



On Sunday I was preaching on "I'm the Vine, You are the Branches," and during the sermon I saved a story about a huge vine that grows in England and it really spoke to people who talked to me afterwards and so I wanted to share it with you all. In Hampton Court near London is an historic palace that started to be built in 1514 was Henry VIII most famous residence, but there is a grapevine under glass in the grounds. It is about a thousand years old and has only one root that is at least two feet thick. Some of the branches are two hundred feet long. Because of skillful cutting and pruning, that one vine produces several tons of grapes each year. Even though some of the smaller branches are two hundred feet from the main stem, they bear much fruit because they are joined to the vine and allow the life of the vine to flow through them. If you are like me, it's hard to picture such an enormous vine, never mind the fact that it is a thousand years old but it is such a great picture of the importance of being connected to God who is the true vine. The thing that stands out for me in this story is the fact that there is only one root that feeds and brings life to the branches. Just like God is the one root that feeds and sustains us spiritually and if we are to grow and be fruitful then we need to stay connected. Being

connected is so important in all aspects of life. The few weeks that Jennifer and I spent back home in Portadown really made me think of the many connections we have in life. The opportunity to reconnect with people who are and have been so important to us is something that we treasure. I am sure like me there are people who at one time were in your life and are no longer. I had friends at school that I thought I would go through life with and that wasn't the case. We lost the connection we once had and we move on. It is easy for us to lose our connection to God as well. It has happened to me time and time again.

Thankful that didn't last very long and I kept clinging on to God by the tips of my fingers. It is obvious that in those times I was not living a life that glorified God or was fruitful.

Being close to God is the most important thing you can do in life. Look, each of us know that if we don't recharge our phone or computer it is useless. Unless we connect them to the power source they can't be used. So why should we think our Christian lives would be any different? Just like the huge vine in Hampton Court that produces tons of grapes from one single root so we can live fruitful lives when we are being fed by God the Father, our One True Vine. We are not called to produce fruit but to bear fruit, to bring forth fruit. God produces the fruit and we bear fruit. He wants to have more love, joy, peace, and all the fruit of the Spirit flowing in our lives. This type of fruit allows you to shine brightly and allows people to truly see the character of Jesus in your life. If there is one thing to take away from this, it is to stay connected to the true vine and embrace God's pruning process. When He prunes He gets rid of all the harmful stuff that stunts our growth. Being connected to the true vine will produce fruit in your life, and pruning will help you produce more fruit. But as Jesus stated, none of this can happen if you don't remain connected to him. That's why Jesus says He is the true vine.

