



[John 15:1-6](#)

(1) "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. (2) He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. (3) You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. (4) Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. (5) "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (6) If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

New International Version

[John 15:1-6](#) deals with the productivity achieved in our lives after conversion begins. This teaching begins to make abundantly clear how much we need Him. Interestingly, what Jesus teaches in John 6 about being the bread of life—which also shows how much we need Him—occurred fairly early in His ministry. The exhortation here occurs at the end of His ministry, speaking to His disciples following His final [Passover](#) observance. He confirms that what the Father desires to be produced in our relationship cannot be produced apart from Christ. This passage is a final admonition for us to make every effort to remain "in" Him, not allowing what just happened with Judas to happen to us. By betraying His Savior, Judas abandoned the responsibility imposed by the New Covenant.

For the moment, consider the beginning of the relationship. We can overlook the arresting fact that, without Jesus paying the penalty for our sins, there would be no future except for death. Without it, there would be no looking forward to a joyous and productive life in the [Kingdom of God](#). In fact, there

would be no relationship at all. Without Him providing this for us, there would be no [hope](#) at all. Could we pay the penalty for [sin](#) and continue living?

Understanding the symbolism Jesus used is helpful in grasping how much we need what Christ did and does. To glean as much as we can from this, we need to tie it to its wider context, Jesus' final Passover with His disciples. Certain references to bread are made as part of Jesus' change of the Passover symbols, which helps to tie the symbolism together with His crucifixion for our forgiveness. Paul writes in [I Corinthians 11:23-24](#):

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take eat; this is My body [which is broken for you](#); do this in remembrance of Me."

In John 6, bread plays an important role. It is frequently used as a metaphor for Christ Himself. I Corinthians 11 clearly ties bread, also named in [John 13:18](#), to the giving of His body in [the crucifixion](#). [I Corinthians 11:25-26](#) adds:

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

This second symbol is important to grasping what Christ teaches in [John 15:1-6](#) correctly. The vine He speaks of is obviously the grape vine. He clearly states that He is the vine and that we are the branches attached to Him. Just as grapes can be produced only by a shoot that remains attached to the vine, we can produce spiritual fruit that pleases the Father and thus be in the Kingdom of [God](#) only if we remain attached to [Jesus Christ](#). In this illustration, all nourishment that results in fruit must come from the vine. He not only pays the penalty of our sins, but He also supplies the spiritual nourishment to produce fruit that glorifies the Father and prepares us for life in God's Kingdom.

[John 8:31-32](#) reminds us that continuing in His Word is the key to knowing the truth and becoming free. This greatly enhances the production of fruit. Thus, if we fulfill our responsibility, we are in that sense in partnership with Him in performing our duties under the New Covenant. A wonderful additional benefit of remaining in Christ is that those who faithfully fulfill their roles are not gathered up and cast into the fire, as [John 15:6](#) warns.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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