



John's Schedule

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What matters most in life is that which will survive our earthly pilgrimage, as is clearly seen in John 15. This series leads you to the feet of the One we need to know, the One we need to hear, and the One who alone can make us ready for the greatest day of our lives! You will be introduced to the Vinedresser --- the heavenly Father who is always watching over each of us.

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Our Father the VINEDRESSER



Part 30 (020203AM)

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It was tough to grow grapes in the Bible times. Can you imagine a farm on paper thin soil? Soil that was only like frosting spread finely over massive rocky hillsides, that was parched by the relentless sun mercilessly beating down from cloudless days? So soil and moisture were scarce, rocks and hot days were plentiful. Not a very good growing plan, but yet the vineyards of the Land flourished. Why? The skill and persistence of the vinedressers. This morning may I introduce our Father the Vinedresser? He is the One we see at work in [John 15:1-2](#). Please turn there again with me.

[John 15:1-2](#) "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.

This morning our Father the Vinedresser is here. He is looking at us.

- If we are cast down in the mud of sin **He chastens us** and spiritually lifts us back up into the sunlight of fellowship.
- If we are flourishing with external growth but not producing much fruit (by giving, sowing and reaping, spirit walking, flesh denying and so on...as we saw last time) **He prunes us** by cutting away at our rambling growth until we bear more fruit.
- And finally if we are fruitful and bearing more fruit, at special times **He invites us** to allow Him to even more prune in our lives until we bear MUCH FRUIT!

Our Father the Vinedresser - He chastens us as needed; He prunes us as needed; He invites us as needed - all so we will be more fruitful.

So the question we need to ask ourselves is, how is my fruitfulness coming. Do you have fruit already sent up? Are you bearing fruit today? Are you living to protect your future fruitfulness? With those questions before us, look again with me at our Father the VINEDRESSER!

One of the principal reasons for pruning grape vines is to keep them healthy. Any leaf spots, diseased leaves or branches were quickly pruned for the good of the entire vine. This morning we are celebrating the most intimate of all our worship services. We are celebrating our oneness with Christ our Vine.

Because of that our Father the Vinedresser asks that we get ready, that we clean up, and come humbly before His Table. When the New Testament church met for celebrating the Lord's Supper they were exhorted to prepare by a time of heart searching. This time was described by Paul in [1 Corinthians 11:27-32](#). Please stand with me as we read God's Word.

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in **an unworthy manner** will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in **an unworthy manner** eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 **For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.** 31 For if we would **judge ourselves**, we would not be judged. 32 **But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.**

That is why our Father the Vinedresser chastens and prunes us. He wants us to stay healthy. The Lord Himself wants you and me to in spiritual health and fruitfulness. This morning we can be warned of the danger of un-judged living (which is chastening and pruning) by comparing the deadliness of sin in our lives to the dangers of cancer in our bodies.

Sin unchecked is deadly, destructive, and never tolerated for long by our Father the Vinedresser. Listen to the description that a Christian physician wrote that powerfully portray our life as a part of Christ's body. His premise is that we must guard from allowing sin to multiply in our lives and destroy our fruitfulness and health.

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Part: 4	Jesus: I AM the Bread of Life
Part: 3	Jesus: I am the LIGHT in the Wilderness
Part: 2	Jesus: I AM the Light to follow
Part: 1	Jesus: I AM the Light to Trust

Sometimes a dreaded thing occurs in the body - mutiny - resulting in a tumor... A tumor is called benign if its effect is fairly localized and it stays within membrane boundaries. But the most traumatizing condition in the body occurs when cancer cells defy inhibition. They multiply without any checks on growth, spreading a rapidly throughout the body, choking out normal cells. White cells, armed against foreign invaders, will not attack the body's own mutinous cancer cells. Physicians fear no other malfunction more deeply than cancer. For still mysterious reasons, these cells -and they may be cells from the brain, liver, kidney, bone, blood, skin, or other tissues-grow wild, out of control. Each is a healthy, functioning cell, but disloyal, no longer acting in regard the rest of the body.

Even the white cells, the dependable palace guard, can destroy the body through rebellion. Sometimes they recklessly reproduce, clogging the bloodstream, overloading the lymph system, strangling the body's normal functions-such as leukemia,

In His warnings to the church, Jesus Christ showed no concern about the shocks and bruises His Body would meet from external forces. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against my church," He said flatly (Matthew 16:18). He moved easily, unthreatened, among sinners and criminals. But He cried out against the kind of danger that comes from within.

Few doctrines are more important than the Church. Because of the constant attack, we need to be good students of the subject. Because disease can diminish the effectiveness of the Body, we must maintain habits of health. Furthermore, a regular checkup by the Great physician is a must. Not once a year but as least once a week. And be prepared for the cost of that visit[1].

1 GOD WANTS TO MAKE EACH DAY OF OUR LIFE FRUITFUL

We are looking at the seventh and final of Christ's great titles: **I AM THE TRUE VINE** (15:1) - Jesus is all I need to be fruitful to the last day of my life, apart from Him is only continual withering. Left alone a grape plant will always favor new growth over more grapes. The result? From a distance, luxurious growth, an impressive achievement. Up close, an under-whelming harvest.

2 ALL BELIEVERS BEAR FRUIT

A true branch[2], united with the vine, will always bear fruit. Not every branch bears a bumper crop, just as not every field has a bumper harvest (Matt. 13:8, 23), but there is always fruit where there is life. But the question still remains about what "takes away" means. The answer[3] comes in two parts. First, a clearer translation of the Greek word *airo*, rendered in John 15:2 as "take away," would be "take up" or "lift up." Remember the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible, so look at how God's Word uses this word. We find accurate renderings of *airo*, for example, when the disciples "took up" twelve baskets of food after the feeding of the five thousand:

- Matthew 14:20 So they all ate and were filled, and they **took up** twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.

This word is used again when Simon was forced to "bear" Christ's cross:

- Matthew 27:32 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to **bear** His cross.

In fact, in both the Bible and in Greek literature, *airo* never means "cut off." Therefore, when some Bibles render the word as "takes away" or "cut off" in John 15, it is an unfortunate interpretation rather than a clear translation. "Lifts up," suggest an image of a vinedresser leaning over to lift up a branch.

3 ABIDING IS THE KEY

To abide in Christ is to continue to draw from His fullness. It is not a question of my sufficiency, my strength, or my anything. It is solely a matter of His sufficiency. The branch is simply a conduit, through which flows the fruity-producing juices, which result in the lovely clusters of grapes. Of course the key to this passage is the word *abide*; it is used eleven times in John 15:1-11. What does it mean to "abide"? It means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us to produce fruit.

4 DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT IS FRUIT?

God's Word describes no less than seven different, yet closely related types of fruit. These are:

1. SOWING AND WATERING FRUIT:
2. FLESH DENYING FRUIT:
3. GIVING (MONEY AND TIME) FRUIT:
4. SPIRIT WALKING FRUIT:
5. SERVING FRUIT:
6. SPEAKING FRUIT:
7. FASTING AND PRAYING FRUIT:

5 WATCH OUR FATHER AT WORK

The farmer of this vineyard in John 15 is our Heavenly Father. As our personal vinedresser He prunes us as an earthly farmer would tend to his grape branches in two ways:

1. he cuts away dead wood that can breed disease and insects, and
2. he cuts away living tissue so that the life of the vine will not be so dissipated that the quality of the crop will be jeopardized. In fact[4], the vinedresser will even cut away whole bunches of grapes so that the rest of the crop will be of higher quality. God wants both quantity and quality.

6 HOW DOES GOD PRUNE IN OUR LIVES?

1. Revelation 2-3 shows Christ walking amidst his church. Note His words to Thyatira in [Revelation 2:18-23](#) "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 19 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. 20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 **And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.**

2. John speaks of a sin unto death that appears to be discipline and chastening in [1 John 5:16](#) If anyone sees his brother sinning **a sin which does not lead to death**, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who **commit sin not leading to death**. **There is sin leading to death**. I do not say that he should pray about that.

3. Then of course our text this morning of [1 Corinthians 11:28-31](#).

The greatest judgment God could bring to a believer would be to let him alone, let him have his own way. Because God loves us, He "prunes" us and encourages us to bear more fruit for His glory. Your Heavenly Father is never nearer to you than when He is pruning you. Sometimes He cuts away the dead wood that might cause trouble; but often He cuts off the living tissue that is robbing you of spiritual vigor. How does the Father prune us?

1. SOMETIMES OUR FATHER USES HIS WORD TO CONVICT AND CLEANSE US. (The word translated "purge" in [John 15:2](#) is the same as "clean" in [John 13:10](#).) [John 13:10](#) Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely **clean**; and you are **clean**, but not all of you." [Ephesians 5:26-27](#) that He might sanctify and **cleanse** her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.
2. SOMETIMES OUR FATHER THE VINEDRESSER MUST CHASTEN US ([Heb. 12:1-11](#)). At the time, it hurts when He removes something precious from us; but as the "spiritual crop" is produced, we see that the Father knew what He was doing.

THE WAY GOD WORKS WITH SOILED NO FRUIT BELIEVERS

To understand discipline please turn over to [Hebrews 12:5-11](#).

One Bible expositor writes this[5] as he examines this passage: "*If your life consistently bears no fruit, God will intervene to discipline you*". The two key words that describe this are "*lift up and clean*". This should transform the way we see this passage. God is speaking to believers and making clear His unwillingness to allow persistent unfruitfulness in their lives. A grapevine in Christ's day that grew along the ground would soon be covered with dust, mud, and the damage that comes from being walked upon in the pathways between the rows of grapevines. Also the branches in the dirt are shaded from direct light.

1. *Degree 1: Rebuke* - "My son, do not...be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him" (v.5). We hear God's rebuke, even though we don't always choose to respond. God can make Himself heard in many ways: a prick of our conscience, a timely word from another person, a Scripture, the preaching of God's Word, or conviction by the Holy Spirit. (Do you see how wonderful and kind it is of God to use so many methods to get our attention and steer us away from peril?)
2. *Degree 2: Chasten* - "For whom the Lord loves He chastens" (v. 5). In other places in the Bible, the word *chastening* is used interchangeably with discipline. But in our text we find a specific use that shows a more serious degree of discipline. Chastening is something you feel as emotional anxiety, frustration, or distress. What used to bring you joy now doesn't. Pressures increase at work, at home, in your health or finance. Many Christians bump along in this level of discipline, yet fail to read the signs. They feel unfulfilled at church, critical of their Christian friends, and "on the outs" with God. When they pick up their Bible, it feels like a lead weight instead of a welcome relief. Their relationship with the Lord, seems blighted by a sadness or lethargy they can't quite trace. If any of these symptoms sound familiar, you don't need to go to church more or try to read your Bible with a better attitude. You need to look for ongoing sin in your life, the dirt crusting over your leaves and cutting you off from God's best. If you don't respond, love will compel your Father to take more drastic measures.
3. *Degree 3: Scourge* - "And scourges every son whom He receives" (v. 6). To scourge is to whip, to inflict punishment. It's the same word the Gospels use to describe what the Romans did to Jesus just before they crucified Him. Not a pretty picture! In fact, for the word *scourge* you could substitute *cause-excruciating pain*. What percentage of Christians do you think have experienced scourging? It may shock you to read that God scourges "every son." That means you have most likely already been scourged in your life.

THE PAINFUL CLEANSING OF CHASTENING

Now the key to Christ's chastening and its duration: "It's All Up To You, Once believers understand God's motive in discipline, an astonishing truth dawns: *The discipline doesn't have to continue! It's all up to me. I will only experience pain as long as I hang on to my sin.* If you're still wondering whether you are in a season of discipline, ask yourself this question: *Can I look back over my walk with God and see very clearly that a sinful behavior I used to be caught up in is no longer an issue? Are there thoughts, attitudes, or habits that used to dominate my life but don't anymore?* If you can answer yes, you're moving forward and upward with God. If you can't, you are undoubtedly being disciplined.

[1] Adapted and quoted from Brand and Yancey, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made.

[2] Quoted from Wiersbe, Warren W., The Bible Exposition Commentary, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[3] Bruce Wilkinson, Secrets of The Vine. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001,p. 21 -35.

[4] Bruce Wilkinson, Secrets of The Vine. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001,p. 21 -35.

[5] Bruce Wilkinson, Secrets of The Vine. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001,p. 39-48.

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