

# CONNECT GROUP NOTES

## Sunday 28.01.2024

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### “The Vine”

#### **Preacher**

Ps. Nathan Bean

#### **Scripture**

“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[a] 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, as I also 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 you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

John 15:1-8

#### **Thought**

Could it be that we often don't fully realise the necessity of God in our lives? Jesus says “Apart from Me you can do nothing”. We don't realise how vital He is, not just for our survival, but for our flourishing in life.

We think that Sunday will be enough - that one top-up of Church will fuel us for the week, yet these verses talk about a constant abiding. They speak



of remaining connected, a constant download of His presence, a drawing of His life into ours like a branch from a tree; reliant, constant, not a fill-up, but a persistent flow.

Jesus claims to be the one true vine. He is the only true source of life - the only authentic vine. We so often search for life in other places; we look to financial security, to relationships, to entertainment or vocation - all of which are good things, but none are truly life-giving. They are merely imitations of the real thing. We think they'll give us what we need, but they have no capacity to fulfil our deepest needs.

We so often know at an intellectual level that Jesus is the source of life - yet we prefer to discover it for ourselves rather than trusting God at His word. We look for life from our family, security from our finances, purpose from our work, renewal from vacation - but we drain them dry and they fail to fully deliver. We can even go through the religious routines, pray daily, go to Church, do the right things and go through the motions - yet remain dry if the life of Christ isn't running through us.

Jesus invites us to let His presence be the largest influence in our life, to open our hearts to Him each and every moment, to allow His presence to flow through every endpoint of our world, and to change who we are. Not just more information, not just understanding, not having it all figured out, but a grafting of our life into His, an abandoning of our insistence to have it all worked out, to be our own source of life - and to rather open our hearts fully to the life-giving flow of Jesus.

Today, we are invited to accept the invitation and initiative of Jesus for Him to live with us and in us, to prune away anything in our lives that is not fruitful, and to be our single source of true life, of true hope, of true peace, of true joy.



## **Discussion Points**

1. If I were to audit my life today, would I find areas where I am relying on other things or people or situations to give me peace or purpose or security in life?
2. Are there areas of my life where I sense Christ wanting to 'prune back' unfruitful endeavours? (You may wish to take a moment to prayerfully bring these before Him).
3. Is God highlighting areas of my life where I need to lay down control, and to invite Him to flow freely through those branches?

## **Personal application + Prayer**

Dear Jesus,

I need You. I need You in every moment of every day, in the good times and the hard times and the in-between. Today, I set my eyes on You, and I let the things of this world fade in the light of Your glory and grace. You alone are my source and strength. Change me, Oh Lord. Make me new. May I ever rely on You, from now until eternity.

Amen.