

*Colossians 3:16*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,  
teaching and admonishing one another  
in all wisdom,  
singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,  
with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*



**The I Am Statements of Jesus**

Two dangerous words: I am. Those two words almost got Jesus stoned. Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am.” He was boldly identifying Himself as God. He was claiming to be older and greater than Abraham. In the Gospel of John Jesus makes seven “I am” statements that each have staggering implications and make incredible claims about who Jesus is. Some believed Him, some rejected Him. In the next seven devotionals we encourage you to wrestle with what Jesus says about Himself and how that impacts your view of Him and how it impacts your life.

**Reflections from Scripture on The True Vine**

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:1-5).*

Here in Lynden, we enjoy the beautiful sights of fields replete with bright red raspberries and deep blue blueberries. And, as summer has begun, we also get to enjoy the sweet taste of these berries. But, as we know, these fruits didn’t come to be apart from the care and concern of the folks who planted them. In John 15, Jesus teaches us about our relationship with Him through language and pictures drawn from the world of botany.

As Christians, we should always strive to advance in faith, hope, and love. But we can ask: what is the source of that growth? Our innate, natural powers, exercised apart from union with Christ, are not of such a nature as to be able to produce spiritual transformation. According to Scripture, Jesus’ very own life and power provide for us the ability and motivation to walk the walk of faith. “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:9). “*When Christ who is your life* appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4). “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, *so that we might live through Him*” (1 John 4:9). Our union with Christ, who is the True Vine, is life-giving, working deep in our hearts and minds to conform us into His own holy image. Our wayward wills are progressively refashioned and renewed through out vital connection to the Author of life (Acts 3:15). Jesus, in other words, is the fountain of all grace.

But how can we expect to be like Jesus? How can we bear fruit that glorifies God? This is why Jesus calls His disciples (including you and me!) to remain in Him. After all, Jesus is the resurrected Lord of all, and His resurrection power is available to us every moment of every day. Not only that, but God has been pleased to make that power available to us through various ordinary means (e.g., Scripture, prayer, worship, hearing with faith the word of God preached). The Spirit of Christ works through these means to pour the fresh water of His grace upon us for our growth. The glorious truth stands that we have been once-and-for-all incorporated into Christ by grace alone, through faith alone. But just as a plant needs nutrients and water to thrive, so we need to abide in Jesus that we might enjoy our relationship with God and others to the fullest.