

“The Secret of the Vine”

Review: Did you **memorize** 1 John 5.11-13 – can you say it?

Simple steps for developing a life of prayer

1. **Choose to believe** God’s truth claims – don’t rely on your senses for truth.
 2. By God’s grace **choose to commit** to:
 - a. A certain time of each day for prayer
 - b. Pray for a hunger for God (Matt 5.6; Ps 42.1-2)
 3. **Journal** to God – does it work for you?
 4. **Support** one another through prayer (Eph 6.18)
- What helped? What hindered? Make adjustments as needed!**
5. **Keeping Focused: A – C – T – S** and don’t forget to grow in praise!

A. God’s promise to memorize: **Titus 2.11-14...**

B. Stages toward a Deeper Prayer Life... (Do they fit?)

1. Curiosity – sporadic: usually not much meaning – duty, mechanical – definitely not natural response of the heart – playing at prayer – does it work for me? (first date)
2. Commitment – discipline: desire, but still work – pray more often than stage one, but still not natural (dating)
3. Connection – breaking through: enjoyment (going steady)
4. Communion – addiction: can’t do without – toward a moment-by-moment relationship (marriage)
5. Intercession – sharing the power, privilege, and connection (this is the work of a heart that wants what God wants)

Amazing Grace: God has invited us into His family:



C. **Lessons From the Vine (John 15.1-12)**

1. What is the Father seeking from us? _____
2. What is this “fruit” He wants?
(See verse 8 and 12...See also Galatians 5.22-23)
3. The branch is completely dependent on the vine for life - daily nourishment is essential for survival.
4. The vine is completely dependent on the branch for fruit.
5. The juice that flows between the vine and the branch is love – the love of God flows in and the love of God flows out to others.
6. The Gardener is in charge and is NOT answerable to the branch.
7. The Father is involved in our growth and development.

8. The Father Himself loves us! If He did not care deeply about us, He would not waste His time and energy shaping us.
9. Unless we believe in the core of our being that we are unconditionally loved by God we will not be able to submit to Him.
10. This pruning process is our Father at work shaping our heart so we can live in His presence forever.
11. The Father prunes/shapes our heart¹ through culture, calling, conflict and suffering, community, communion, our choices (good and bad), and the commonplace affairs of real life.
12. Jesus experienced this maturing process the Father uses to shape our heart (see Hebrews 2.10-11).
13. Jesus demonstrated the level of trust, dependency, submission, surrender and connection with His Father that we need.
14. We can choose to trust and enjoy our Father as He shapes (prunes) our heart to be like His.
15. We can open our eyes and watch God work in us and around us as he performs His heart shaping work.
16. We can cooperate with our Father’s heart-shaping work in us by trusting Him completely – even when our senses tell us to run away.
17. We can cooperate with our Father’s heart-shaping work in others by being loving and kind, focused and faithful, honest and caring to those around us.
18. It brings joy to the surrendered heart as God’s love flows through us into the lives of others.
19. Only those who learn to submit and cooperate with the Father’s heart-shaping work will be saved.
20. The Father prunes/shapes us to prevent our being lost – so stay connected NO matter what!

D. **Secret of the Vine:** Fruitfulness is the proof that the branch is getting life-giving nourishment from the vine. (See Matthew 7.16; Revelation 22.12)

- E. Pray and Ponder in your journal: 1 Chronicles 4.9-10...Why would God answer the prayer of Jabez? Is this a prayer you and I should be praying?
- F. **Homework Inquiry** (think this through on your own and journal your responses to God)
Ponder John 15 – the lessons, thoughts, and the secret of the vine that Jesus talked about. What else is God saying to you? What does it mean for me to “abide” in Him? What will it take? Do I really want to?

¹ McNeal, Reggie. *A work of heart*. (2000). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.