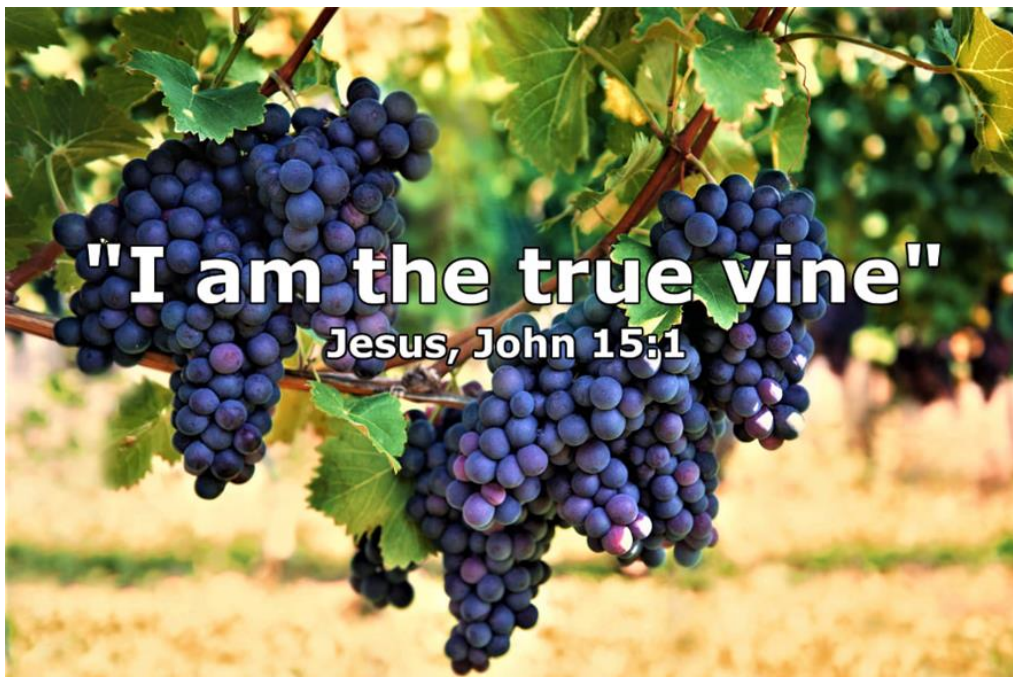
Both are important but often we believe the facts but do not embrace them in our lives. Why is this?

There are seven "I Am" statements made by Jesus in the Gospel of John. This is the last one.

Check out our website for the previous six.

<https://godmanchesterbaptist.org/prayer/>





"I am the true vine"

Jesus, John 15:1

I AM THE TRUE VINE.

Reflection: Jesus connects us and restores our relationship with God so we can have everlasting life and be more like him in character.

Read John 15: 1- 8

Jesus said, "I am the True Vine" to his closest friends gathered around Him. It was only a short time before Judas would betray Him; in fact, Judas had already left to do his infamous deed.

The grapevine was originally used as a symbol of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Grapevines are cultivated to bear good fruit and bless others. Israel failed to remain connected to God and show the world how good it was to live in relationship with God. They turned away from Him and worshipped other idols. They kept God's blessing to themselves refusing to share with others.

Jesus came.... leaving heaven to come to earth 2000 years ago. He is the source of everlasting life for people. When we choose to follow Jesus, we are connected to him just like the branches to the vine. He is the source of life, and we can depend on him, so we no longer need to struggle and strive.

Read Galatians 5: 22-23

God wants to grow good fruit (character) in our lives to make us more and more like Jesus. Our character is the outside evidence of what is inside in our heart.

To look or act like Christ, you must stay connected to HIM. Just as the branches of the grapevine bear good grapes because the branches have good connections to it so the character fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control will only follow a good connection with Jesus.

BEWARE of connecting to false vines and remember that vines produce better fruit when they are pruned but this process can be painful. God is the gardener and when we bear good fruit, we bring Him glory.

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

This is a tool used to help you reflect upon your day to help you better partner with God and be aware of how you are or are not experiencing the reality of God in your life.

Maybe ask yourself some questions such as:

How did I draw strength from Jesus today?

When did I depend on Jesus for what I needed today?

How did I stay connected to Jesus today?

What helped? What hindered me in this?

Talk to Jesus about your desire to connect with him and rest in Him.

BREATH PRAYER

This is a style of prayer you incorporate throughout your day as you breathe.

It is typically 7 – 9 syllables.

This month's breath prayer is "Jesus, apart from you I can do nothing."

Dear God,

When we feel isolated, we can remember that Jesus said,

"I am the True Vine; abide in me."

When we feel powerless, we can find strength in remembering that Jesus said,

"I am the True Vine; abide in me."

When we are tempted to try to go it alone, we can reach out to other believers, remembering that Jesus said,

"I am the True Vine; abide in me."

When life becomes so busy that time with God seems impossible to find, we can regain our focus by turning our hearts and minds to the one who said,

"I am the True Vine; abide in me."

When we stress about the quality of the fruit we are or are not producing, we can relax and trust the source of our life and growth, the One who said,

"I am the True Vine; abide in me."

Lord, show us how to abide in you.

Free us from trying to produce our own fruit and help us to trust that you are at work and will work through us and in us. Prune from our lives the tasks and activities that steal our time and keep us from growing as you want us to grow.

ACTIONS

Make a To-Don't list – We have all heard of To-Do lists. Take a few minutes to look at your average week. What did you discover about how you spend your time? There are activities and things that are part of our lives that take our energy away from what is truly important. The only one who can say no to them - who can and will prune away the things 'sucking' our time - is us. Think about some possible ways to say no to the things that distract you from what is truly important? Make a To-Don't List.

Be Still - Try to sit in silence for 5-10 minutes each day this month. As thoughts come up, don't try to resist them, or retain them. Just let them go. Ask Jesus, "What do you want to say to me?" Jesus is always trying to speak to us, but often we do not take the time to listen. Over time you will notice more of God's presence already alive in you.

Observe a bunch of flowers in water daily - What do you notice? How is this like your life when you are apart from the True Vine? What do the flowers need to stay looking fresh? Spend some time exploring with God what other things you could add or subtract from your life that would foster greater connectivity with Jesus?

Give your mobile phone or internet a break – Amid all the unknowns of today's world chaos, there is one thing we learned during Covid lockdown, how interconnected we all are. We are not created to be self-sufficient and this pressure to be autonomous has given us an epidemic of loneliness, despair, and alienation. We were created to live connected to God and each other. Try 24 hours of isolation from your communication device and see how much we need to be reconnected back to our friends and family. Is this how you feel when you disconnect from God?

Your Relationship with God – looking UP

Spend time reflecting on the image of Jesus being the vine and you being the branches.

- What comes to mind as you ponder Jesus being the vine?
- In which parts of my life am I living totally dependent upon Jesus?
- In which parts of my life am I living independently of Jesus?

Think of the times when you have felt disconnected from God.

- What gave rise to those situations? How did you feel? Is it possible to be surrounded by symbols and reminders of Christian faith and still feel disconnected from God? Where does the disconnect originate?

Your relationship with your church community – looking IN

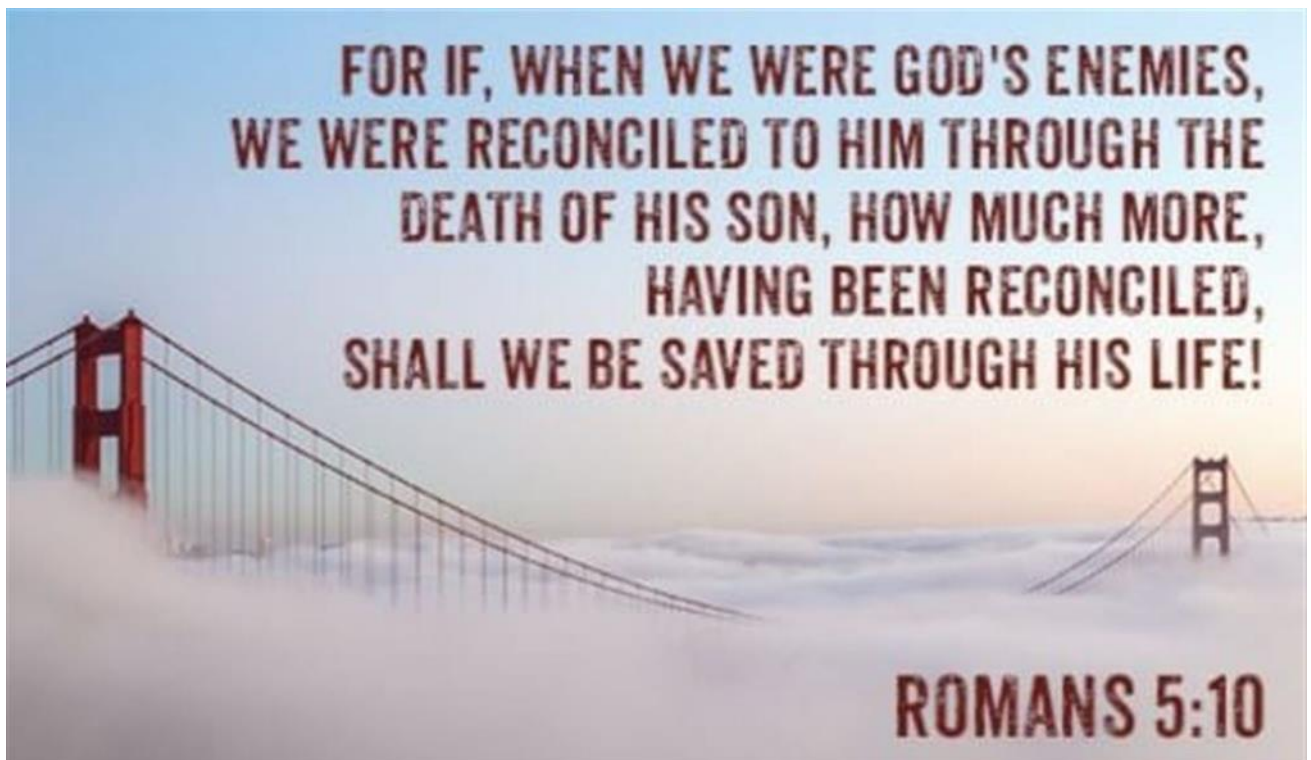
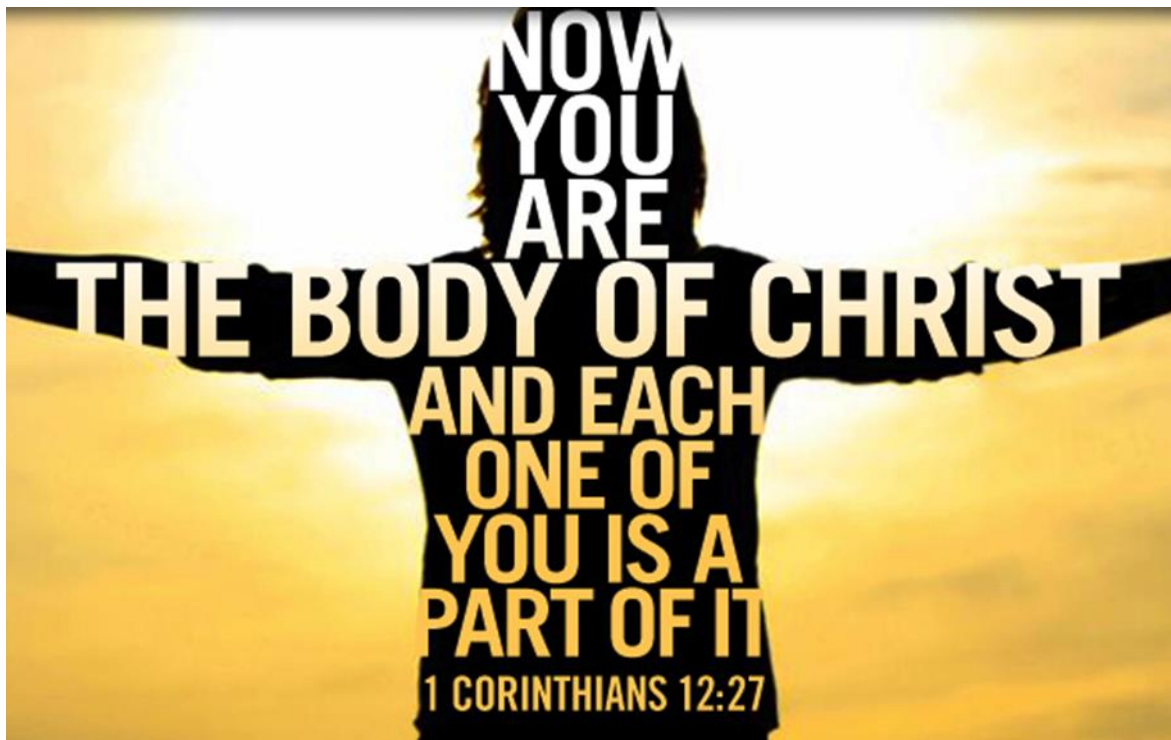
If we don't remain in Jesus, we are just remaining somewhere else—in anxiety, in anger, in fear, in shame, in ambition, in numbness, in self-absorption. If we are all connected to the one vine, we clearly share the same source of life.

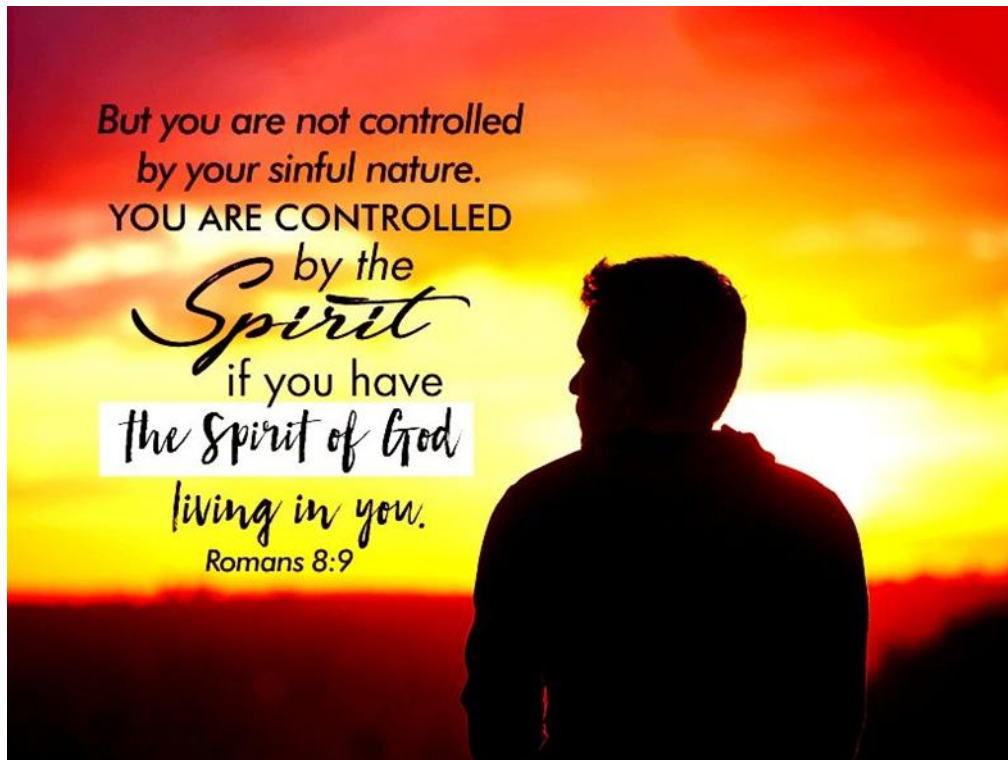
- Do we recognize those in our church community who are struggling with their connection?
- How can we help those who are not bearing good fruit, being pruned, or just hanging on?

Your relationship with those outside church – looking OUT.

- Are we behaving like Israel in the Old Testament?
- Are we showing the world how good it is to live in relationship with God?
- Do we sometimes join the world in worshipping other idols and turn our back on God?
- Do we share the good blessings that God has given us to those outside the church?







John 15 v 1-8 NIV

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 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.

“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. 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. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Galatians 5 v 22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.