

# Connected - The Vine

Happy New Year! It's that time of year where we decide to make changes in our lives. We resolve to change the things we say we want changed, do the things we say we want to do, only to find ourselves making the same resolutions the next new year...

Would you believe me if I told you that I had the solution to that? It's simple...not easy, but simple.

Get Connected. This is the word that the Lord has given me for Connection Church for 2021. Last year it was "Draw Near", this year it's "Get Connected".

You see, drawing near is great, if you draw near to Jesus, He'll draw near to you. But then what? You've got to get connected!

This week starts a series called "Connected" where I'm going to dig into Jesus' revelation that He is the true vine. We'll look at the Vine, the branches, the gardner, and the fruit.

But it all starts with the Vine!

## **John 15:1-8 (NKJV)**

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Everybody got that? There are times when I read the bible and it's like getting slapped upside the head...not just in a disciplinary kind of way, but if you've ever been slapped upside the head, you know it kind of rattles your brain, and you have to regain focus, dial back in.

There's a lot going on here but we're going to take it one step at a time. And it all starts with Jesus!

**I am the true vine** - Jesus is specifically using the grapevine as an illustration here.

To Israel, the grapevine had great meaning. They were all around, people were familiar with them. At one point grapes were on their coins and a golden vine hung over the entrance to the temple. So they knew grapevines.

So why is Jesus the TRUE VINE. This word "true" in the Greek is alethinos (al-lay-thee-nos) meaning it has not only the name and resemblance, but the real nature in every respect of the name.

To make it simpler, Jesus is actually the vine. The vine is a physical representation of and spiritual truth. The grapevine demonstrates this spiritual relationship between Jesus and His people.

The vine provides life to the branches....Jesus is the source of all true life

**Acts 17:28 (NKJV)**

for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

This is where we have our being...it's our identity. Christians today have an identity crisis...it's not just that we forget who we are, but we forget who's we are!

You have your being in Christ! Guys you need to know that if you are in Christ, you are NOT who you once were...(listen closely)...even if you sometimes do what you used to do!

You are not defined by your mistakes, you are defined by His love and mercy and grace. By the blood that He shed for you on Calvary. And He said:

**You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you**

Clean - Free from corrupt desire, innocent, unstained with the guilt of anything

Word - teaching, revelation that they were sinners in need of a Savior, and Jesus was getting ready to pay the price for their sins.

At this very moment when Jesus is teaching this, Judas had already run off to betray Him. This was one of the last moments before He was handed over.

Jesus is trying to hammer home this idea of how they need to remain in Him, get connected, stay connected. You are going to do the work of Christ but you can't without being connected to the true vine!

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you....How could they already be clean (free from corrupt desire, innocent, unstained with guilt) if Jesus hadn't yet died for their sins?

God sees you as you WILL BE. In fact, I believe God thinks much more highly of most of you, than you do of yourselves...if you could only see you the way that He does...

**Zephaniah 3:17 (NKJV)**

The Lord your God in your midst,  
The Mighty One, will save;  
He will rejoice over you with gladness,  
He will quiet you with His love,  
He will rejoice over you with singing.”

Has He saved you? Then He rejoices over you! This means He takes delight in you. He enjoys you. You give God great pleasure.

This is the Vine! This is what we must be connected to...the God who saves and rejoices over you. Who will absolutely change you...but at the same time will rejoice over you even when you get tripped up in life because He enjoys you and sees you as you will be...perfected in Christ!

As the Vine, He **provides the nutrients** to the branches...meaning He sustains us. He supplies us with what is necessary for life, health, and growth!

**Colossians 2:19 (NKJV)**

and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Paul is speaking of false believers here...they don't hold fast to the Head (the Vine, Jesus) and Jesus is where ALL the body is nourished and knit together, and grows!

Somebody say "All the body". That means you, and you, and you, and me....We all get nourished...by being connected to Jesus. See you can be fed by lots of things in life, but it doesn't mean you are being nourished.

What happens to you physically when you eat a bunch of junk food? Especially sugar? You get a quick boost. Initial energy. It tastes good. It's enjoyable. BUT THEN...you get slow...you get tired...you get bloated...and you don't accomplish much of anything. In fact you probably sit around full of regret and shame wishing you had made different choices...you were fed but not nourished!

This is what sin is like to our souls. A short, temporary high, then a long slow crash of guilt and regret.

But the nourishment you get in Jesus...it not only gives you life, but a healthy life....and a healthy life is a growing life. It keeps getting better and better and better.

And when we're not experiencing that kind of life...we have to look at what we are connected to! Where are we getting fed? Facebook or Jesus? TV or Jesus? Drugs or Jesus? Beer or Jesus?

All of those other things fail to nourish you. They won't sustain you!

We are nourished by the vine...and we are knit together by the vine. Do you know how the body of Christ functions together effectively? But being connected to Jesus!

I know that seems like common sense, but there are many churches with bullies who run things the way they want and these people in many cases have lost sight of who the church belongs to...It's the bride of Christ. He is the head. He is the vine that connects all of the branches. We are not independent branches just doing what we want...we are connected to the vine and the vine has the roots!

### **Abide in Me, and I in you**

This is a state you remain in. You can't just get connected and then depart and do your own thing...you have to remain connected. It's got to be where you live...on the vine.

This takes commitment in your life. I know I just lost you guys. What has happened in our world where people don't like to commit to things anymore?

To be committed is to be dedicated...to be dedicated is to be loyal...to be loyal is to be faithful...

Are you faithful to the Lord? Because, listen...He is the true vine! He is the one that will provide all that you need...

### **2 Peter 1:2-4 (NKJV)**

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Jesus has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. But where do we get them? By being connected to Him.

True life does not start in the branch, it starts in the vine. The life in our spirit comes from Jesus, from our connection to Him. And it's only in Him that we are able to bear good fruit for the glory of God!

How dependent are you on Jesus? How much of your daily life have you surrendered to Him? It's time to give up control and just receive what He has for us...

You know we talk about making Jesus the center of our lives but have you ever really thought about what that means?

I've pictured Him in the middle and everything in a circle around Him. Because in geometry the center is the middle point...and as a human, I tend to think naturally instead of spiritually.

But when we are looking at Jesus as the center of our lives, it doesn't mean He has to be in the middle of a circle, it means He's the focus, He's what we should concentrate on.

And His rightful place isn't in the middle...it's at the top!

### **Are you connected to the vine?**

For some of you, you may think it's too late, you're too far gone, you've messed up too much.

#### **2 Timothy 2:13 (NKJV)**

If we are faithless,  
He remains faithful;  
He cannot deny Himself.

If you're willing to take that step toward Jesus, if you draw near to Him, He'll draw near to you...Get Connected!

#### **Romans 5:10 (NKJV)**

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

### **Do you remain connected?**

Is Jesus at the top in your life? Do you have the spiritual disciplines of reading the Word, praying, and serving? These things are important because they foster and develop that relationship...they keep you connected...even when you feel like you aren't. Don't let these things slip!

### **You will be My disciples.**

This means a student...a learner...and this is how you grow with the increase that is from God.