

# The Vine and Branches: “Deeper Relationship With Christ”

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Date: 01 March 2026

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at [ChristChurchEastBay.org](http://ChristChurchEastBay.org). Good morning. My name is Sarita and I am part of the CC Kids. A reading from the Gospel according to John chapter 15. 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.

[1:05] 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. As the father has loved me, so have I loved you, you will remain in my love.

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my father's commands and remained in his love.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this, love each other as I have loved you.

[2:11] Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business.

Instead, I have called you friends. For everything that I learned from my father, I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

And so that whatever you ask in my name, the father will give you. This is my command, love each other. This is the gospel of the Lord.

Thanks, Sarita. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Lord, would you speak? Speak to us. We want your words to abide within us, in our hearts.

[3:21] Not just so that we have information, but so that we might abide in your love. Your words of love and grace and truth to us in Christ. So hear our prayers.

Be present to us. Lord, would you affect us by this thing we come to listen to every week, by the preaching of your word.

Not because of me, but because of your spirit. Because of your heart for us and for your people. So hear us, Lord. Be present to us in your word. And bless us with it.

In Jesus' name. Amen. You know, when I was living in Orange County, that's where I went to undergrad. I remember just thinking about my future and my sense of calling.

What does God want me to do? And one of my strategies was to surround myself with thoughtful people, Jesus-loving people, and also ambitious people.

[4:22] And there's this one guy in particular. His name was Edwin. He had just started his medical residency. He was a doctor. Super sharp. Incredibly critical thinker.

And I just really looked up to this guy. Particularly, though, because of his ambition. He had a huge vision for what he hoped God would do in his life. What he hoped that God would help him accomplish in the world.

Like poverty relief and racial reconciliation. He wanted to go on medical missions. And he had all these kinds of dreams. And I remember just being mesmerized by this guy.

We had dinner one night. And we were talking about the brokenness in our world, our sense of calling. We were talking about the families that God might give to us one day.

And then he said something to me that's really stuck with me for almost 20 years now. He said, I just want my kids to give more than they take from the world.

[5:20] And I ate that up. I started praying that for my future children. As soon as I had children, holding them in the hospital as newborns. I prayed that over each of them. I prayed that over nieces and nephews.

It's what I want for my kids, for our kids, for all of us. For us to be people who give more than we take. For us to be people who leave the world better than we found it, right?

And isn't that what Jesus said, right? It's more blessed to give than to receive. And so wouldn't the world be so much better of a place if all of us devoted ourselves more to giving than to taking?

I think at some level we all feel this, right? We all have this urge to make an impact. But, you know, while I want this for myself and for my children and for all of us, all the people of the world, that we would be fruitful people, right?

Contributing more than consuming. What I've also begun to find is that this standard, this aim to give more than I take, this urge to make an impact, you know, I feel like for some reason this drive to bear fruit has begun to feel less like divine design and more like pressure to perform.

[6:30] Does anyone else feel that? Like on the one hand, you feel ambitious. You feel like you have something to give. You feel responsible to give it. And so you wake up and you pursue growth and fruitfulness and this excites you.

This is what gets you up out of bed every day. And yet on the other hand, these ambitions also come with anxieties. Anxieties about whether or not you'll succeed. Insecurities about whether or not you're performing up to your potential or meeting that certain standard.

And you fear that you're wasting your life because you're not contributing enough. Not making the impact in the world that you feel you were made to make. Are you familiar with this? The inspiration to make an impact and yet the pressure to produce.

Now where'd this come from? Why has this drive to bear fruit begun to feel like more of a drag than a delight for so many of us? Well, the scriptures themselves teach that this drive is from God.

It's what God designed us with. His very first words to us were what? A command and a blessing. Genesis 1.28. Be fruitful, he said. It's like from the beginning he wrote this basic fundamental code into the human operating system.

[7:41] Be fruitful. It's literally how we're wired. With this instinct to cultivate, build, multiply. This drive not just to lounge and consume but to love and contribute. To bear fruit.

So our drive to bear fruit, it isn't the problem. But what the scriptures also teach is that this drive can get misdirected. And in fact, it has because of sin.

Because of the way that humanity has broken off our connection with God. You see, whether you're religious or not, and whether you're conscious of it or not, we're all designed to live out of three basic questions.

What gives my life meaning? Where do I get the power to live that life? And what fruit or outcomes am I hoping to produce with that life? We're all looking for meaning, empowerment, and fruit.

And so we all tend to organize our lives around whatever we believe will help supply these things to us. And we're quite willing to attach ourselves to that which we think will give us meaning and power and fruit.

[8:39] But see, this is where the pressure creeps in when we get the source wrong. When we get the power wrong, the standard of fruitfulness wrong. That's when fruitfulness stops feeling like a gift and it feels a lot more like a grind, right?

So the question we need to consider this morning, whether you're interested in Jesus or not, is what is the true source of our meaning? What is the true source of our power?

And who sets the standard for what fruit should actually look like in our lives? That's what our passage, that's what Jesus' words speak to us this morning. Look with me at verse 1. Jesus says, I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener.

Now remember when and where Jesus is saying this. These words were spoken on the last night of Jesus' life, after the Last Supper, after He said that someone was going to betray Him, after He said Peter was going to deny Him. And the last words of chapter 14, right before this verse 1, were, Come now, let us leave.

So picture this. They're either walking to Gethsemane or maybe they're just standing in the dark, hours before the cross, but only He knows it, right? And in this moment, shortly before He is lifted up on a cross as a supposedly failed, defeated, and powerless Messiah, right before everything in Jesus' life will look like it's about to end in failure, Jesus wants to talk about fruitfulness.

[9:57] He says, I am the true vine. Now you have to understand what this would have meant to the Jewish disciples. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, it was always the people of Israel whom God identified as His vine.

You are my vine, He would say about them. If you look at just the call to worship that we had earlier on page 1 of your liturgies from Psalm 80, you can see this quite clearly in Movement 2. The psalmist writes, You transplanted a vine from Egypt.

You drove out the nations and planted it. It took root and filled the land. And God's intentions, according to His promise to Abraham, were for this people to be a blessing to the world. All the mountains of the world, all the mighty cedars were to be covered by the shady branches of this vine.

And so this was the most, like, idyllic way that every pious, self-respecting, hopeful Jewish person viewed themselves and their nation. God called us to be His vine. He Himself has planted us in a vineyard at the center of the universe.

So significant was this concept of the vine to the people of Israel that, you know, in their temple, which they believed, again, to be the center of the world in the holy place, there was this massive grapevine made of pure gold.

[11:03] And it represented Israel, and wealthy citizens would come and bring gold, gifts of gold, to add to the vine. Add a leaf here. Add a grape here. Add a whole cluster of grapes.

Ancient historians tell us that there were clusters of grapes that were, like, the height of human beings. These were huge. For the Jewish people, this vine image at the temple represented their understanding of their place and purpose in the universe as the people of God.

Israel viewed itself as God's vine, the vine that everyone else in the world needed to be connected to in order to be connected to God, and in order to live a meaningful, fruitful life for the kingdom. But see, the Old Testament psalmists and prophets also teach us that the people of Israel, they failed to be the fruitful vine that they were meant to be. The prophet Jeremiah called them a degenerate vine.

The prophet Ezekiel noted that they had become like a common piece of wood, only useful for fire. And so it's into this, like, thick Jewish context that Jesus is here saying, I am the true vine.

[12:06] Where Israel failed to be God's source of fruitfulness and blessing to the world, Jesus has come to be the true and better Israel. So see, while many of his Jewish contemporaries found their source of meaning in their heritage and culture, their source of power in the temple, their standard of fruitfulness and eventual, like, international prominence, Jesus came to subvert all faulty attachments.

So basically, he's saying to them and to us, Look at verse 2.

So you know what he's saying here?

He's saying that, hey, you and your life and your agenda, they're actually supposed to be subject to me and my Father. You aren't the vine. I am. You aren't the gardener. My Father is.

And all the initiative is mine. I'm the one who cleans you by my own words. I'm the one who sets you up for fruitfulness. What he's saying here is that your source of meaning, your source of power, the standard by which you will measure fruitfulness, all of that starts with me, the true vine.

[13:29] And it starts with your Father as well, the gardener. Now, I want us to consider that metaphor for a second, this organic image of the vine and the gardener, right? Think about that.

Does the vine depend on the branch or does the branch depend on the vine? It's the vine that gives life and fruitfulness to the branch. Also consider the branch's relationship to the gardener.

The branch doesn't get to set the agenda. The branch doesn't get to define success. The branch doesn't get to determine the timing of the harvest or what should or what shouldn't get pruned.

That's the gardener's job. That's the gardener's call.

And I think one big reason why many of us are filled with so much performance anxiety is that we've mistakenly believed that we need to be both fruit-bearing branch and vine and gardener all at the same time.

And we set these goals and expectations on ourselves as if we were the ones to make our own meaning, as if we were the ones that were meant to generate our own fruitfulness, and as if everything we pursued was for our own glory, our own worth, our own value.

[14:34] But here, when Jesus is saying that I am the true vine, my Father's the gardener, what He's saying is, it's not about you. It's about my glory. That's what He says in verse 8.

It's about my Father's glory. And while that might sound, you know, kind of demeaning to us, the whole point of my life, of your life, of our lives, the whole point of bearing fruit, it's got to be the glory of God.

And this is not some egotistical deity saying that to us. It's actually a liberating truth that we need to hear, that you are not your own, and that the weight of glory doesn't rest on you but on something, on someone far stronger, far wiser, far more capable, and far more secure.

than you would ever dream to be yourself. This is what one of my favorite current thinkers, his name is Alan Noble, he's an author, he's written this book, *You Are Not Your Own*, highly recommend.

He basically argues that we live in a secular culture that tells us that because there is no transcendent, sacred source of authority to tell us how to live, we can and we should make our own meaning, define our own standards of success and fruitfulness, and accomplish this somehow on our own, in our own strength, in our own wisdom.

[15:48] But, he says, this outlook, it's only ever going to crush us. For who of us can bear such a weighty responsibility to define our own meaning and then to execute all with our limited wisdom and strength?

No wonder we're all anxious. No wonder we're all hustling and grinding. And look, this is why Jesus' words here are so life-giving. Verse 4. All he says is, Remain in me.

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. This is how you will bear fruit in your life, Jesus says.

Not by striving harder, but by staying closer. Staying closer to me. This word remain, it's so key. It means to stay. It means to dwell. It means to abide, right?

[16:51] It's not a hustling, try harder, productivity word. It's a restful, organic, dependence, trustful word. It's what a branch by its very nature does in organic relationship with its vine.

A vine doesn't yell harsh commands at the branch. Try harder, blossom faster, give me more nectarines. No, a branch yields exactly as much fruit as the vine and gardener intend.

Not less and not more. And apart from that vine, a branch can do nothing. Think of those Valentine's Day roses that you received or that you gave.

Sure, maybe they were beautiful, but no amount of water, no amount of that powdery stuff that you add to the water, right? Nothing will keep those roses alive forever.

They've been cut off. They may look beautiful and they may look beautiful for longer than you imagine, but they will die. And they will certainly not multiply. This is the image Jesus gives us to understand the way to fruitfulness and that there are only two options, he says in verse 5.

[17:53] Either you bear much fruit in Him or, apart from Him, you can do nothing. And that's nothing. Not less fruit, not slower fruit, not like less juicy fruit.

No, it's just nothing. And perhaps that's hard for many of us to believe, right? Because look how much humanity has accomplished without God, right? Look at all our tech, all our towers of Babel tricking us into thinking that we are more like God than we were meant to be.

We live in a culture and society that believes almost anything can be engineered. We live for life hacks and productivity systems. We have AI assistants. There are more robots that are on the way. And in the meantime, we'll continue to monitor on our dashboards, right? Our sleep, our steps, our serving sizes, our screen time. We know how to manufacture output.

Look at all that we produced. And so when Jesus says, apart from me, you can do nothing, it's hard to take that statement seriously. It's hard to feel the weight of it, right?

[18:56] But maybe that's because we've confused activity with life. Zoe, life. Jesus isn't saying you can't build companies. He's not saying you can't innovate. He's not saying you can't accomplish impressive things.

What He's saying is that apart from Him, you cannot produce the kind of fruit that lasts. You cannot generate eternal life. You cannot manufacture Christ-like love.

You cannot engineer joy that survives suffering. You cannot fabricate a soul that is alive to God. And listen, this isn't a put-down on human accomplishment and potential.

This is just a reminder of the way we were designed to be in relationship with our Maker, our Sustainer. We need Him. Notice Jesus doesn't just say, remain in me, as if it's all on us, like this is just some magical technique that Christians call abiding in order to be fruitful.

No, this is not a spiritual hack. No, He says, remain in me as I also remain in you. It's always been about relationship. And man, you have to understand what a profound relationship He's inviting us into.

[20:00] This isn't just a command, it's a promise. And not just any promise, this is the promise of God's very presence, His life, His power, desiring to dwell within us.

Remember how sacred and holy and significant the temple was to the Jewish people? Because God's presence was thought to abide there. Well, here, Jesus is saying this nearness of God can abide not just with you, but in you.

And in you in order to bear fruit, in you in order to fulfill your potential and calling in you to be everything that you were made to be. Don't you want that?

Union and communion with the living God is on offer here. The source and power behind all lasting fruitfulness, that's what Jesus is offering. He's offering us Himself as divine, and He invites us to simply abide in Him as He longs to abide in us.

But see, this generous invitation to abide in Him as a branch to a vine, it also confronts and possibly exposes all of us. Because see, even if we don't accept Jesus' invitation, the question isn't just whether or not we'll abide in Jesus or not, but where we'll abide otherwise.

[21:15] Because everybody builds their life onto something. Everybody plugs into something for meaning, power, and fruitfulness. We know this well in the Bay Area. Many of you have come to abide in the vine of UC Berkeley, of Salesforce, of Meta, of this or that network, opportunity, lifestyle, or relationship.

And these vines, in various ways, they do give identity. They allow us to make an impact. They provide stability. They allow us to make an impact. But when Jesus says, I am the true vine, He's forcing us to consider, does any other vine bear fruit that ultimately lasts?

Does any other vine sustain eternal, abundant life? So maybe now you're listening and maybe you're even intrigued by the prospect of abiding in Christ as the vine, but this seems super spiritual and abstract and metaphorical.

And you're wondering, what does this actually mean? What does this actually look like? Like, how do we actually stay connected to Jesus as our vine? Well, look at verse 7, where He alters the

metaphor a bit.

He says, if you remain in me and my words remain in you. See, what it means to abide in Christ is not just to have some vague spiritual relationship with God, but to let His words, the Scriptures, dwell within us.

[22:31] Remember, His words created and constituted all of creation. So imagine what they're supposed to do in and through us. Abiding in Christ and He in us and His words in us means allowing His authority to take precedence, to take residence, not just in our behavior, but in our hearts and our minds and our desires, hiding His word in our hearts, meditating on it day and night, letting it correct what we believe, expose what we love, confront what we fear, and rewire what we desire.

And that's what leads to real power, friends. That's what leads to real power and fruitfulness in our lives when we are so saturated by God's word and will. When our operating systems are so in sync with the owner's manual, right?

That everything we do is shaped by thy kingdom come and thy will be done. And man, if that is our heartbeat, if that is how we approach God in prayer, if His word is what has shaped what we wish and ask for, well, we better believe that it will be done for us.

We can take that to the bank. Verse 7, if you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. This is the incredible power of prayer reserved for those who abide in the vine.

This is how we were always meant to bear fruit, by prayer, by dependence. Like, think about that. Think of all the frustration you've ever experienced, things not going the way you wanted.

[23:56] You've tried so hard to tend your own vine, generate your own produce, but the crop that comes out, it's never as great as you want. But what if we actually believe that apart from Him, we can do nothing?

And what if we actually let His words remain in us? And what if those words shaped our aims and our prayers for fruit in this world? Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Oh, what peace we often forfeit.

Oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. So this is the way to the fruitful life. It's abiding in Jesus as our vine.

It's Him abiding in us, and specifically His words taking root, His words directing us to live rightly, but also His words emboldening us to ask, and to ask confidently for a fruitful life.

Again, not striving harder for Him, but simply staying closer to Him. And the promise is that we will bear fruit. What does Psalm 1 say? Those who meditate on God's Word day and night, they will be like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season.

[25:02] What does the Apostle Paul say? We are His masterpiece, His workmanship created to do good works, which He prepared in advance for us to do. See, if we are abiding in Christ, we will naturally, organically, in due time, in season, we will bear fruit.

We need not fret about wasting our potential or underperforming. Our gardener is too good for that. And nothing, not even we, can get in the way of Him receiving the glory that He's due.

Verse 8, this is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. But look, this is not just about doing the right thing or reaching our potential.

Jesus adds another layer onto what it means for us to abide in Him and He in us and His words in us. Look at verse 9. And this is incredible stuff.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. Notice the layers. First, remain in me and I in you. Then remain in me and my words in you. But now, remain in my love.

[26:07] You know, I think when some of us here abide, we can easily think, oh great, another spiritual habit to master and kind of suck at. You know, another discipline to try to optimize and then fail at, right?

But Jesus isn't offering a spiritual technique here. He's offering a relationship. And not just any relationship. He says, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

And please, let that hit you for a second. It's almost like it shouldn't be in the Bible. Like, theologically, it sounds incorrect. Because do you have any idea how much the Father loves the Son?

And He's saying that He loves you with that kind of love. The love that has existed between the Father and Son from all eternity that did not need you in that love circle.

Jesus is saying, I'm bringing you into that. So abiding isn't you climbing up to God. It's you staying inside the love that's already coming down to you. And isn't this so much better, so much more inspiring than the pressure to produce and perform?

[27:13] Isn't this so much more liberating than the notion of having to define my own meaning, self-generate my own fruitfulness? Isn't this so much more sure than having to guess at whether or not I have value in this world based upon my impact?

A child of God in the embrace of their Father doesn't get more loved on their productive days, nor less loved on their slower days. A branch does not become more beloved by producing more grapes.

It simply receives what is already flowing into it. That's why Jesus says in verse 10, That's not him saying, earn my love.

He's saying, live in the love you already have, just like I did. Consider that for a second, please. That Jesus, like everything that Jesus ever did, all the obedience he ever rendered to his Father, every single act, whether hard or costly, everything that Jesus ever did, he did it fueled by the love of his Father.

He did it sensing and feeling the love of his Father in heaven, every single action. Can you imagine living a life like that? How different things would be?

[28:27] How different our world would be if we all lived like that? A life so secure in the love of God that you live differently than everyone else and change the world.

See, this is what his words and commands are for. This is how they connect to his love. And all he wants is our joy, guys. Verse 11, I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

God wants our obedience because he wants our joy, joy and fruit that lasts. And the only way we'll experience that is by abiding in his love, which basically means preaching the gospel to ourselves again and again and again.

Preaching the gospel to myself when I'm criticized, when I fail, when I'm overlooked, when I'm disappointed, is to say, I'm already loved with the love of the Father, the love that he has for the Son, and in that love my joy is complete and I shall not want.

That's how a Christian handles and even bears fruit in the face of fear and rejection and disappointment, not by denial, but by deeply anchoring themselves in the love of God. See, bearing God's fruit in the kingdom of God is not about more and more output.

[29:36] It's not about fighting against the clock, battling against scarcity and insecurity. No, it's about bearing witness to the kingdom of God, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, the first of which is love.

That's what the fruit is, love. Verse 12, My command is this, Love each other as I have loved you. Jesus isn't being vague here about what fruit is.

He doesn't let us fill in the blank about whatever fruitness might look like according to what we desire to make it. In the Bay Area, fruit usually means achievement, influence, metrics, promotion, options, network, brand, followers, being indispensable, right?

Being impressive. Even in the church, fruit can get twisted into numbers and visibility, having it together, looking spiritually productive, right? But Jesus defines fruit in one word, and it's just this, it's love.

And not just any love, but the highest kind of love. Verse 13, Greater love has no one than this to lay down one's life for one's friends. That's fruit, Jesus says. Not output, not influence, it's sacrificial, self-giving love.

[30:41] And don't miss when he said this, right? This is the night he was walking toward Gethsemane, walking toward Calvary, toward the place where he wouldn't just teach love, but show it. But Jesus, he even goes even further than this.

He says in verse 14, you are my friends if you do what I command. Then verse 15, I no longer call you servants, instead I have called you friends. You know what he's doing here? See, love isn't just

sacrifice.

Love elevates people. Love transforms relationships. It restructures hierarchies. The king looks at his disciples and says, friends, the Lord of the universe lets you in on his heart.

Everything I have learned from my father, Jesus says, I have made known to you. Unless we hear this command to love as another crushing standard, Jesus anchors it in his grace. Verse 16, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

In other words, fruit doesn't produce belonging. No, belonging produces fruit. See, you don't love your way into friendship with God. You love because you've been given friendship with the maker of heaven and earth.

[31:48] And that's why Jesus returns to prayer again here when he says, whatever you ask in my name, the Father will give you. Because abiding and deep communion and friendship with God, it reshapes what we want and gives us boldness to ask.

And to ask for anything, even for the most fruitful, impactful life. This is what Jesus himself wants for his disciples. This is what he wants for his branches, friendship and access, joy and life, meaning, power, and fulfilling fruit, the fruit of love modeled after his love.

A love that gives more than it takes, but not out of guilt or trying to prove its worth, no, a love that gives more than it takes from the world because of its ultimate source, the vine who gave his life for the world.

In truth, we will never outgive what we've received in Christ. But abiding means we are always receivers first before anything else.

So really, the only people who ever truly give more than they take are those who never stop receiving from the vine who is Christ.

[32:58] Now to close, just imagine that for a second again. Imagine that for yourself, that for our church, our world. Imagine a world full of such people, right?

So secure in Christ, abiding in the vine. Imagine a world that defined fruitfulness as if Jesus were the most perfect, ideal, optimal way to be human.

Like, what if fruit wasn't defined by scale, but sacrifice? What if the most productive person in the room was the one who loved most deeply? What if we trusted that fruit ripens in season and stopped trying to, you know, microwave what God intends to grow at His own pace?

What if we slowed down to the pace of the three-mile-an-hour God? The God who became flesh, became vulnerable, became interruptible, became arrestable, became crucifiable.

What if we proceeded at the pace of love, love for strangers, love for our enemies, love for our oppressors, love for people who we feel are slowing us down and keeping us from the fruitful lives we're so convinced were meant to live?

[34:06] What if instead of hustling to figure out how we might expedite God's process of fruitfulness through innovation and technique and superficiality, what if we simply stayed connected to the true vine and let the gardener do his work?

Fruitfulness, it doesn't come from striving harder. It doesn't come from optimizing yourself into exhaustion. It doesn't come from manufacturing meaning. It comes from staying closer, closer to the vine, closer to His Word.

closer to His love. The pressure to produce dies when you realize you were never the vine, you were never the gardener, and you were ever only meant to be a branch, abiding in the I am who says, 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. let's pray.

Lord, teach us how to be faithful branches, how to be rested branches, joyful branches, delighted that the vine has made a place for us, that the vine has attached Himself to us, that He invites us to abide in Him and that He desires to abide in us, that He invites us to abide in His love.

[35:44] Oh God, make us so secure in Your love. every problem in the world, oh God, is because people are not convinced of Your love. So start here with Your church, Lord.

Convince us that Your love is enough, that we are secure in it, and that we will bear fruit in season, that You are the source, the source of our meaning, the source of our power, and Your Son has shown us what fruitfulness looks like.

Oh God, forgive us for all the false fruit that we pursue, all the fruit that we try to staple onto our branches, Lord God. Let us choose Your way instead, even when it's slow, even when it doesn't make sense, even when it's costly.

Let's trust Your Word that we will bear fruit in season, much fruit, Your Son says to us. And God, convince us of the other side as well, that apart from You, we can do nothing.

Let us feel that, Lord, deeply. Make us a dependent people that You might receive the glory and that we might enjoy Your presence and power in our lives more than we could ever imagine.

[37:08] Make our joy complete, oh God, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.