

# Are the Various Denominations Branches of the True Vine?

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Jesus identified Himself as the vine: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser” (John 15:1). He explained the work of branches was bearing fruit, warning that, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes” (15:2).

Some suggest that this parable is a picture of the contemporary church, with all the various denominations forming the Lord’s church. It is sometimes shown in the form of a tree, with various branches depicting how different religious groups have grown out of one another. The text reveals, however, that the branches are not the different religious sects of “Christendom,” but instead are individual Christians.

In John 15, Jesus is speaking to the apostles as individuals, not religious groups. The emphasis is on what the individual disciple must do. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (15:5–8).

The disciples “are the branches.” Branches are people, not churches (“If anyone does not abide in Me”).

The branches must bear fruit for the farmer. Fruitfulness is the product of a Christian life and comes only from abiding in Christ. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, “for without Me you can do nothing” (15:4–5).

What we can do in Christ, however, is unlimited. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). The key is to be in Christ, abiding in Him. Paul said, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

Christ did not want His followers to divide into various religious groups and denominations. As He prepared for the cross, He prayed, “I do not pray for these alone [the apostles], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20–21).

He wanted all who believe the testimony of the apostles to be united. *–Bob Prichard*