

How To Love Grapes

John 15:1-8 **John 15:1** "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³ You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

In today's gospel lesson, Jesus uses the analogy of a grapevine to show his disciples how God loves and cares for us. This analogy actually carries through very well whether we apply it to childcare or whether we apply it to human beings in general as Jesus did here.

Children, Human beings and grapes need direction.

Children, Human beings and grapes need boundaries.

Children, Human beings and grapes will not survive if left on their own.

Children Human beings and grapes need direction...

Proverbs 22: 6 tells us very clearly that if we train up a child in the way it should go when it is old, it will not stray from it.

I Timothy 4:7 exhorts us to train ourselves in Godliness. A grapevine needs to be trained to grow up and out. If left on its

own the tendrils will stay on the ground or wrap themselves around anything. An untrained grapevine does not bear a lot of fruit and the fruit it bears is often hard to reach.

Children, human beings and grapes need boundaries...

There are some things that you just don't do. You may have heard that before, you may have said it before. It is true.

These limits or boundaries are taught to us as we grow. They help us get along with each other and help us live a full life.

Our boundaries begin early. We learn that it is good to share.

We learn that we need to hold hands when we cross the street.

We learn that plenty of rest and a proper diet will keep us

healthy. As we get older we learn about other boundaries such

as not lying, stealing, or cheating. We learn about being

careful and respectful of other people's things: If you break it

you bought it. Even children who have never read the Bible

will have some concept of the difference between right and

wrong. As human beings we learn quickly that there are

consequences for breaking laws. There are fines, community service, jail, and criminal records that sometimes stay with us

the rest of our lives. Grapes need boundaries too. On a

different level, vine growers will try very hard to keep grapes from cross-pollinating in order to maintain certain

characteristics. In the same way we try to keep our children

from getting in with the wrong kind of people. **Proverbs**

1:10-16 ¹⁰ My child, if sinners entice you, do not consent. ¹¹

If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us

wantonly ambush the innocent; ¹² like Sheol let us swallow

them alive and whole, like those who go down to the Pit. ¹³

We shall find all kinds of costly things; we shall fill our houses with booty. ¹⁴ Throw in your lot among us; we will all have

one purse"-- ¹⁵ my child, do not walk in their way, keep your foot from their paths; ¹⁶ for their feet run to evil, and they hurry to shed blood. Boundaries keep us safe and away from temptation.

Children, humans and grapes will not survive if left on their own. Grapes if not cared for eventually stop bearing fruit altogether and simply become a tangle of vines that are more nuisance than a crop. An untended grapevine eventually becomes worthless.

Children especially young children must have the care and attention of loving parents. Human beings if left to their own devices will find away to destroy themselves. We have created weapons of mass destruction. We have engineered diseases that if released can wipe out whole countries. When God created humanity, we were given a perfect world that if allowed to would have taken care of itself. But with the fall from the Garden of Eden also came a fall of sorts of the earth and we began to abuse the home God had given us. The evidence is clear that as our technology progresses, without some sort of divine intervention, we are going to wipe ourselves out. **Matthew 24:21-22** ²¹ For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

This time of great suffering may actually be of our own doing. But God as a loving parent will save us from ourselves.

The analogy of the vine grower and the grapevine makes it clear that God's intention for us to have us be the best vines we can be producing the sweetest most succulent fruit that we possibly can. We are God's grapes and God loves us.