

Looking after the vines.

Mario jumped into the front seat of the pickup truck with his father, Antonio. "Where are we going dad?" asked Mario. "We need to go and check on the vineyard", replied Mario's dad.

Mario's father Antonio owned many acres of almonds, peaches, and grapes. Today Mario and his father would be checking on the condition of the grapes.

When they arrived at the grape vineyard they noticed that the vineyard appeared to be overgrown. Mario walked up to the first row of grapes and noticed that there were bunches upon bunches of grapes.

"Wow!" exclaimed Mario. "There are so many grapes on that branch. How can so many grapes grow on one branch?"

"You see that large vine?" replied Mario's dad. "That large vine supports those branches. The vine provides important things such as nutrients and oxygen to those branches so they can give the branches life and produce the fruit. The vine is the source of strength for those branches. Also, I am a vinedresser, which means that I prune off the dead branches and the thick branches, which have a lot of fruit, in order to make the vines healthier. When the vineyard is healthy there is a lot of growth, which means there is a lot of fruit."

The two of them continued in the truck to the next vineyard. This vineyard produced a different kind of grape. Mario noticed that there was hardly any fruit and a lot of withered and dead branches. "Dad, why are there so many dead and fruitless branches?" asked Mario. Mario's father said, "Those branches grew so wild, it's almost like they tried to separate themselves from the vine. If they separate from the vine, then they will starve and die and no fruit will be produced. That's what happened to these branches."

"Will these branches ever produce fruit?" asked Mario. Mario's father replied, "The branch cannot bear fruit on its' own. It has to stay attached to the vine. Branches are weak and useless by themselves. They are only good for burning, but not for bearing fruit. The branch cannot produce its own life; it must draw that life from the vine."

Sometimes branches can become diseased and I need to cut out that bad part of the branch so the branch can grow stronger and healthier. When I find a branch that hasn't produced fruit or that is dead, I cut it off and burn it in the fire. That's how I keep my vineyard producing a lot of fruit."

"Dad what do you do with all of the fruit you grow?" asked Mario. "Feed others," he replied . "You see Mario, all of these grapes are grown for a particular reason, to provide food for others. If I do not take proper care of this fruit such as, pruning, vine dressing, and watering, the fruit will not grow. It takes time to produce a good crop of grapes. A good crop does not come overnight".

Jesus refers to Himself as a Vine. In the story above, Mario's father talks about how the vine is connected to the branches. The vine provides the branches with nutrients and oxygen, which gives life and strength to the branches. In our life with Jesus, He is the source of life and strength for all Christians.

Without the vine, there is no branch. Without Jesus we can do nothing.

Jesus tells us in John 15:4 that we need to abide (or remain) in Him, just like a branch needs to abide in the vine. A branch cannot live or produce fruit by itself. We cannot grow and produce fruit apart from Jesus. Just as a branch is weak and useless of itself, we too are weak and useless if we try to do things in our own abilities.

Jesus tells us about the vinedresser. The vinedresser represents God. God the Father, our Gardener, loves us very much; He wants only the best for us. He doesn't want us to settle for bearing a little fruit, or even some fruit — He wants us to bear "much" fruit.