



Jachin Boaz Ministries

PO Box 481

Wellington NSW 2820

Australia

Phone 02 6845 3063

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to our shared conversation for the month of December, 2013. I would like for us to start with a few verses from God's Word found in John Chapter 15, where He talks about a grape vine!

Joh 15:1 I AM the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser.

*Joh 15:2 Any branch in Me that does not bear fruit [that stops bearing] He cuts away (trims off, takes away); and **He cleanses and repeatedly prunes every branch that continues to bear fruit**, to make it bear more and richer and more excellent fruit.*

Joh 15:3 You are cleansed and pruned already, because of the word which I have given you [the teachings I have discussed with you].

*Joh 15:4 Dwell in Me, and I will dwell in you. [Live in Me, and I will live in you.] Just as **no branch can bear fruit of itself without abiding in (being vitally united to) the vine**, neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in Me.*

Joh 15:5 I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing.

Joh 15:6 If a person does not dwell in Me, he is thrown out like a [broken-off] branch, and withers; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and they are burned.

Joh 15:7 If you live in Me [abide vitally united to Me] and My words remain in you and continue to live in your hearts, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

Joh 15:8 When you bear (produce) much fruit, My Father is honoured and glorified, and you show and prove yourselves to be true followers of Mine. (Amp).

*As we look closely at this picture, painted here by the apostle, John, we find a **Grape Vine, with names and instructions!** You wouldn't need me to tell you that a grapevine consists of a main vine and lots of different branches. **Four of which are described here.** Let's look more closely and see if we can find where we may fit in to this wonderful parable. I am sure we would not have too much difficulty in agreeing, that the first verse of our scripture very aptly tells us - That Jesus is the TRUE VINE. I have placed a diagram of that same*



grapevine here for you to set in your mind the proper functions of such a vine; its major components and how they function. Without a very healthy **STEM** – the main vine – there wouldn't be a grapevine, or those beautiful juicy fruit we so often take for granted from that plant. And since we have already established that **Jesus is the Vine**, and we **KNOW** He is a very healthy source of nourishment (spiritual food), we can rest assured that the branches should be in good shape as they leave the parent part of the plant to run along the supporting wires.

We only need to re-read verse five to know that **WE** are supposed to be representative of the **branches** that grow **in and from the vine!** ...**I am the Vine; you are the branches...**! (Verse 5). Consequently, I want for us to take a closer look at four of these branches - represented here.

1. The Pruned Branch: -

*Joh 15:2 Any branch in Me that does not bear fruit [that stops bearing] **He cuts away** (trims off, takes away); and **He cleanses and repeatedly prunes every branch** that continues to bear fruit, **to make it bear more and richer and more excellent fruit.***

That tells me that if my life is not bearing the fruit (of the Spirit), that God would expect me to exhibit, and make known and available to all those with whom I come in contact; that I can expect the pruning shears to do a 'number' on me! Wow! That would be reason enough to re-evaluate, right there! Unless of course you don't mind the mangling and maiming that comes with a pair pruning secateurs. What about you? Now that doesn't mean that we never experience some type of pruning, but, **that real heavy pruning** where you **have to be cruel to be kind**, to that poor plant that appears to have seen better days...! Well - that is what you need be avoiding. Then you and I will happily grow along those supportive, training wires - **with just the little tips snipped off now and then, to encourage us to bear more and, most flavoursome - fruit.** We can handle that type of pruning! It might hurt a bit at times, but it is good for our overall health, growth and general wellbeing. Amen!

2. The Connected Branch: -

*Joh 15:4 Dwell in Me, and I will dwell in you. [Live in Me, and I will live in you.] **Just as no branch can bear fruit of itself without abiding in (being vitally united to) the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in Me.***

If I cut one of the branches off my grapevine and put it in a pot, it will not produce fruit for me. Why? Because it's source of nourishment has been terminated. Its food supply no longer exists. If our food supply was taken away from us we would become very emaciated very quickly, to the point of death. So too, the branch from the grapevine...!

To deliver the proper fruit, at the proper time, in the proper season, and having the proper flavour...it must stay grafted in to the vine – its TRUE source of ALL things good for health and vitality! Getting the picture? If we want and need to have and be the best source of nourishment, not just to ourselves, but to our family and friends, and our extended family in Christ, we too, must **stay inter-connected**; feeding from the source...Jesus! **There is NO other way!** That's why there is another quote from the Master Himself, where He said...**I am the Way, the Truth and the LIFE!!!** (John 14:6).

3. The Throw-Away Branch: -

*Joh 15:6 If a person does not dwell in Me, he is **thrown out** like a [broken-off] branch, and withers; such branches are gathered up and **thrown into the fire**, and they are burned.*

*I am sure, by now, you are fully aware of the repercussions of not **DWELLING** in Jesus; the food supply for all of our requirements. Notice this is prefaced with an **“if”!** It is our choice to **DWELL or not to DWELL!** Verse four explained to us what to dwell means: - **“to live in Me and I will live in you”.** That is the promise Jesus made to us. Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? **The only difficulty we encounter is - our own will, and pride, and independence.** All of those things, when not aligned with the instructions of Christ, **will find us in the pruning pile, and thrown out!** **And worse still, into the fire!** Fire is representative of hell, and the ongoing torment of exceptional magnitude that awaits the person who does not chose Christ and His food supply. **Death by starvation! And by personal choice!** Just think - it could have been **avoided, simply by making a different choice.***

4. The Fruitful Branch: -

*Joh 15:8 When you **bear (produce) much fruit, My Father is honoured and glorified, and you show and prove yourselves to be true followers of Mine.***

*This branch is our final branch, and Oh what a blessing it is, in a trifold manner. **Firstly,** when we **bear or produce much fruit,** we give off a wonderful aroma, just like the grapes from our vines that we eat on a regular basis. We will **“smell good and taste good”,** in our everyday dealings with ourselves, and our fellowman. There will be no need to second guess ourselves. We will **automatically operate in a spirit of integrity, wrapped up in love, joy and peace – the first three fruits of the spirit!***

***Secondly,** our fruitful life will bring **Honour and Glory to our God, the Vinedresser.** He then gets opportunity to stand back and admire His handiwork, and say... “It is good”, just like He did back in Genesis, when He spoke the world into existence.*

*And, **thirdly,** we get to **show and prove ourselves to be true followers of Jesus, our Vine;** the source of our nourishment. He has asked us to **imitate Him,** throughout the scripture, and this will be the evidence He has been looking for all this time. He will no longer have to wonder if we will stop, look and listen, to His still small voice. **He will KNOW, by our fruit!** And **we will** in turn **KNOW, by our fruit, and the PEACE which - closeness with Him brings.** If that isn't a win/win situation, I don't know what is. Enjoy, and be blessed!*

Till next month

From my house to yours

Blessings of the abundant kind!

Leila Nord.

