

“STEPS TO SPIRITUAL SUCCESS”
Big Idea . . . Part 1: I AM THE TRUE VINE
John 15:1-8

INTRO: The 7th and final gigantic affirmation of Jesus concerning His deity. Twice He declares, “I AM the Vine” (v. 1,5). In this passage, Jesus details the steps for spiritual success. This saying is part of the private instruction that last evening.

Context:

- Chs. 1-12 Public Ministry (3 yrs)
- Chs. 13-17 Private Instruction (1 night)
- Chs. 18-21 Passion Victory ((, 1 week)
- John 13-17 Private Instruction
- Chs. 13-14 Upper Room
- Chs. 15-17 Enroute to Garden
- READ John 15:1-8, 11

Chs. 13-17, Jesus comforts His disciples just before His death. Temple Mount picture . . . Wilkinson pp. 12-13 . . . We *must understand three symbols* to get the meaning of this passage (Vine, Vinedresser, Branches). Pictures of Vines . . . Grapevines are everywhere. Why grapes? Not money, military, letter . . .

I. THE VINE IS THE SON (vv. 1, 5)

- A. *God’s vine in OT was symbolized in the nation Israel* (Exo. 14:17; Isa. 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Psa. 80:8-16). God planted them in Canaan to bear fruit. They came up empty (Isa. 5:2, 4 “bad”). In Jer. 2:21 Israel is described as . . .
- B. *God’s vine in the NT is personalized in Jesus Christ*. He too was planted by God. He is more than a symbol. He is the True (faithful as opposed to Israel) Vine Matt. 21:33-41.
- C. The Vine is the source of life – the Trunk.

II. THE VINEDRESSER IS THE FATHER (v. 1b, 2, 6)

- A. The Vinedresser plants the vine as He did with Israel and Christ. He is responsible to provide and care for His vineyard.
- B. The Vinedresser does something to those branches not bearing any fruit – these He “cuts off” or takes away and removes (more later).
- C. The Vinedresser does something to those branches not bearing enough fruit (v. 2). He “prunes” them (more later).

III. THE BRANCHES ARE CHRISTIANS - Words aimed at those who’ve already established relationship with Him (v. 3). Verses 2 and 4 speak of our position (“in me”); v.5 of our production (“fruit”).

There’s no need for an identity crisis. Jesus tells us who we are (branches). He is the Vine. We are here to bear fruit to glorify God. Two kinds mentioned and both are in union with Him (v. 2, 4, 5).

- A. *FRUITFUL & PRODUCTIVE* Branches - obedient
 - B. *FRUITLESS AND BARREN* Branches – disobedient
- All do not respond alike (NF, F, MF, MMF) - degrees

IV. Series Title: “Steps to Spiritual Success”

- A. Defining “SPIRITUAL SUCCESS” – Not world’s definition, but God’s. All of life is “spiritual”. Spiritual success is bearing fruit for His glory and our joy. It IS the overflowing abundant life (Jn. 10:10)
- B. Steps overview:
 - 1. #1 Accept the Master’s *Purpose* (His Why) – 15:8 glorify God. All created to glorify God – everything. The world says there are many answers to why we exist: pleasure, money, love, family, etc. God says there is only one answer. “The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever” (Westminster Shorter Catechism). This is our purpose (Psalms 16:8-11). Look at v. 8 (glorify God) and v. 11 (our joy).
 - 2. #2 Adopt the Master’s *Plan* (His How) – 5 Keys . . . 3 Secrets . . .
 - 3. #3 Appropriate the Master’s *Promises* (So What?) at least seven promises . . .

CONC. – In John 15:1-8 Jesus is comparing how grapes grow to how we should grow (steps to spiritual success). The thrust of series is not how to become a Christian but on becoming a more fruitful Christian and bring greater glory to God.