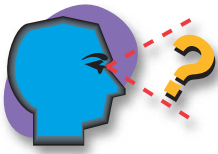


John



Responses to the Questions

NOTE: BE SURE TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS YOURSELF BEFORE READING THE ANSWERS IN ORDER TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS STUDY.

Read John 15:1-27

1. The prophets in the Old Testament often spoke of Israel as God's vine. Over and over again, however, Israel disappointed God in their failure to love and obey him. Jesus is the *true* vine because he is the true fulfillment of God's plan for his people. Only through Jesus are we, his New Covenant people, able to live lives that are pleasing to God.
2. Christians are the branches. If a grapevine had branches that were unproductive or yielded rotten grapes the vinedresser would cut off those branches and throw them away. In the same way, God will cut off those believers who are not living Christian lives. They will be separated from him. And just as branches that are cut off from a living vine will wither and die, so will a Christian without Jesus, Who is our Source of life. As for those vines that are pruned; a good gardener knows that trimming a plant causes it to grow back healthier and more productive, just as a pruned grapevine will be more fruitful. Indeed, even healthy bits of the plant are pruned, to intensify the nourishment of the main fruit-bearing branches. Similarly, God sometimes "prunes" us by allowing us to suffer and by sacrifices that help us focus more completely on God. A good father will sometimes allow their children to suffer the consequences of their actions or bad choices so that they may learn from their mistakes. God, Who is the perfect Father, sometimes finds it necessary to "prune" us through suffering and sacrifice. Often we are brought closer to God through these means.
3. You'll recall in Chapter 6 Jesus stresses that we must eat his Flesh and drink his blood in order to have life. We are sustained through the Eucharist. Jesus, our life source, gives us his body and blood so that we may live eternally. Just as the branches have to stay attached to the vine to live, our souls need the nourishment of the Eucharist. The key word is "abide". In 6:56, he states: he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *abides* in Me and I in him. In verses 4-10 of this chapter, Jesus uses the word "abide" ten times!
4. Yes. As we just seen in Chapter 6 and verses 4-10 in this chapter, Jesus makes it clear that we must abide in him in order to have life. . What does it mean to abide in Christ? It means keeping his commandments and repenting when we fail to do so; and through the sacraments receiving the grace to overcome our bad habits and sins. As Jesus says in this chapter, in verse 14: "You are my friends if you do what I command you." This contradicts the doctrine of "once saved, always saved" which states that once someone has accepted Christ as their Savior and been "born again" or "saved" that they cannot lose their salvation no matter what they do. This is unbiblical. There are some verses in Scripture which, when taken out of context, seemingly make a convincing case for this erroneous doctrine, however, when read in context with the whole of Scripture, it is very clear



Responses to the Questions (cont.)

that one must abide in Christ in order to gain eternal life. It is not enough to say we love Christ, we must show him our love by living our lives in accordance to his will. If a man told his wife he loved her but never kissed her, never paid her any compliments, and was unfaithful to her, would she really believe that he loved her? We show our love through our actions.

5. Ezekiel states that a vine is worthless unless it bears fruit. A vine is not even good for making a peg because the wood is too weak. Just as a branch separated from a vine cannot bear fruit, Christians separated from Christ cannot bear fruit. However, with God all things are possible. It is through the grace of God that we are able to do the good works that we do. "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).
6. The Church teaches that if one has fallen away from Christ, and dies in this state, he is at risk of eternal condemnation. This is also clear in Scripture. Matthew 24:13 states that one must "persevere to the end" in order to be saved. In 2 Timothy 2:12, St. Paul agrees in his statement, "If we persevere, we shall also reign with him." St. Paul also stated that we should work out our salvation with "fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12) and in 1 Corinthians. 9:27 St. Paul again stated, "I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified." It's very obvious through Scripture that Christians certainly can lose their salvation. However, Christ is merciful and as long as we draw breath we can repent and be brought back into union with him. In order to obtain this state of grace, one needs to repent of sin and, as soon as possible, one needs to go to confession with a priest and receive absolution of his/her sins. (See paragraph numbers 981 and 1493 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for more information about reconciliation).
7. Yes, we have seen through the analogy of the vine and branches that a Christian who does not bear fruit through his/her good works, like a worthless branch, will be cut off and die. No, St. Paul was not teaching that faith alone saves us. The "works" that St. Paul is referring to is works of the Law, meaning the Old Testament Mosaic laws such as circumcision. He was not talking about good deeds. St. James is neither teaching that we are saved by works alone. If one reads the next few verses, this is clear. St. James states, "...for just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (James 2:26) Therefore, it definitely matters what we do or don't do. St. Paul and St. James are not contradicting each other at all. They are both saying the same thing.
8. Jesus is speaking about being "worldly", i.e., caring about things of the world such as fame and fortune. Therefore, in this sense, his Apostles were not of this world. The "world" hates Christians because they are a contradiction to all that the worldly care about. A true Christian cannot be worldly as the worldly are prideful, lustful, greedy and sinful. A Christian cannot have it both ways. As Matthew 6:24 says, one cannot serve both God and mammon (material things – things of the world).



Responses to the Questions (cont.)

9. As Galatians 5:22 states, the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The Holy Spirit does not abide in anyone who hates another. 1 John 4:20 states: "If any one says 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."

10. No. Jesus didn't merely speak to them and tell them things; he also performed miracles. Jesus went on to say, "If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father."(John 15:24) Their sin was their rejection of him even after all the wondrous works that he had done. Quoting Psalm 69:4, Jesus said: "They hated Me without a cause." We cannot take verse 22 to mean that these people would not have been sinful if Jesus had never spoken to them. Nor does this verse infer that we should not speak the truth to people who are in darkness and sin. We are called to love one another and to leave a friend in their sin is not loving them. If we love them, we need to help them stay on the straight and narrow course. On the other hand, Jesus tells us to remove the plank from our own eye before we remove the splinter from our brother's eye. In other words, we should clean our own houses before we run around telling others how to clean theirs.

11. Jesus was quoting Psalm 69:4 to show that the Scriptures had predicted how he would be rejected and hated.