

Stay connected

John 15.1-8

Jesus describes himself as the true vine, his Father (God) as the gardener, and his disciples as the branches. He urges his followers to stay connected to him as the only way to be fruitful, and explains that we must expect and accept some 'pruning' to enable us to grow.

Now read **John 15.1-8** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

In the Old Testament, Israel was described as the vine and yet often failed in its calling, so it is significant that Jesus calls himself the true vine. He emphasises the need for the disciples to stay connected to the vine because, of course, unattached branches cannot bear fruit. He goes on to explain that any fruitfulness we experience is not an end in itself, but for the purpose of bringing glory to God.

EXPERIMENT

You will need: a glass of water, bright food colouring, a stick of celery or a white flower with a long stem. Add a few drops of food colouring to the water; stir until the colour is uniform.

Place the celery/flower in the water. Watch what happens during the day as the plant sucks up the water. How might this be a symbol of abiding in Jesus? Pray about the effect Jesus could have on you – and others – if you 'stay connected'.

What might help you to remain in the right place to grow?



OUTDOORS

Try and connect with God outdoors through creation, perhaps by doing something unusual e.g. hug a tree (if you're with other people, find the biggest tree you can and see if you can hold hands round it); lie/roll on the grass; splash in a stream; watch an insect closely; look at the stars through binoculars (DON'T LOOK AT THE SUN!). How do you feel connected to God as you do this?

Daily Prayer

Use these three simple prayers at the same time each day this week.

Morning

Lord, help me to abide in you today, especially when I am doing...

Lunchtime

Lord, help me to know whether or not I am connecting to you today.

Evening

Lord, I am sorry for any times when I drifted away from you today; especially...



Take the opportunity this bank holiday weekend to do some 'lifestyle pruning'.

For example: go through your wardrobe or cupboards to find where you have too much 'stuff'; take some to a charity shop, to be loved and used by someone else (or, if it is rubbish, to a recycling centre).

If you have a garden, do some weeding and, as you do this, ask God to show you where there is 'stuff' in your life that might be hindering your relationship with him.

Invite God to help you clear it out.

STAY CONNECTED

Is there anyone you haven't spoken or written to in a while? Make time to contact them this week. Perhaps you could send a picture of a part of God's creation that you have felt closely connected to recently, explaining what it has meant for you and inviting them to respond with their thoughts.