

**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.

Introduction to DO NOTHING

**Gwen North, August 18, 2019**

My Dream since I have been a parent is to do nothing. It has been for years. I love this passage so much that as I was reflecting on it. I heard the words “you can do nothing.” With great delight I smiled and stared at the wall for five hours. I ate chocolate, laid in the sun, and didn’t move. Well, not exactly.



When I saw this scripture: “Apart from me you can do nothing.” I thought, finally a dream come true. It seems that my faith, personality and sense of calling in life has made me busy. I want to cross those words off my list. Oops does that mean that I have done something if I cross it off? What do you think? Raise your hands if you do? This is good

news for me to now wait. Unfortunately, the do-nothing dream is actually a bad bad dream. It is bad because the Scripture says “apart from me you can do nothing.” Who in their right mind wants to be apart from God. Being apart from God would be similar to losing my life itself. It is not that sometimes we can’t sit by and smell the roses and kick back with a beautiful view, rather it is essential that we never leave the side of Jesus.



In many ways, Jesus is giving us a beautiful message or photograph or even a poem about the dependence that we have on God in this passage. It is a metaphor that we can glean a lot of spiritual truth from. He says, “I am the vine, you are the branches.” What does this mean? The vine is the ultimate source of life for the branches. If the vine dies the branches have no hope for life. So, it is the same with every day from the lifeline of Christ, worry. With the anchor of the vine, the the earth that it provides, branches the sun. Without the vine we will starve and become compost. Or we become trash or fuel for a fire. There is no life for a branch away from the vine. Without the vine, Our fruit dies.



Branches branch out in many directions. They provide food for many people. Everything that they need to be successful is already provided: sun, nourishment, etc. In many ways worry and disbelief cut off our ability to thrive. We struggle to flourish when the Word of God doesn’t dwell in us richly.



Sometimes branches get trimmed, but as in gardening, this causes them to regenerate and grow stronger. Our brokenness isn’t a hindrance to our walk with God. It can’t deter God’s purpose for us. We abide in the midst of suffering.

A pruned branch will grow in three directions where previously it had only grown in one. Pruned branches produce extra fruit and feed more people. Unpruned branches do not have successful growth patterns. In verse 6 it says, “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." They go where they want to go when they are unpruned. Without the Vine we will starve, die or become compost. The fruit in our lives dies.

The Almighty God regenerates us and sends us out with each pruning. This pruning then comes to life by producing food and a flourishing life. This man is faced with a gap. This is a very big gap. It is a gap where trust and faith are essential. Sometimes Jesus is saying, "Be still and know that I am God." Other times Jesus is saying, "JUMP and know that I am God." In all things we need to put our trust and faith in God. 100%. God will get you through this. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in God with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight," As we are pruned as vines it hurts. I imagine that it hurts for a plant to be cut back. Sometimes tragedy comes and prunes us back but at the same time God is bringing His perfect plan to fruition in our lives.



Romans 5:3 says, "we <sup>c</sup> also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.



People are fed as we suffer pruning. Our lives brim with new purpose as we suffer pruning. God is providing our needs as we suffer pruning. God is actually healing us as we suffer pruning and making us more powerful in the Kingdom. Our brokenness isn't a hindrance to our walk with God. It can't deter God's purpose for us! It thrusts us into the fullness of our calling.

John 15:7-8 says, "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that bear much fruit and become my disciples."

First off, I love the intimacy with Christ that He is calling to us when He says, "if you abide in me." In Oxford Dictionary online, Abiding means, *1: to remain stable or fixed in a state of love that abided with him all his days. To conform, to abide by the rules. To accept without objection: to acquiesce.*

There is a measure of obeying here. There is a measure of conformity and love. Conforming to God's rules and submission and acceptance of His will.

Branches don't care about the approval of the mainstream. They receive life and everything that they need from the vine. Branches don't need to be anything more than what they were created to be. Seeking approval or conformity is meaningless to a branch because its purpose is singular. It should draw life from the vine and grow. Like this picture. God gives us growth through the path that we take. God draws us to a particular path and blesses us. Blessing comes after we abide with Him!



John 10:10 says, "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly." This abundant life is ours. It is not pain-free, simple, easy, predictable, or glorious. But it is abundant, indeed. It is abundant to live and abide with Christ.

I am inspired by Brother Lawrence. He is a French monk who died in 1697. He was born in a peasant family, wounded in war, captured by the enemy, had a limp, became a monk and served in the most menial job in the monastery which was working in the kitchen and when

*he couldn't stand any longer he mended shoes. From the kitchen people started to notice him. He had great joy and never lost it. People would come and write him with his problems. His words were written down. The Practice of the Presence of God was compiled after his death. His book is still in print and translated. He was the picture-perfect example of abiding in the Vine. His quotes were translated from French:*

*"There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God; those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it."*

*"I cannot imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of GOD. For my part I keep myself retired with Him in the depth of center of my soul as much as I can; and while I am so with Him I fear nothing; but the least turning from Him is insupportable."*

*"The difficulties of life do not have to be unbearable. It is the way we look at them - through faith or unbelief - that makes them seem so. We must be convinced that our Father is full of love for us."*

*Let us occupy ourselves entirely in knowing God. The more we know Him, the more we will desire to know Him. As love increases with knowledge, the more we know God, the more we will truly love Him. We will learn to love Him equally in times of distress or in times of great joy."*

All of us here today are challenged today is to find that solitude in the presence of God. That is where fruitfulness comes from.

*"That we should establish ourselves in a sense of GOD's Presence, by continually conversing with Him. That it was a shameful thing to quit His conversation, to think of trifles and fooleries."*

*"Think often on God, by day, by night, in your business and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone"*

*"We must know before we can love. In order to know God, we must often think of Him; and when we come to love Him, we shall then also think of Him often, for our heart will be with our treasure."*

We get deep intimacy with Christ from living this life of faith. The results are the Gardener's as we live for Him. Abiding with Christ is togetherness with the Divine King. Practicing the presence of God and walking deeply with the Father is abundant life.

Taking on the mind of Christ as we are drawn into His likeness through the power of the Holy Spirit is a life worth living.

Fruit bearing according to His plans brings blessings from another world. Blessings that are not ours as we imagine them but they are the blessings that we really need.

Our wishes become the Divine wishes of Christ. Our prayers become the prayers of Christ.

Our asking of the Lord becomes a reflective conversation, steeped in the Word and laden with faith. Verse 7 of this passage says, *"ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you."*

Your will is God's will because of abiding and intimacy. Intimacy with God shapes God's will in everything. This abiding with Christ in every sense is the deepest intimacy that is offered to us in this world. Abiding leads us to knowing what God's good and perfect will is every day in every way.



At the end of the day we can "do nothing." Through abiding we are really just branches. We receive all of our nutrients. We are pruned for effectiveness. Yet in our "do nothing" we are really abiding. So I guess I don't have to work for anything. All I do I do through God. I am God's very own branch - he does everything to keep me healthy as I ABIDE in Him☺