

# (John 15 #1) I Am the True Vine

by Ed Miller

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*Ed Miller explores the profound implications of Jesus as the true vine and the believer's call to abide in Him for spiritual fruitfulness.*

**Duration:** 57:46

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 18:31-34, John 15:1-2, John 15:4, John 15:6

**Topics:** "Abiding In Christ", "Divine Revelation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the statement made by Jesus, 'I am the true vine.' He emphasizes that even though the disciples had been familiar with the concept of the vine for thousands of years, it was radical for them to hear that they were not the vine. The preacher highlights the importance of God's revelation in understanding the truth, as the disciples did not comprehend the clear statements made by Jesus until God unveiled it to them. The sermon also touches on the themes of abiding in Christ and how Jesus deals with the vine.

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## Transcript

Well, good evening. It's good to be with you, and we have certainly laid this before the Lord, as I'm sure you have as well, and it's our desire that we see the Lord together, and I'm sure that's been your prayer. Before we begin, I want to remind you of a principle that is absolutely indispensable, and that principle is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit.

How we do praise the Lord for the Bible and for every aid, every assistance, every help, every book, every commentary, every word study, every atlas, every concordance, every help. But the bottom line, brothers and sisters in Christ, after you've plowed through the helps, you better come before the Lord as a little baby, and you better say, Lord, now you unveil Christ to my heart. If you don't trust God to illumine your heart to this book, he won't use what is helpful anymore.

We thank him for the helps, but they're not indispensable. His revelation is indispensable. The Bible, like our Lord Jesus, is human and divine.

We need the human side. We don't encourage or glory in ignorance. We want the scholarship, but there's also a divine side, and only God can give that.

Now, before we pray together, I'm going to ask you to turn. We will be in John 15, but for a moment, turn to Luke chapter 18, please. Luke chapter 18, verse 31, Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, Behold, we're going up to Jerusalem.

All things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. Then he gives a list. He'll be handed over to the Gentiles.

Anything puzzling about that? He'll be mocked, mistreated, spit upon. A child can understand that. After they've scourged him, they will kill him.

Third day, he'll rise again. Simple facts. Next verse, 34, But the disciples understood none of these things.

The meaning of this statement was hidden from them. They did not comprehend the things that were said. Nothing could be simpler than the facts that he gave.

He'll be handed over. He'll be beaten. He'll be scourged.

He'll be spit upon. He'll die. He'll rise.

And they said it was hidden from them. No matter how clear the statements, if God does not reveal it, we don't get it. No matter how clear it is.

So I'm going to ask you to bow with me and trust the Lord to unveil, take the veil away from our hearts, shine the light on the Lord Jesus, and then give us grace to walk in the light as he is in the light. Let's pray. Father, we thank Thee again for this precious book.

And the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts ever to make these plain statements, plain to our spirit. Speak to us. Visit us.

We know when we see your face, we will be enlightened. We'll be changed. We ask that you administer grace to our hearts, everyone, that none would be passed by, but everyone would see the Lord in a living and in a vital way.

We ask this in the all prevailing name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. If you'll turn please to John chapter 15.

Before we look at this marvelous text, I'm sure you're familiar with it, John 15, 1-17, how God's people have been blessed by this passage through the years. Now let me make a couple of introductory comments before we look into the text itself. I'm under no delusions as I come before you this evening.

I understand that this is a familiar passage, and I also got intelligence that you've already been studying it. That's one of the blessings I have in my own heart, ministering here at Family Ministries, because the text is known in advance, and you eat it up and meditate on it, and it just saves me from some donkey work. And I appreciate that.

But everybody knows what we're going to talk about. You know, Christ is the vine, and Christians are the branches, and we abide in the vine, and the vine provides for the branches, and our Father is the husbandman, and he prunes the fruitful branch. So I understand that there's nothing new here, but I am praying that even though I won't say anything you haven't heard before, that the Spirit of God would anoint it so that the reality of the truth would refresh our souls.

It doesn't have to be new, it doesn't have to be novel. It's thrilling, not because it's new. So may God refresh us as we look at these well-known, precious truths.

The second thing I want to call attention to is, I'm going to give an outline, but I also know because of the nature, this chapter preaches itself, and because of the nature of the content of this wonderful chapter, there will be overlapping. In other words, we're going to speak about the true vine, but we've got to touch abiding when you talk about the vine. And we're going to talk about abiding in Christ, and we're going to have to talk about how he deals with the vine, and we're going to go back and forth, so there will be overlapping.

And then the last thing I want to say by way of introduction is that even though we're familiar with this passage, we're not familiar with it. You know what I mean by that? Every part of God's truth has no bottom, and there's no end to anything. When you come to this book, there's just no end to it.

And though there is a wonder and a mystery here, I've asked God this weekend to enable us to appropriate and enter in to everything that he has revealed. I have an idea that sometimes we hide behind mystery as an excuse for ignorance. Somehow it sounds honorable to sit at the feet of mystery and take off our shoes and sing Holy Grail and not enter in, not claim that.

There's mystery here, but we're not going to use the mystery as an excuse for ignorance, because it's revealed mystery. And so we want to enter in. We don't want to play with things.

We're not trying to dazzle anybody with light. I'm not going to spring any truth on you. You know what we're going to talk about, but I want to enter in and ask God to help us appropriate everything that he has revealed.

John chapter 15. You know what? Perhaps we're going to read aloud those 16 verses. Maybe a couple of you can read a couple of verses and someone else.

And let's just read 1 to 16. If you feel like you'd like to share in that, just stand up and read loud enough so everyone can get it. A few verses, sit down, and then someone else will read through 16.

Every branch in me. You are already clean. Abide in me.

He bears much fruit. Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in them. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made whole. This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth doeth.

For all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should go, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you. Thank you.

Thank you, brothers. Trust the Lord with me as we go through this, that he'll unveil himself. Let me give a simple outline of what I'd like to cover this evening, tomorrow evening, Lord willing, and then on the Lord's Day.

It's a simple outline, and almost everyone who touches this text divides it up this way. Tonight, I'd like to focus on the heart of God in terms of the statement, I am the true vine. Basically, that's what I'd like us to see tonight.

Why did Jesus say that? What did he mean by that? And so by God's assistance, we want to nail down the revelation of Christ as the true vine. And then logically, we want to look at all that God intends by the truth, abide in me in order that you might bring forth fruit. What's that all about? Abiding in order to bring forth fruit.

I think beyond a doubt, the main message of this section has to do with fruit bearing through abiding in Christ the vine. And so we'd like to discuss verse 2, fruit, more fruit. Verse 5, verse 8, much fruit.

Verse 16, remaining fruit. What is all this that comes out of abiding in Christ? Apart from me, verse 5, you can do nothing. What's that all about? Sunday morning, Lord willing, we'll take the next step and ask God to unveil himself as the Vinedresser.

What does it mean that my father is the husbandman? What is pruning? How does he prune, notice, the fruitful vine? What fruit comes from the Lord out of my life that God cuts off, and why? We need to see that. We need to see that. And so, Lord willing, that's what we're going to look at tonight.

Christ the vine. Tomorrow night, Lord willing, abiding in the vine to bring forth fruit. And then, my father is the husbandman.

And what does it mean when God prunes us? And how does he do that? Chapter 15, verse 1, I am the true vine. My father is the husbandman. Let me begin by calling attention to the balance of Scripture.

The vine is a very precious illustration in the mind, in the heart of God. He didn't use it once, or twice, or three times. We say the tree planted by the water, that's a picture of the righteous man.

We say the rock, that's a picture of... we say the brook, that picture's... What does the vine picture? In the eternal councils, way back, before there was anything, and God decided, I think I'll create a vine. Why did God say that? He didn't say, I don't believe. Well, the vine, you know, spruce up the creation.

It's pretty. It's nice. Now, God had something in his heart, in his mind.

The whole creation is a museum. Everything has its spiritual counterpart. Let me give you several illustrations.

The nation Israel is about to go into Canaan. Land of milk, and honey, and wheat, and richness, pomegranates. The land of milk and honey.

Picture of Christ, the life of milk and honey. The land, the promised land. And when he wanted to picture it, you remember the story.

Numbers chapter 13. The spies go into the land, and they bring back an earnest. What did they bring back? Grapes.

God says, I better create the vine and the grapes, because I want to picture the whole promised land. And that one cluster of grapes being carried on a pole between two people. To picture the promised land.

God said, I think I'll create a vine. Go through the Bible and just trace it out. Wine, grapes, branch, vine.

Oh, it's amazing. You read in the Psalms chapter 104. Wine that makes glad the heart of man.

And so when we talk about natural joy, the world talks about wine. That's natural joy. And God says, don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit of God.

Natural joy, picturing this supernatural joy in the Lord that has no hangover. God's joy. God said, I'm going to create the vine because I want to picture the promised land.

And I want to picture the joy of the Lord. And then when he wanted to picture his people, all his people, Israel. Hosea 10.1. Israel is a luxurious vine.

We'll talk about that in another connection. When he wanted to picture what we love so much. The new covenant.

Grace. He said, it's like new wine in new wineskins. He didn't just arbitrarily invite Caprice and say, I think I'll make a vine.

When he wanted to picture the most beautiful things in his heart. He said, I'm going to create a vine to picture the promised land. I'm going to make a vine to picture the joy of the Lord.

I'm going to make a vine in order to picture my people, Israel. I'm going to use the vine to picture the new covenant. And when he wanted to picture security and safety.

1 Kings 4 and other places. He pictured his people sitting under the vine and under the fig tree. Safe and secure.

The vine. God's picture. And when he wanted us to know about his love in the song of Solomon.

He said, my love is better than wine. It's God's picture. It's God's picture of everything.

Even the negative side. When he wanted to picture the judgment. Revelation 14.

He sends out the angels to gather the clusters from the vine of the earth. To be destroyed. It's all God's picture.

And when he wanted to picture heaven. He said, I'm not going to drink this anymore with you down here. The next time I drink this.

We'll be there. Every time you see the vine. He's telling us something wonderful and something glorious.

When he begins his great ministry on the earth. And he begins his miracle. How does he begin? He turns water into wine.

It's not an accident. This is all planned by God. How precious is the vine.

And when he wanted us to remember him. You know the story. He took the cup.

The precious blood of Christ. Pitched by the juice of the grape. And when he wanted to picture his church.

He pictures them. Chapter 15 as the vine. And when he wants to picture marriage.

The right kind of marriage. He said. And the woman.  
She'd be like a fruitful vine. This is not a mistake. Every place you look.  
So don't read vine. La la la. It's one of God's most prolific pictures.  
Created on purpose to illustrate everything. You know why? Because. Say the vine.  
That's the love of God. And that's the joy of the Lord. And that's the promised land.  
And that's marriage. And that's union. And that's fellowship.  
And that's the blood of Christ. And that's the new covenant. And that's grace.  
I'm the true vine. I'm the true. Everything the vine pictures.  
All through the scriptures. Jesus said. I'm the true vine.  
No other picture that I know of. Except one I might touch on in a little while. No other picture.  
Except these two. Go so far. To say so much.  
And to communicate more. Of God's precious truth. Than this vine.  
Now at this point. This is about one day before he dies. What made him.  
Come up with this illustration. What made him think of it. Some would say because the vine.  
You know in the New Testament times. Because when Herod enlarged and beautified the temple. He had  
this tremendous.  
Elaborate vine. Over the door of the temple. It was.  
Scholars tell us it was one of the most prominent. Sites in Jerusalem. You came to Jerusalem that you had  
to stop.  
And see the vine. Scholars tell us that the clusters of grapes. That hung on that vine.  
Made out of gold. And made out of gems. Some of the clusters were the size of a man.  
And it would just hang there. One commentator I read said. In that day.  
It was estimated that just the vine. Was worth about twelve million dollars. I don't know if it was worth  
twelve.  
I'm not fighting for that. I don't care if it was worth twelve million dollars. But I'm trying to show you the  
prominence.  
Of the vine in that day. Whether that was the reason. That he thought of it.  
Or whether in the upper room. There's an open window. And the vines are coming in.  
Or whether it's because he instituted the Lord's table. And used the cup. And thought of the vine.

Or whether going down. When they departed. Into the Kidron Valley there.

On the way to Gethsemane. They went by vines. Or because he was the mighty creator.

And had planned it all. I created the vine to picture this. Whatever the reason.

He said that day. I am the true vine. I want to suggest for you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. As we press in on the heart of God. Two things that I think he meant.

When he said I'm the true vine. And if God can begin to break these two things. On us.

If he can dawn this truth on us. We'll be ready. For what it means to abide in Christ.

If you miss this. You're going to struggle with abiding in Christ. It is so basic.

So cardinal. So fundamental. To understand God's heart.

When he said I am the true vine. And I'm suggesting it means at least these two things. Let me get that before your heart.

I think he meant when he said. I am the true vine. I think he meant this.

I am the true vine. You are not. I think that's what he meant.

You're not the vine. I am the true vine. You are not.

And the reason I say that. See we don't read this with a Jewish mindset. But all along the way.

They were taught. That they were the vine. And when they put that vine up over the door.

And some visitor came. They would say see the vine. That's us.

The people of God. Israel. Now let me give you a couple of verses on that.

Turn if you would to Psalm 80. The psalmist sang about that. Psalm 80.

Verse 8. Thou broughtest the vine out of Egypt. Thou didst drive out the nations and plantest it. Thou preparest room before it.

It took deep root. It filled the land. The mountains were covered with the shadow of it.

And the boughs thereof were like cedars of God. It set out its branches to the sea. And shoots to the river.

They sang that. We are the vine that was brought out of Egypt. And planted in the land.

And spread all over. And then when they got messed up. And went under the chastening rod.

Look at verse 14. Turn again. We beseech thee.

O God of hosts. Look down from heaven. Behold.

Visit this vine. Visit this vine. They were the vine.

Israel was the vine. And the stock which thy right hand has planted. The branch that thou made strong for thyself.

Isaiah chapter 5. The prophet spoke about it. In Isaiah chapter 5 verse 1. Let me now sing for my beloved. A song of my beloved.

Concerning his vineyard. My well beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. He dug it all around.

Removed its stones. And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in the middle of it.

And he hewed out a wine vat in it. He expected it to produce good grapes. But it produced only worthless grapes.

What's the vineyard? Isaiah 5.7 The vineyard of the Lord of hosts. Is the house of Israel. The men of Judah.

Are his delightful plant. Everywhere they went they were the vine. They went into their Bible.

They're the vine. God took them out of Egypt. God planted them in the land.

They are the choice plant. Jeremiah spoke of it in chapter 2. 21 I planted you a choice vine. A completely faithful seed.

How you turned yourself into a degenerate vine. Everywhere you turned. They were the vine.

And when they were judged. The prophet said. God has laid his vine waste.

It's his vine. It's his people. It's Israel.

The idea of being God's vine. Being cared for by the Lord. Being watered day and night.

Being watched over. That gave them a national pride. They were glad to be God's vine.

And they were glad to tell everybody they were God's vine. Now it's true that God called them a vine. Why did he choose vine? It's easy to remember.

John 15. Ezekiel 15. Because in Ezekiel.

He gives the clue why he used vine for that. They didn't get it. But that's why.

Listen to Ezekiel 1. 15. 1. The word of the Lord came to me saying. Son of man.

How is the word. How is the wood of the vine. Better than any wood of a branch.

Which is among the trees of the forest. Can wood be taken from it to make anything. Can man make a peg from it on which to hang a vessel.

If it's been put into the fire for fuel. And the fires consume both of its ends. And its middle part has been charred.

Is it useful for anything. Behold if while it is intact. It's not made into anything.

How much less. When the fires consumed it. And it's charred.

Can it be made into anything. Why God choose the vine. Because it's worthless wood.

That's why it was a picture of Israel. They didn't get that. But that's why he chose it.

Because you can't do anything. You can't make a stool out of a vine. You can't make a hat rack out of a vine.

What can you make out of a vine. Maybe a wreath or a whistle. That's all you can do with a vine.

You can't go to Scott's Furniture. Give me something in grapevine. They probably don't carry it.

Ezekiel tried to point out. If the wood of a vine is worthless. When it's alive.

If it's cut off. And if it's put into fire and burned. What are you going to do with that wood.

And even when Israel was under chastening. And when they were cut off and charred and burned on both ends. They still didn't get it.

And they said. We are God's vine. You missed a point.

You should read Ezekiel. You should know why God called you the vine. In the first place.

But they didn't get it. Well by the time we come to the New Testament. They've had you know 4,000 years of this.

There's the vine. Gold vine. Beautiful vine.

I'm the vine. And Jesus comes up on this last day. He says.

Before I go. You need to know. You are not the vine.

That blew them away. That absolutely. That was radical.

For them to hear that. That was such an amazing statement. That they were not the vine.

Look at John 15. 4 and 5. Please. Sometimes it takes years to learn this.

And sometimes we have to be shocked out of it too. Because even though you know we hold the creed. And we're orthodox.

And we say we believe the truth. Unless God convinces you. You're not the vine.

You're going to try to be the vine. But unless God shocks me. And jolts me.

Out of this idea. It's ingrained. We think we're the vine.

Verse 4 and 5. Abide in me. And I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit.

Except it abide in the vine. Neither can you. Except you abide in me.

Without me. Finish it. You know when we look at verses for the deity of Christ.

We look for verses that Jesus is God. Sometimes there's better verses than those verses that say Jesus is God. Think of one of your neighbors.

Just one of them. You got a name in mind? Go over to that neighbor. Knock at the door.

Not to the whole world. Just the neighbor. And say without me you can do nothing.

You know what they'll say? Who do you think you are? What kind of arrogance is that? Our Lord Jesus said to the whole world. Without me you can do nothing. He's God.

Or he's a madman. To say something like that. What a revelation that is.

Apart from me you can do nothing. And the reason it's so hard to grasp that. Is because we've proved him wrong many times.

Without me you can do nothing. Yes I can. I can do a lot of stuff without God.

I can. And so can you. I'm not going to point fingers.

But I'll bet you there are ministries. That have been built. That have not come from God.

And churches. And missions. And seminaries.

And Bible schools. And families. And lives.

We do it all the time. What does he mean? Without me he can do nothing. Without him we do a lot of stuff.

And we get involved in a lot of work. Here's what he meant. Without me he can do nothing that can be called fruit.

He can do a lot of stuff. But nothing that is called fruit. And nothing that will remain.

And nothing that will glorify God. That's what he meant. Without me he can do nothing.

As long as we look to some vine that is not Jesus. If we think we're the vine. Or if we think the church is the vine.

Or we think some ministry is the vine. Or some man or some woman is the vine. We're in big trouble.

Jesus said I'm the true vine. And by that he meant. You're not the vine.

I'm not the vine for me. And I'm not the vine for you. And you're not the vine for you.

And you're not the vine for me. And we're not the vine for us. I don't know where to go with that.

But you get the idea. Our Lord Jesus is the vine. You know, I'm not going to get into my testimony.

But for years I thought I was the vine. You ever try to do God's stuff? You get so tired. You faint.

You can't do it. You get so discouraged and so frustrated. And you try to live off your own energy.

And you try to generate and build up this zeal. And get involved. You've been there.

Jesus said that he was the true vine. That's not the main thing he meant though. When he said I'm the vine.

You're not. He certainly meant that. But let me suggest another thing that he meant.

When he said I am the true vine. I think he meant that I am the vine. That is I created the vine to picture something.

And I am the reality that I pictured that vine to create. In the original, I am the genuine vine. I am the reality that answers to the vine.

If the vine pictures the promised land and natural joy. And supernatural joy. And the love of God and the new covenant.

And security. And heaven. And that whole list I gave you.

He's saying I'm the true vine. The reality of all of that. I want you to imagine with me.

Humor me. Play with me here. I want you to go back in your imagination.

Because I'm going to put words in God's mouth. I don't want to be irreverent. But I think on the level of earth we've got to create things to get us looking in the right direction.

I think it went something like this. We're in eternity past. There's nothing.

There's no angels. There's no earth. There's no life.

There's nothing. And God's up there and I speak as a fool. And he's trying to figure out what he's going to do.

I think I'll create something because I want to communicate me. And I'm going to create things to picture me. I'm going to make a great museum that they can live in.

And so I need to communicate my truth to them. And so God thinks how can I communicate life? I'm the life. I want them to have life.

I want them to have life with a capital L. I want them to have abundant life. How can I communicate life? And I think God said I know what I'll do. I'll create life.

Because that's a great illustration of life. I'll create biology to illustrate life. And then I know when I create life that they'll look at life and they'll study life and they'll observe life and maybe they'll catch on.

I'll put life everywhere. I'll put life in the air and I'll put life in the sea and I'll put life on the land and I'll make bugs and I'll make birds and I'll make elephants and I'll make fish and I'll make plants and mushrooms and I'll make life everywhere. And so every time they turn around they're going to say life, life, life, maybe they'll catch on.

And I'll just make that so that they'll understand. He also created inorganic things which is another picture we won't get into. That is just as thrilling but we won't touch that.

And so God's plan was to create an organic world. Crawling, buzzing, teeming with life. Life in the river, life in the puddle, life in the drop, life in the air, life, life everywhere.

And you know I'm right, it's there. You see it. And so God carefully designed this plan that all organisms have in common.

This something, they don't know what to call it, they call it protoplasm. And they break it down and they say well it's got carbon and it's got hydrogen and it's got nitrogen. But there's something missing.

It's called life and they don't know what it is. They just recognize it. And it's different from a stone because a stone doesn't have that thing called life.

A bug has life, a stone doesn't have life. And there's an unbridgeable gulf between the stone and the plant and the flower and the insect. Life.

I'm not trying to define life, I'm just trying to recognize that God made this on purpose. It's a fact. And then God said that's what I'll do, I'll make all of that life.

But I've got to be careful not to make anything that lives independently alive. Not one thing in life can have independent life. Because that will ruin my picture.

So God said alright now I've got life. Now I think I will create something to sustain that life. Something to support that life.

Something to maintain, to develop that life. So that that life can survive and grow and develop and multiply. I think I'll make the environment.

All that happened in the Eternal Councils. I know that. And God just said I'm going to make the environment so that life can live.

I've created a zillion forms of life and now I've got to make an element in which they can live and move and have their being. And so it came to pass and you know it, that this world consists of life, organic life. And in every living thing is that principle of life.

But in no living thing is the condition of life. The conditions of life are in the environment. The principle of life is in the organism.

And so I have lungs but I need the atmosphere. And so I have a stomach. You've noticed that I have a stomach.

I need food. God has made me in such a way and everything so that the living thing needs the environment. Then God said in my museum I'm going to have to see to it that the organism can only live as it has union with the environment.

If that is broken the organism will die. He made it that way. It was on purpose.

God designed it that way. What is life for an organism on the level of earth in the words of science? What is life? Life is just an organism living in union with its environment. What is death? Death is when that organism is cut off somehow from its environment.

If it's cut off a little bit it dies a little bit. When it's finally cut off it's altogether dead. And so the deaf are dead to the whole world of sound.

They're cut off from that part of the environment. And the blind are cut off from the whole world. They're dead to the whole world of sight.

Sometimes the environment changes. Sometimes we change. And we have to adjust.

And you can read all that in your science book. I can run from a storm. I can run maybe from cold weather.

But sometimes something happens maybe in here and I can't run anymore. And I'm cut off from the environment. God made it that way on purpose because he wanted to say, I'm the true vine.

I am the environment. I am the element of the branch. I created all that to show that I am the environment.

And in me, he says, they will live, move, and have their being. Christ is the Christian's environment. Now God didn't need to do it that way.

He didn't need to create a universe to make him happy. He was a happy God before you came along. Happy God before I came along.

He had joy and fullness and completeness and purpose. It was all inside of God. He didn't need to create an angel or an archangel.

He knew he doesn't need me. All the Christians in the world gathered together from every age and generation wouldn't be enough to make one priest to worship him as he ought to be worshiped. Every living thing he's ever made all put together.

Couldn't be an offering for him. He's Almighty God. He's El Shaddai.

He's Jehovah. He's sufficiency. But he wanted us to see it.

He didn't have to stoop to picture himself as a mother hen or an eagle or a rock or a vine. He did that to accommodate and gratify our weakness. So that we could understand.

To make himself visible. What's suggested in John 15 under the figure of the vine and the branches is fully developed in the epistles of the New Testament. Let me do just a little more donkey work with you and try to stay with me on this.

For 4,000 years, through 44 books of the Bible, we never had this great revelation. It wasn't until Pentecost. It wasn't until the Holy Spirit came that he unveiled this truth that you can't even open the epistles without seeing it.

In Christ Jesus. Why is that so prominent in the Bible, in the New Testament? In Christ, that's your environment. In Christ, that's your element.

Christ is your native air. Christ is your native food. Christ is your native drink.

Christ is your native rest. Christ is now your element. You live in him.

You move in him. You breathe in him. It's all in Christ Jesus.

In the Lord. In Christ Jesus. We're not just externally connected like two parallel lives.

He's got his life. I've got my life. We're together.

We're in it. It's not just that we receive his truth. That we preach his gospel.

Not just that we're saved from hell and destined for heaven. That's true. But now it's something wonderful.

Something new God has done. He's come inside. And now he wants to live out his life.

This is a glorious thing. Open the New Testament and begin to read. We are partakers of everything he's ever done.

He died. We died in him. He was buried.

We're buried in him. He rose. We rose in him.

He ascended. We ascended in him. He's seated.

We're seated in him. He's coming. We're coming in him.

We're identified with Christ. He's become our environment. He's the ground on which we stand.

He's the air that we breathe. He's our element now. He's the vine.

The true vine. Churches mentioned in the Bible are in Christ Jesus. They're found in Christ.

Preserved in Christ. Saved in Christ. Sanctified in Christ.

Rooted and grounded in Christ Jesus. Made perfect in Christ Jesus. Our ways are said to be ways in Christ Jesus.

Our conversation is now in Christ Jesus. Our faith. Our hope.

Our love is in Christ Jesus. We're told to think in the Lord. Walk in the Lord.

Labor in the Lord. Suffer in the Lord. Triumph in the Lord.

Everything is in the Lord. I'm to receive you in the Lord. You're to receive me in the Lord.

I'm to forgive you in the Lord. You're to forgive me in the Lord. Wives, submit to your husbands in the Lord.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord. What's all this in the Lord? In Christ Jesus. We've put on Christ.

He's our environment. The truth we hold is the truth as it is in Jesus. God's will has become God's will in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Everything is in Christ. Why? He's our environment. When we die, we die in the Lord.

We sleep in Jesus. Those who are dead in Christ. It's all in Christ Jesus.

When He appears, we appear with Him in glory in Christ Jesus. He has literally become our environment. Our life.

Our element in which we live and move and have our being. The gospel does not just give us new information about a covenant. The gospel informs us about our state in Christ Jesus.

It remains for us to draw from Christ our life, our environment, our element to abide in Him. Then we'll begin to learn our capacities and our possessions, our responsibilities and our duties and our destinies. How we relate to God.

How we relate to people. How we relate to heaven. How we relate to earth.

Oh brothers and sisters in Christ. The fullness of the wonder of that truth. I'm the true mind.

All that's included in that. Everything is in Christ Jesus. I wonder if you've ever seen that idea.

That Christ is your environment. My son Daniel, thanks to Rick Baker, has taken up a sport called diving. You should see him in his gear.

Talk about a strange looking guy. His feet look funny. He wears a rubber suit.

He's got a strange tank on his back. He's got strange gloves on his hands. He's got some strange thing over his face.

And he walks real slow and funny. He's got a big belt with big lead things on it. Where are you going? You strange creature.

I'll tell you where he's going. He's going to an environment where he doesn't belong. That's not his element.

He doesn't belong down there with the fish and the lobsters. And so you know what he's got to do? He's got to take his environment with him. And so he looks a little strange.

And he loads up with his environment to go down into this strange environment. You know what a Christian is? He's somebody who lives. He doesn't belong here anymore.

It's not his element anymore. You don't read in the Bible, Paul says, I am in prison. You never read that.

You know what you read? I am in Christ in prison. You're not in prison. That's why he could be so happy there.

You know why? Because he carried his environment with him. That guy was always absent from the body. In prison with the Lord.

Every time you look at Paul, he wasn't in trouble. He was in Christ in trouble. He wasn't in the sea.

He was in Christ in the sea. He took his environment with him. And so can you.

And so can I. And the wonder of living in this new environment called Jesus Christ. I'm the true vine. What did he mean by that? I'll tell you what he meant.

He meant, I'm the vine, not you. But he also meant, I am the vine. I am your environment.

I am your element. I am your life. And everything you do is going to be from that.

You know, I read a little further down, and it sort of shocked me. It said, if you abide in me and I abide in you, I expected it to say, you shall bear fruit. It didn't say that.

It said, if I abide in you and you abide in me, you ask what you will. And I'll give it. What's that all about? Prayer.

Oh, I'll tell you, it's the one. You see, God made organic life, and he made the environment, and he made the organic life to receive. That's all it does.

It just receives the environment. It just takes. The environment's the great giver, and the organic life's just the great receiver, and it just takes.

And it never even asks. And God said, that's because organic life's going to pass away, and the environment's going to pass away, because that's just a picture. The reality is, I want you to have life, and I am your environment, and that's not going to pass away.

And one of the most wonderful things, what is faith? It's the Christian reaching out for his environment. That's all faith is. And it's so beautiful that now we can talk to our environment.

If you abide in him, you can talk to him, and say, these are my needs, and he provides. This is a marvelous thing. We need to understand what it means to live from that.

But tonight, may God help us to see. I'm the true vine. You are not the vine.

I am the true vine. Everything I created divine to picture is found in abundant fullness in me. I am your life.

I am your element. I am your environment. And you can carry me, and they'll look at you, and say, what a stray, look how he walks.

So strange. Peculiar people that. And you'll live.

And you'll live because you're connected to another environment. Your conversation, your life is in heaven. I pray that God will teach us how to live in our environment.

How to move in our environment. How to exist in our environment. We're not doing it.

The church is on life support. They haven't learned to live from their environment. They're sick.

They're fainting. They're dying all over the place. Because they haven't learned.

I'm the true vine. And you're the branches. And I made it that way on purpose.

I put it as a picture. And we miss it every time we turn around. God graces.

God give us eyes to see it. And begin to learn what it means to have Jesus Christ as your element. Your environment.

The true vine. Let's pray. Father, we thank you.

Not for what we think we know this means. But for everything you have inspired it to mean. Burned in our hearts indelibly.

The truth. That you are the true vine. Thank you that you're going to do this in a way that far exceeds anything we could ask or think.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.

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