

"Tales from a Vineyard: When You Can't Get Any Closer!"

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»John 15:1-9

- "It is a matter of historical interest that one of the earliest literary works of Karl Marx was a graduation essay written at the age of seventeen on 'The union of believers with Christ according to John 15:1-14, showing its basis and essence, its absolute necessity, and its effects.'" (F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* 316, footnote #2)
- Ellen White: "One evening a gentleman who was much depressed because of deep affliction was walking in a garden, where he observed a pomegranate tree nearly cut through the stem. Greatly wondering, he asked the gardener why the tree was in this condition, and he received an answer that explained to his satisfaction the wounds of his own bleeding heart. 'Sir,' said the gardener, 'this tree used to shoot out so strong that it bore nothing but leaves. I was obliged to cut it in this manner; and when it was almost cut through, it began to bear fruit.'" (My Life Today 93).
- "Our sorrows do not spring out of the ground. In every affliction God has a purpose to work out for our good. Every blow that destroys an idol, every providence that weakens our hold upon earth and fastens our affections more firmly upon God, is a blessing. The pruning may be painful for a time, but afterward it 'yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.' [Hebrews 12:11] We should receive with gratitude whatever will quicken the conscience, elevate the thoughts, and ennoble the life. The fruitless branches are cut off and cast into the fire. Let us be thankful that through painful pruning we may retain a connection with the living Vine; for if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him. The very trial that taxes our faith the most severely and makes it seem as though God had forsaken us is to lead us more closely to Him, that we may lay all our burdens at the feet of Christ and experience the peace which He will give us in exchange." (My Life Today 93)
- "Lord Jesus, please abide in me, and let me abide in You."
- Andrew Murray: "Love needs an object to whom it can give itself away, in whom it can lose itself, with whom it can make itself one. Because God is love, there must be a Father and a Son. The love of the Father to the Son is that divine passion with which He delights in the Son, and

hence declares, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' The divine love is as a burning fire; in all its intensity and infinity it has but one object and but one joy, and that is [in the Other]."

(Abiding in Christ 139-140)

- "As one of His redeemed ones, you are [Christ's] delight, and all His desire is to you—with the longing of a love which is stronger than death, and which many waters cannot quench. His heart yearns after you, seeking your fellowship and your love. Were there the need, He could die again to possess you. As the Father loved the Son and could not live without Him—could not be 'God the blessed' without Him—so Jesus loves you. His life is bound up in yours; you are to Him inexpressibly more indispensable and precious than you can ever know."

(Abiding in Christ 140, emphasis supplied)

- Psalm 73:25—"Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

- Tommy Tenny: "God isn't looking for religious people; He's looking for people who are hot after His heart. He wants people who want Him, who want the Blesser more than the blessings." (The God Chasers 149)

- A Prayer: "O God—more than the blessings I want the Blesser—more than anointings I seek the Anointer—and more than the gifts, I desire the Giver."



"I'D RATHER HAVE JESUS"