



E-Worship 4:23

An online resource for officers and worship leaders in the 21st century

"A time is coming...when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." - John 4:23

On pruning and productiveness...



I've been learning a lot about grapes lately. No, I'm not a farmer, and I won't be attempting to grow them in my back yard. But I was recently looking at the famous scripture passage where Jesus says "I am the vine and 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 15:5). So I was curious to find out how much more I could glean from the passage by learning about grapevines and what it takes to grow vines that produce a lot of fruit. And here's what I discovered:

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Trouble a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt." - Hosea 2:14-15

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." - Luke 10:40-42

"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." - Hebrews 12:10-11

First, grapevines are pretty hardy, and will grow in most soil types, as long as there is sufficient drainage. It is an aggressive plant, so growers purposely don't over-fertilize the soil. The plant can easily grow out of control and produce all leaves and vines, with no fruit, so one of the gardener's jobs is to actually keep the grapevine from over-growing. This especially applies in colder climates, because in order to produce fruit, the vine has to "harden off" --- stop growing vines and leaves and start producing fruit instead. Too rich a soil and all you get are leaves and vines with not enough time to grow the fruit before the first winter frost sets in.

Secondly, grapes don't need a lot of water --- it's more of a danger to the plant to over-water than to not give it enough.

So what do grapevines need in order to produce healthy fruit? Four things:

- 1) Lots and lots and lots of sun.
- 2) Shelter from wind.
- 3) A solid support structure.
- 4) Annual pruning. Each year the gardener must prune back 75-90% of the previous year's growth.

What's interesting about grapevines is that they're often their own worst enemy. Without the gardener's intervention by pruning, grapevines produce so many leaves and vines entwining around each other, that it blocks itself off from the very lifeline it needs most in order to survive: the sun! Leaves that are blocked off from the sun tend to develop mildew and other various diseases, and attract insects that can then kill the plant.

The reason grapevines need shelter from wind is simply because wind cools the plant down, and the plant needs heat to grow an abundance of grapes (the sun again).

E-Worship 4:23 is a product of the Music and Gospel Arts section of Corps Ministries The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territory 2 Overlea Blvd. Toronto Ontario, M4H 1P4 Phone: 416-422-6108 Fax: 416-422-6133 E-mail: Kim_Garreffa@can.salvationarmy.org



Continued on page 2...



Pruning and productiveness



Continued from page one

There is also a reason it needs a solid (preferably metal) support structure. A grapevine is one of the strongest plants around. When it is healthy and growing, it can actually destroy the structure it is attaching itself to, so a simple wood trellis just won't do. The trunk of the grapevine is very solid and inflexible, as strong as the most solid of tree trunks. The vines that grow out from the trunk are very heavy, and can easily crush whatever it happens to be climbing. It also becomes very difficult for the gardener to extricate the vine from whatever it's attached to, if the gardener has not kept the vine in check through pruning. The tendrils that the vines send out, that cause it to "stick" to its climbing support, are every bit as strong as steel cables.

In Jesus' famous speech from John 15, He uses this perfect grapevine analogy to make his point. "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." Christ is the strong immovable trunk of the grapevine, our very lifeline to God, the reason we will be alive for eternity. He is our Rock (Luke 6:48, 1 Cor. 10:4), our solid Foundation (1st Cor. 3:11). We belong to Christ, having been made alive to God through Him (Romans 6:11, Col. 2:13). His life is our life, and His strength becomes our strength (Phil 4:13).

But in this smorgasbord Western world of punch-clocks, consumerism, endless entertainment, materialism, wealth, pettiness and gluttony, we are often bogged down with mindless distractions and busyness that deters us from producing the fruit of the Spirit that pleases God our gardener (Gal. 5:22-23). We occupy ourselves with too much stuff (leaves) that has no eternal value, that crowd out of our lives the very thing we need most of in order to produce lasting fruit: the Son! So often God has to forcibly prune us back, removing from us whatever is distracting our focus away from Him, all the mildewy insect-filled sin-stuff that is hindering our ministry and preventing real fruit from growing in our lives.

So here's my question for you today: How much Son are you getting? Maybe for 2009, it's time to prune back, just a little.

For further study on grape-growing, go to:

<http://www.northscaping.com/infozone/IS-0127/IS-0127.shtml>

http://www.pioneerthinking.com/jb_grapes.html

Cutting away the excess...

Help your congregation or study group apply John 15:1-8 to their personal lives through the following exercise:

Examine a typical week in your life, perhaps even using the past week as a template. How did you spend your time? (See chart A)

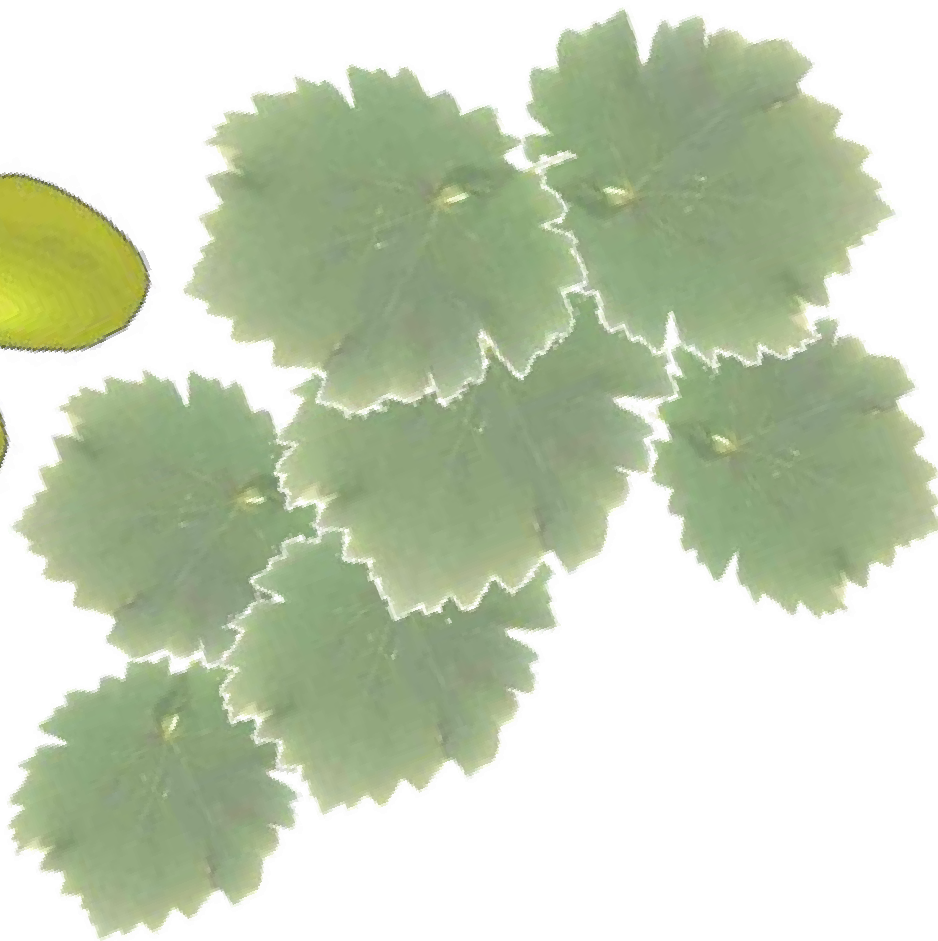
In thinking through your time management, what is excess that can be removed -- that may be displeasing to God, or interfering with constructive spiritual growth in your life? Using as many leaves as necessary, write on each leaf one thing that God wants you to cut back on (e.g. TV watching), or perhaps even remove altogether (see template on page 3). Each leaf will then say... "Less _____", or "No more _____". Then, above the grape cluster (see page 3), write down the heading "God's priorities for me:" In each grape, write down something that is currently in your life that pleases God, or that you know God wants you to add into your life so that you can produce more fruit for Him. (As an alternate, write out the gifts of the spirit, one gift on each grape, as found in Galatians 5:22-23).

Keep the leaves and grapes as prayer reminders, so that you can regularly go back through them and re-assess your time and consumerism management skills, to see how things are improving from a spiritual perspective.

Chart "A"

One week = 168 hours

I need:	Actual	More/less
Sleep:	_____	_____
Employment:	_____	_____
Eating (include prep, clean-up):	_____	_____
Exercise:	_____	_____
Shopping:	_____	_____
Housework, chores:	_____	_____
Church:	_____	_____
Family/Friends time:	_____	_____
TV:	_____	_____
Computer, E-mails, Gaming:	_____	_____
Prayer/Bible Study:	_____	_____
Other: _____	_____	_____



i thank You God for most this amazing day:
for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;
and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any-lifted from the no
of all nothing-human merely being
doubt unimaginably You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

- e. e. cummings

Worship songs of intimacy and connection

1. Draw me close to You (Kelly Carpenter)
2. You Are Everything, Everything I need (Brian Doerksen)
3. Abide in Me (Jerry Wise)
4. Take My Life (Holiness is what I long for) (Scott Underwood)
5. Be Still and know that He is God (Steven Curtis Chapman)
6. Breathe (Marie Barnett)
7. Give Me Jesus (Fernando Ortega)
8. How Great is Our God (Chris Tomlin)
9. Psalm 23 (Jason Upton)
10. Still (Reuben Morgan)
11. Facedown (Phil Laeger)
12. Word of God Speak (Bart Millard, Steve Kipley)

Recordings of all songs are available via itunes or saytunes.com