

Tend The Vine

A Five-Day Devotional
from Pastor Chris's Sunday Message

October 5 - October 9, 2026

Throughout Scripture, God often uses the image of a vineyard to describe His people. A vineyard is something planted with intention, cared for with patience, protected with purpose, and expected to bear fruit. It is not wild or accidental. Someone has invested time, attention, and love into helping it grow.

In Jesus' parable of the wicked tenants, that familiar image becomes challenging. The vineyard has been prepared and entrusted to caretakers, but somewhere along the way, stewardship turns into possession. The tenants begin acting as though what was entrusted to them belongs to them. Instead of receiving the owner's authority with gratitude, they resist it.

That tension gives us an important place to begin this week.

It is easy to look at the world around us and become defensive, anxious, or focused on what threatens the faith from the outside. But Jesus' parable also asks us to consider what may be happening inside the vineyard. Are we faithfully tending what God has entrusted to us? Are we bearing the fruit He desires? Have fear, pride, control, resentment, or self-reliance quietly taken root?

Over these five days, we will move from stewardship to self-examination, from repentance to dependence, and finally to prayerful trust in God's care. The goal is not simply to identify what is wrong, but to open ourselves to what God wants to grow within us.

Monday, October 5 Matthew 21:33

Entrusted, Not Owned

“There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower…” — Matthew 21:33

Jesus begins His parable by describing an owner who has already done everything necessary for the vineyard to flourish. He plants it, protects it, equips it, and then entrusts it to others. The tenants do not create the vineyard. They receive it. That distinction matters.

So much of our frustration can come from forgetting that what we have is first a gift. Our abilities, opportunities, relationships, possessions, influence, and even the time we have today are things we have been entrusted to steward. We may work hard for them, care deeply about them, and feel responsible for them, but none ultimately belongs to us.

The trouble begins in Jesus’ story when the tenants stop behaving like stewards and begin acting like owners. What was entrusted to them becomes something they feel entitled to possess and control.

We can do the same thing. We can grip tightly to our plans, our roles, our ministries, our money, or even the people we love. Sometimes our need for control is simply fear wearing a different name.

Faith invites us to open our hands again. God is not asking us to be careless with what He has given us. He is asking us to remember that faithful stewardship grows out of trust. Renewal begins when we ask not, “How do I keep control of this?” but, “Lord, how do You want me to care for what You have placed in my hands?”

Reflective Thought:
What I hold most faithfully is often what I am willing to hold with an open hand.

Prayer
Lord, remind me that everything I have is ultimately Yours. Help me receive Your gifts with gratitude and steward them faithfully. Teach me to trust You instead of trying to control everything myself. Amen.

Tuesday, October 6 Jeremiah 17:9-10

Looking Inside the Fence

"I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds." — Jeremiah 17:9-10

It is often easier to identify what is wrong around us than to examine what may be wrong within us.

We can spend enormous energy worrying about culture, circumstances, other people, or threats beyond the vineyard walls. Some of those concerns may be real. But Scripture repeatedly reminds us that one of the most important places God wants to work is much closer to home: within our own hearts.

Pride can disguise itself as conviction. Anger can masquerade as righteousness. Gossip can be excused as concern. Resentment can feel justified because we have been hurt. The heart is remarkably skilled at explaining away what we would quickly identify in someone else.

That is why Jeremiah's words are both unsettling and comforting. God searches the heart because He sees what we cannot always see clearly ourselves. His searching is not cruelty. It is mercy.

Like a physician identifying something beneath the surface, God reveals what is unhealthy so that healing can begin. A vineyard may be protected from outside threats and still become unhealthy if we ignore what is growing inside.

Repentance begins when we stop asking only, "What is wrong with them?" and become willing to pray, "Lord, what needs changing in me?"

That prayer requires courage, but it also opens the door to freedom.

Reflective Thought:
Spiritual renewal often begins when I stop inspecting everyone else's vineyard and invite God to walk through mine.

Prayer
Search my heart, Lord. Show me what I cannot see clearly in myself. Give me humility to confess what needs changing and courage to follow where You lead. Amen.

The Patience of God

“Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” - Romans 2:4

One of the most striking parts of Jesus’ parable is the vineyard owner's patience. Again and again, messengers are sent—even after they are rejected. That patience might seem surprising. Why keep reaching out to people who continue refusing to listen?

Because God’s desire is not simply to punish rebellion. His desire is restoration.

Romans reminds us that God’s kindness and patience have a purpose: to lead us toward repentance. His mercy creates space for us to recognize where we have wandered and return to Him. But patience can easily be misunderstood.

We sometimes assume that because God has not immediately confronted or corrected something, it must not matter. We may postpone an apology, continue a harmful habit, or ignore a quiet conviction from the Holy Spirit. Yet mercy is not permission to remain unchanged. It invites us to come home.

God’s patience also reshapes the way we deal with others. Once we remember how often God has been patient with us, it becomes harder to demand instant perfection from everyone around us.

Grace does not excuse wrongdoing, but it changes the spirit in which we respond. A church shaped by grace becomes a place where truth and mercy can exist together.

Reflective Thought:
God’s patience is not an excuse to stay where I am; it is an invitation to become who He is calling me to be.

Prayer
Thank You, Lord, for Your patience with me. Let Your kindness lead me toward repentance, and help me extend the same grace and patience to others. Amen.

Stay Connected to the Vine

“Abide in me, and I in you… whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.” - John 15:4-5

Jesus returns to vineyard imagery when He teaches His disciples about life with Him. His message is surprisingly simple: fruit comes from connection.

A branch does not produce fruit by trying harder. It bears fruit because it remains connected to the vine. In the same way, Christian faithfulness is not primarily about spiritual busyness, constant activity, or proving our commitment. It is about abiding.

To abide means to remain, stay, dwell, and continue with Christ. It is the daily choice to stay connected to Him through prayer, Scripture, worship, confession, trust, and obedience.

This is especially important when life feels pressured or uncertain. Our natural instinct may be to work harder, worry more, or tighten our grip. Jesus instead calls us closer.

A healthy church is not built merely by better programs, stronger defenses, or more activity. It is built by people who are deeply rooted in Christ. When the branch is healthy, fruit appears over time. Love grows. Patience deepens. Courage strengthens. Forgiveness becomes possible. Peace becomes less dependent on circumstances.

Our task is not to manufacture those things. Our task is to remain close to the One who produces them.

Reflective Thought:
The fruit I want in my life grows best when my first concern is staying close to Christ.

Prayer
Jesus, keep me close to You. Quiet the distractions that pull me away and produce in me the fruit I cannot create on my own. Amen.

Tend The Vine

“Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted.” - Psalm 80:14-15

The week ends not with a strategy but with a prayer. “Tend this vine.” There is humility in those words. The psalmist recognizes that only God can truly restore what belongs to Him.

The vineyard is His. He planted it. He knows every branch, every weakness, every wound, and every place where new life is beginning to grow. That truth gives us hope.

When we see weakness in ourselves, our families, or the church, fear can tempt us to believe everything depends on us. We may feel responsible for fixing every problem, protecting every boundary, and ensuring every outcome. But the church has never belonged to us. It belongs to Christ.

That does not make us passive. It puts our work in the right place. We serve, forgive, speak truth, encourage, give, pray, reconcile, and bear witness because we trust that God is already at work tending what He loves. Our prayer becomes both surrender and commitment:

Lord, tend what is weak.
Prune what is unhealthy.
Restore what is damaged.
Strengthen what is fruitful.
And show me how to join You in the work.

Hope grows when we remember that God has not abandoned His vineyard. The One who planted it is still tending it.

Reflective Thought:
The vineyard does not depend on my ability to save it; my calling is to faithfully join the God who is already tending it.

Prayer
Lord, tend this vine. Restore what is weak, heal what is broken, and grow within us fruit that honors You. Renew our hearts, our homes, and Your church for Your purposes. Amen.

A Little Encouragement to Share

If these devotional reflections have encouraged you, challenged you, or helped you see God's Word in a new way, consider sharing this booklet with a friend, family member, neighbor, or someone who might need a little encouragement this week.

Sometimes a simple word of faith can make a difference.

Want to hear more?
Watch the message that inspired this week's devotional and continue the journey with us in worship.

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