

# CITYWEST CHURCH

02.08.2026 - 10 AM

## PRESENCE PEOPLE: STAY CONNECTED.

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. <sup>3</sup>You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. <sup>4</sup>Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

<sup>5</sup>“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. <sup>7</sup>But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! <sup>8</sup>When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

### John 15:1-8 (NLT)

*We live in a world that constantly pulls our attention, our energy, and our hearts in a thousand different directions.*

*We are connected to everything:*

- *our phones*
- *our work*
- *our schedules*
- *our responsibilities*
- *social media*
- *entertainment*
- *endless information*

*But in the middle of all this connection, many people have become disconnected from the most important relationship of all.*

*The relationship with God and this is why Jesus’ words in John 15 are so important.*

*Jesus does not say: "Try harder." He does not say: "Work harder." He does not say: "Become more impressive."*

*Jesus gives a simple invitation:*

***Remain in Me.***

***The foundation of spiritual life is not activity.***

***It is intimacy. Not achievement. But abiding.***

**CONTEXT** - John 13-17 was Jesus' private teaching to His disciples (including His prayer to His Father in Jn 17) which took place in the Upper Room less than 24 hours before He was crucified.

## **1. THE FOUNDATION OF DISCIPLESHIP IS RELATIONSHIP.**

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.

### **John 15:1-2 (NLT)**

*Jesus begins with an image that would have been deeply understood by His listeners.*

*Throughout the Old Testament, Israel was often pictured as a vineyard.*

*Hosea, Psalms and Isaiah*

*God planted His people. God cared for His people. God desired fruit from His people.*

*But again and again, Israel failed to produce the fruit God desired.*

The nation of Israel is the vineyard of the LORD of Heaven's Armies. The people of Judah are his pleasant garden. He expected a crop of justice, but instead he found oppression. He expected to find righteousness, but instead he heard cries of violence.

### **Isa 5:7 (NLT)**

*The problem was not that God was an unfaithful gardener.*

*The problem was that humanity had become disconnected from God.*

*So Jesus makes a profound statement:*

***“I am the true grapevine.”***

*Jesus is saying: The life you were created for is found in Me. The connection humanity lost through sin is restored through Christ.*

*Before Jesus sends His disciples into mission, He first calls them into relationship.*

*Think about the way Jesus called His disciples.*

*He did not begin by saying:*

***“Here is a list of things you need to accomplish.”***

***“Jesus called out to them, ‘Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!’”***

**Matt 4:19 (NLT)**

*The invitation was: **Come. Follow. Be with Me.***

*Before they were apostles, they were disciples. Before they were sent, they were formed.*

*Before they did something for Jesus, they learned to walk with Jesus.*

*This is where many of us get Christianity backwards.*

*We think the goal is: “Do things for God so God will be pleased with me.”*

*But the gospel says: “Because God has already loved me in Christ, I can now live with Him.”*

*The Christian life does not begin with working.*

*It begins with abiding.*

***prune:*** pure, clean, without stain or spot. It means to make clean; of a vine clear, prune by removing superfluous wood. The idea is to make clean by taking away an undesirable part. It indicates removing that which is unclean or of no use. It gives us English cathartic.

## ***The danger of measuring spirituality by activity***

*One of the great temptations of modern Christianity is confusing busyness with faithfulness.*

*We measure ourselves by questions like:*

- *How much do I serve?*
- *How many ministries am I involved in?*
- *How much Bible knowledge do I have?*
- *How many people know my name?*
- *How much can I accomplish?*

*But Jesus asks a different question: **Are you remaining in Me?***

*Because it is possible to be busy for God while becoming distant from God.*

*It is possible to work in the vineyard while forgetting the gardener.*

*It is possible to serve Jesus while slowly drifting away from Jesus.*

*Jesus speaks to the church in Ephesus:*

I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance... But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!

### **Revelation 2:2-4 (NLT)**

*Notice something powerful.*

*Jesus does not say: "You stopped working."*

*They were still working.*

*Jesus says: "You lost your first love."*

*They had activity without intimacy. They had ministry without abiding.*

## 2. FRUIT COMES FROM PRESENCE, NOT PRESSURE.

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

**John 15:4 (NLT)**

***Fruit bearing is impossible without abiding; but it is inevitable with abiding.***

*Jesus gives us one of the clearest pictures of spiritual growth.*

*A branch does not produce fruit by trying harder.*

*A branch produces fruit because it is connected to the source of life.*

*Imagine a branch lying on the ground.*

*You could encourage that branch.*

*You could shout at that branch.*

*You could tell that branch to try harder.*

*But no amount of effort will produce fruit.*

*Why? Because the branch is disconnected from the vine.*

## 3. THE GREATEST THREAT IS DRIFTING.

*The reason Jesus repeats the word remain over and over in John 15 is because Jesus knows our natural tendency.*

*We drift.*

*We rarely wake up one morning and decide:*

*“I am going to walk away from God.”*

*Usually, it happens slowly.*

*A little less prayer. A little less Scripture. A little less dependence. A little more self-reliance. A little more distraction.*

*Until one day we realise:*

*“I am still doing life, but I am no longer walking closely with Jesus.”*

*Hebrews 2:1 (NLT)*

“So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.”

**Hebrews 2:1 (NLT)**

*Notice the warning: Drifting.*

*Nobody plans to drift.*

*A boat drifts when it stops intentionally moving toward its destination.*

*Spiritual drift happens when we stop intentionally remaining with Jesus.*

*The question for us is not:*

*“Do I still believe?”*

*The deeper question is:*

*“Am I still abiding?”*

*Jesus’ invitation is simple:*

*Remain in Me.*

*So how do we practically do this?*

*We create space for relationship with Jesus.*

*Not as another religious duty.*

*But as a response to love.*

## **1. What is pulling me away from Jesus?**

*What things are competing for your attention?*

*What things are shaping your heart more than Christ?*

*It might be:*

- *busyness*
- *entertainment*
- *success*
- *comfort*
- *anxiety*
- *control*

*The first step of abiding is awareness.*

## **2. What noise is drowning out God's voice?**

*God is not absent.*

*But sometimes our lives are too loud to notice His presence.*

*Create moments of silence. Create moments of prayer. Create moments where your soul can breathe.*

## **3. Where have I replaced dependence with striving?**

*Where are you trying to carry what God has asked you to surrender?*

*Where are you trying to produce fruit that only God can grow?*

*The world tells us: "Produce more."*

*Jesus says: "Remain."*

*The world tells us: "Prove yourself."*

*Jesus says: "Abide."*

*The world tells us: "Your value comes from what you accomplish."*

*Jesus says: "Your life comes from your connection to Me."*

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.”

**John 15:5 (NLT)**

*The branch does not create life.*

*It receives life.*

*The branch does not force fruit.*

*It bears fruit.*

**Self-sufficiency slain** *“Without me ye can do nothing.”*

**CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS.**

- 1. What does abiding in Christ look like in your life?**
- 2. What is pulling me away from Jesus?**
- 3. What noise is drowning out God’s voice?**
- 4. Where have I replaced dependence with striving?**