

# CLEAR VISION

A monthly publication of the Center for Christian Life Enrichment

## Soul Food: Fruitful Lives



By Rich Blue

**J**esus teaches that in

this allegory he is the vine and we are the branches. He is the vine—he is the whole grapevine including the roots, stalk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit. He is everything and we are an interconnected subset of the whole.

He makes it a point to say he is the true vine. Why would he say he is the true vine? I would think he might reference himself as the best vine, the strongest vine, or possibly the only vine. Instead, he says he is the true vine.

Does that mean there are other inauthentic vines to which we might mistakenly attach? I

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will 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.*

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

—John 15:1-5

know there are many times when I find myself attaching to something or someone who is not a genuine source of nourishment or connection. I am tempted to attach myself to people, comfort, things, fantasies, or other soft addictions that will never nourish me. We must make sure we are abiding and connecting to the ultimate source of what is true and right; that which will empower and equip us to live lives of love, purpose, and abundance.

**We are branches—vital parts of a much bigger whole. We have a very distinctive purpose in the process of fruit bearing.**

Jesus refers to his Father as the gardener. The Father's primary responsibility is the health and productivity of the vine. The Father is a purposeful pruner. Everything he does

is to maximize fruitfulness. He removes any branch that does not produce fruit.

He does not hesitate to prune a branch so that it may be even more fruitful.

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## Soul Food: Fruitful Lives

We are branches—vital parts of a much bigger whole. We have a very distinctive purpose in the process of fruit bearing. As branches, we do not create fruit; instead we simply bear it. As we abide in the vine, our attachment allows God to partner with us to produce loving fruit.

Let us take from this metaphor,

that we are beings who are created to remain attached to our Source. Our responsibility is to insure we are maintaining our attachment to him who is the wellspring of life and love. As we sustain our connection, we position ourselves to bear much fruit. We look to our heavenly gardener to remove and prune all that does not produce an abundant harvest.

Jesus promised, *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love” (John 15:7-9).*

If you wish to strengthen your confidence in God still more, often recall the loving way in which He has acted toward you, and how mercifully He has tried to bring you out of your sinful life, to break your attachment to the things of earth and draw you to His love.

—Alphonsus Liguori

## Upcoming Events at CLE

You can get more information on these events on our website: [www.cle.us.com/events](http://www.cle.us.com/events)

Countdown to College: How to Get the MOST out of Your College Experience	August 11th, 2010
After the Honeymoon	September 9th, 2010
Satellite Growth Group Workshop	October 16th, 2010

Now, you can stay current with CLE by becoming a fan or “liking” our Official Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/CenterforChristianLifeEnrichment.CLE](http://www.facebook.com/CenterforChristianLifeEnrichment.CLE)

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## Passionate Pruning

By Rich Blue

**W**hen facing extreme grief or disappointment, how often have we heard someone cry out, “Why me?” After experiencing a series of frustrating setbacks or mishaps have we not all at times wondered whether we were the objects of divine torment? Yet, in the crunch time, what we fear plays a major role in influencing how we interpret our circumstances. Some believe hardship is because they are being punished for their sins. Others think it is simply the result of chance. I tend to see hardship as a mystery stemming from natural consequences, karma, chance and often pruning.

In John 15, Jesus uses a metaphor to illustrate one of the roles his Father plays in our lives. He speaks of Him as a gardener resolute on doing everything possible to increase the fruitfulness of his grapevine. Jesus says that in the allegory he is the grapevine and we are the branches. God is a passionate pruner, knowing that cutting can lead to ever-increasing fruitfulness of a vine. The more fruitful the vine becomes, the more the gardener may see fit to prune it.

I envision God pruning **purposefully** instead of **punitively**. A few years ago I went through a potent time of testing that illustrates what I believe about divine pruning. I went to my orthopedic surgeon to find out why I kept pulling a muscle in my leg. He took some x-rays and I was shocked when he told me I was in need of a hip replacement. I was dumbfounded and disoriented. Tears burst from my eyes and wandered down my face. I was unable to speak. I was trying to communicate, attempting to persuade my doctor that his diagnosis must be a mistake. I had a pulled muscle—it couldn’t have anything to do with my hip. I had never had a serious injury. In all my years of playing football and rugby, I never left a game due to an injury. I could not possibly have something this seriously wrong with me.

Somehow, the years of work I had been doing to strengthen my faith were now being put to the test. I

did not feel punished. In the midst of the shock, I had a sense of being surrounded with comfort and compassion. I was scared and confused; yet, I was beginning to understand that the state of *not knowing* was a prerequisite for true faith.

I had always relied on my power and strength to protect me. I now felt like I could not count on my legs to support me. I could no longer rely on myself to take care of me the way I had done previously. I was now going to need to learn how to rely on God and others to be my strength. After David was delivered by God from the insanely jealous King Saul, he said, “*The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold,*

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*my refuge and my savior from violent men you save me” (2 Samuel 22:2,3).*

Looking back, I now see that I was

going through a time of pruning. I was exchanging something I had always relied on for something much better. I was beginning to understand that the loss of my hip was also the reaping of something much better. I was now becoming aware of how I had relied exclusively on my own strength and was unwilling to let others or God step in and be my rock and my deliverer. I was understanding that the loss of my hip would result in gaining more fruitfulness in my life. I was exchanging the old for the new; the material for the spiritual. I am reminded of the famous quote of Jim Elliot, the Christian missionary who lost his life trying to reach the Waodani people in Ecuador. He wrote, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

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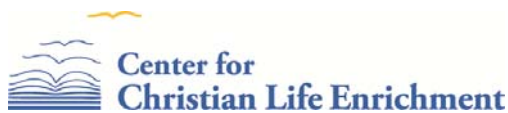
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