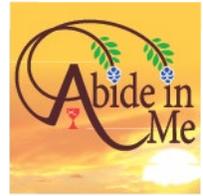


Abide in Me

Written by Rodrigo Martínez, member of the Pentecostal Church of Chile, a Global Ministries partner, and translated and edited by Elena Huegel, Global Ministries mission co-worker in Mexico



¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ²Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ³Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. ⁶If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. ⁸Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. ⁹As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. ¹⁰If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. ¹¹These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. ¹²This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

- John 15:1-12 (KJV)



My name is Rodrigo Martínez, and I am a member of the Pentecostal Church of Chile and a facilitator at the Shalom Center, an environmental education and peacebuilding retreat center created by the church. I am also a "trainer of facilitators" in the Roots in the ruins: hope in trauma program, which started in Chile after the 2010 earthquake. In my secular life, I am the fair trade officer and organic certification supervisor at one of the largest vineyards in Chile. Even though as members of the Pentecostal Church of Chile we don't drink wine, except for communion, many of the brothers and sisters who belong to our church work in vineyards or in the processing of the grapes. Part of my job is to make sure that wine producers invest back into the local community while protecting the health and well-being of the people who live and work in or near these vineyards. I would like to share with you some of my reflections on John 15 in light of what I have learned over the years at my work.

Central Chile has the perfect climate for growing grapes and, therefore, has not only international recognition but also has one of the largest wine reserves in the world. Oenologists, or winemaking specialists, are constantly searching for the best grapes

with special characteristics depending on the climate and geography of the place where they were harvested.

Meanwhile, wine consumers worldwide are becoming more demanding, searching for products that reflect their values such as social responsibility or sustainability. Most vineyards today are working towards environmentally friendly wines that reflect community-building values, and have the strength of a distinguished "terroir." (This French term refers to the feel of the geography where the grapes are grown.)

John 15 reflects three principles that a vineyard husbandman practices to maintain the quality of the fruit. As I said before, good wine depends on good grapes.

Pruning: John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Every good viticulturist (grape grower) knows that good pruning means better grapes since this process will determine the amount of fruit that the vine will carry. If there are fewer grapes, then the concentration of sugar will be higher and make for a better-quality wine. It takes practice to find the right balance between pruning away the excess to improve quality and keeping what is needed for worthwhile production. In the same manner, God has to prune away certain things in our lives in knowing how to obtain the best quality of the final product. Even though this process may be painful, pruning allows new growth and higher quality. In 2018, Chile suffered one of the largest wildfires in its history. One of the viticulturists that I work with lost large portions of his vineyard which were over 200 years old. To salvage the living parts of the vineyard, he had to prune it heavily, and he is patiently waiting for it to grow back and produce grapes again. Sometimes we have to let go of or cut things out of our lives so that a new fruit of better quality, the quality that our Lord needs for the building of the Kingdom of God, can grow. The parts of us that are not life-giving, kingdom-growing, must not abide on the vine.

Fertilization: John 15:6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Another important moment in the cultivation of the vineyard is to allow the plants to rest and the soil to recover the nutrients that were extracted in the production of the grapes. From the end of autumn until the middle of the winter, the plants are left dormant so they can prepare for pruning. The branches must be nourished by the main trunk of the vine through which they receive the sap that will produce the grapes. The main trunk has deep roots grounded in rich soil, which if properly fertilized during the

period of rest, will awaken to pump life-giving sap to the branches that remain after the pruning. It is through a rich, well-nourished spiritual life that we rest and recover while we abide deeply in Christ and prepare once again to produce quality fruit.

Watering and Irrigation: John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

The area where grapes are produced in Chile does not have an abundance of groundwater, which means that many of the viticulturists must depend on the annual rainfall to water their vineyards. Water is life; it is like God's love that is in and around us, filling us with hope, joy, and peace. The vineyard must have water to produce grapes, so we must abide in God's love to produce good fruit.

Pests and illnesses are a part of the life of a plant. The amount of water used in irrigation will have an effect on the weeds that steal nutrition away from the vines as well as the growth of fungi. Each pest or illness will diminish the quality of the fruit, so finding organic and soil-enriching ways to protect and heal the plants is a challenge. One of our vineyards has an army of pest-eating ducks that keep the invasive species at bay! As we abide in Christ, we will discover new, life-giving and life-sustaining ways to deal with the spiritual, physical, mental/emotional and relational pests and illnesses that threaten our fruit production.

When we abide in Christ, then neither illness nor pests, nor drought or fire will separate us from God's love. Like the branches on the grapevine, when we abide in the Giver of life and allow the pruning and care, rest and restoration, right amount of water, and treatments against pests, then we, too, will experience the wonder of producing perfect fruit that God will use to nourish and heal the nations.