

Weekly Newsletter: 5th September 2022

Reflection: Struggling vines make better wines

By Lorna Ferguson

“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” John 15:8

Recently I went to visit Alistair at his University in Kofu (Koh-foo), the biggest city in Yamanashi prefecture. ‘Yamanashi’ means ‘mountain pear’ but in fact the prefecture is better known for its grapes, producing more than 21% of the national harvest. As you go through the city, it seems that there is a vineyard on almost every corner.

It was almost the start of the harvest, so the vines were laden with beautiful bunches of grapes. However, there was something unusual. Each bunch of grapes was sporting a sort of paper hat. Apparently the rainy season in Japan is at the wrong time for grape growing, so the farmers place wax paper coverings on each bunch in order to protect the grapes as they grow, adding around 10% to the cost of producing the grapes. It is not only a costly, but also a painstaking job to cover every single bunch, but shows how valuable the fruit is to the farmer.



The grapevine is mentioned more than any other plant in the Bible. It appears all the way from Genesis to Revelation and is full of symbolism. In the Old Testament the nation of Israel is often referred to as a vine. And in John 15 Jesus describes Himself as the vine, us as the branches and our Father as the vinedresser. So there is much we can learn from the vine.

I decided to read up a little on vines and would like to share three things I learned which I think can be helpful to us in our daily walk.

1. Vines produce better grapes if they are planted in poor soil. Apparently if you grow a vine in good soil, it will put all its energy into growing large and leafy. However, if you plant a vine in rocky soil where it has to work harder to find nutrients and water, then it will worry about its survival and instead put its energy into reproducing – growing grapes. Hence the saying, “struggling (or stressed) vines make better wines”.
2. In order to mature, vines need to climb what they are up against. Many vines will remain juvenile if they grow along the ground. They only produce good fruit if they grow vertically and reach better sunlight where they are also out of reach of herbivores.

3. If you want a maximum yield of good quality grapes, you need to prune the vine. If you leave too many bunches of grapes on the vine, it won't be able sustain or ripen all the fruit.

I think each of these things has a spiritual parallel.

1. We might long for an easy life in good soil, but that is not the reality for many (if any) of us. Romans 5:3-4 says, "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." It is often hardships and sufferings (rocks in our soil) which God uses to grow our character and help us to produce more fruit.
2. We face many obstacles in our daily lives. If we can't move them, then the only choice is to climb over them. It is interesting to read Jacob's blessing of Joseph in Genesis 49:22 – "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine beside a spring; its branches climb over the wall."
3. Returning to Jesus' words in John 15 where He describes Himself as the vine and us as the branches, He says that the vinedresser prunes every branch that bears fruit "so that it will be even more fruitful" (verse 2). Pruning is a painful process but a necessary one if we are to bear more fruit.

And just as the fruit of the vine is precious to the farmer so our fruit is precious to God. Indeed, in verse 8 of John 15 Jesus says, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." Just as Yamanashi Prefecture is known for its grapes in Japan, so we are to be known as Jesus' disciples by our fruit, and that fruit will bring glory to our Father. What an amazing thought!

I don't know what sort of soil you feel you are planted in just now, or what sort of obstacles you might be facing. Perhaps you are in a season of being pruned. None of these are pleasant and our instinct can often be to ask God to remove the rocks or the obstacle, or stop the pruning. But perhaps these are the very things that God wants to use to help us to bear more fruit for Him. This certainly changed my perspective on the rocks in my soil just now. I hope you find it helpful too.

Welcome to Holyrood – this Sunday!

It's wonderful to see new faces at church on Sunday mornings. This Sunday (11th) and on Sunday 18th September, Joe will be holding a short session after the morning service in the hall downstairs to welcome any newcomers and provide them with information about the church. Please share this information with anyone you know who has recently started attending.

Church Barbecue – this Saturday!

Thanks to everyone who has returned the form to help us plan for the barbecue this Saturday at the Newlands Centre in Romano Bridge (EH46 7BZ). Please let Liz know would like to come along and haven't returned the form yet.

The plan for the day is –

- 11.30am Set up
- 12 noon Team games
- 1pm Food
- 2pm Tea and coffee, races, tug of war and more games
- 4pm Clear up and head home

Liz or Hannah will be in touch later this week with those who have offered to help. Please contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if you have questions and pray for the sun to shine!

The Manse Garage

Give thanks that the building work is due to start on the manse garage this week. The plan is to turn the garage into an office space for Joe which will free up one of the bedrooms in the house. Pray for the work to go smoothly and for the new space to be a blessing.

Autumn Term

Home Groups will restart this Sunday for the autumn term and will meet on 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. Your Home Group leader will be in touch about where and when you'll be meeting. If you're not in a Home Group and would like to be, please contact Murdo Macleod or Liz Scott.

We'll continue to have Equip Sessions in the church building at 6pm on 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.

Book Group

A group of women from HEC and other congregations get together monthly to enjoy a discussion about the Christian books. Each June we pick the books that we will read over coming session and then get together on the last Saturday of the month to share thoughts and insights and exchange views on the book we have read.



For the past 2 years most of our meetings have been on Zoom of course but our last few meetings have been in person and it has been great to be able to do that again.

The new session of the Book Group starts on 24 September and our first meeting will have a slightly different format to our usual one. We are planning that each member of the group will share their recommendations for a good read so that we can broaden our reading horizons.

If you are interested in finding out more please speak to Anncri Roberts.

Men's Discipleship this Autumn

Save the date! Joe is running a Men's Discipleship Group for eight weeks from Thursday 15th September. Meet at 10.30am in the church and coffee will be provided. Joe will be using hymns as the basis of the discussion.

Ladies' Breakfast – Saturday 5th November



Save the date! We're excited to draw all the ladies in the church together for a time of fellowship, teaching and prayer on Saturday 5th November from 9.30-11am.

We're hoping to have these once a term and Norma Shippin will be our first speaker. We'll also have a testimony, book review, time to pray and our breakfast together.

Speak to Anna Barnard or Liz Scott if you have any questions.

OMF Scotland Tour – Be Exalted

Psalm 108 reminds us that God's people are called to praise him 'among the nations' and 'among the peoples.' Yet today there are still billions of people around the world who have never heard the good news of Jesus.



Join us to hear how cross-cultural workers are helping people meet Jesus in East Asia. Be inspired to play your part in reaching the world so that our Lord will "be exalted...above the heavens, and...over all the earth". (Ps 108:5).

The Edinburgh event will take place on **Saturday 8th October from 10.30am- 2pm** in our church building. The speakers include: James & Kirsty, Lorna, Gerard & Sarah.

It will also be partly available online (from 10.30am-11.30am) and the live-links will appear [here](#) on the day.

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Monday:
 - Baby and Toddler Group at 10am
 - Pastoral Care Team Meeting at 7.30pm in person
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting on Zoom at 7pm
- Thursday: Session meeting in person at 7pm
- Saturday: Church barbecue at the Newlands Centre
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching. Please contact Liz by 12 noon on Thursday if you would like a socially distant seat.
 - Welcome to Holyrood – after the morning service
 - Home Groups

