

General Church Education



FAMILY LESSON: JOHN 15 VINE AND BRANCHES

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Family Lesson 33 - H

Vine and Branches
John 15

FAMILY TALK
I AM THE VINE

In John 15 you are told that you are something, and the great part is what that something can *do*. You are a branch. And that branch can bear fruit.

Here is a memorable picture. What we are, and what the Lord is. Remembering this picture we know how much we need the Lord. A branch can't live without its vine. This is the last of the seven "I AM's" in the Gospel of John.

The Lord said, "I am the bread of life." "I am the light of the world." "I am the door." "I am the good shepherd." "I am the resurrection and the life." And finally, "I am the Vine, you are the branches."

Let there be no doubt about what bearing fruit means. It means doing something useful. The Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of uses. One of two things you should know about uses in heaven is how many of them there are, many more even than there are in this wide world. They are "infinite in number" (*Conjugal Love* 18), and the uses of this world are few in comparison. (*Heaven and Hell* 393.)

Notice what is said about the many uses that the angels have. "But all these employments of angels are employments of the Lord through the angels, for the angels do them from the Lord and not from themselves" (*Heaven and Hell* 392). The Lord says, "Without Me, you can do nothing." A branch cannot bear fruit if it is separated from the Vine.

The other thing to know about angel uses is how *enjoyable* they are. If you asked angels what thing in life gave them a happiness that made other things enjoyable, they would say the joy of being and feeling useful. Once, when people were learning about uses in heaven, some maidens in heaven broke into song, and by their singing they expressed "the affection for works of use together with their pleasantness" (*Conjugal Love* 207).

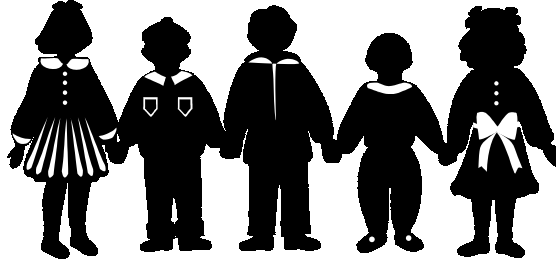
It is interesting that in the book *Heaven and Hell*, two chapters that go together are the chapter on WHAT ANGELS DO, or THEIR EMPLOYMENTS, and the chapter about HAPPINESS. The chapter on the employments of angels says that "they are all in the delight of their work and labor from a love of uses" — and the chapter ends by saying that entering into use in heaven gives a deeper inner happiness than people knew before. In their doing of good things, they become receivers of the great feeling of heavenly blessedness.

Then comes the chapter about happiness, in which it is said that the Lord longs to give everyone happiness. (*Heaven and Hell* 397.) "I am the vine, you are the branches, He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit." And He says to us, "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

Vine and Branches

John 15

LEVEL 1 – MAKING THE LORD HAPPY



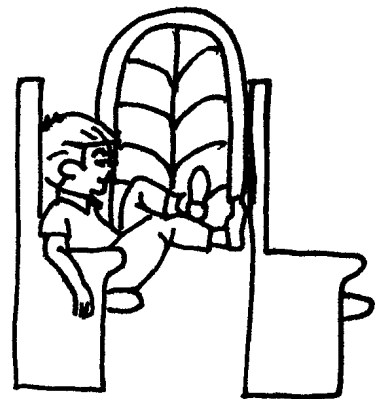
Suggestions on how to use the pictures on page 2:

Look at and talk about the pictures on page 2 with your child, and ask the question, "Would the Lord be happy with what is happening here?"

After going through all the pictures, talk about how we all sometimes do things that make the Lord happy, and sometimes we do things that make Him sad. But the Lord is always with us, and loves us, even when we are doing unkind things.

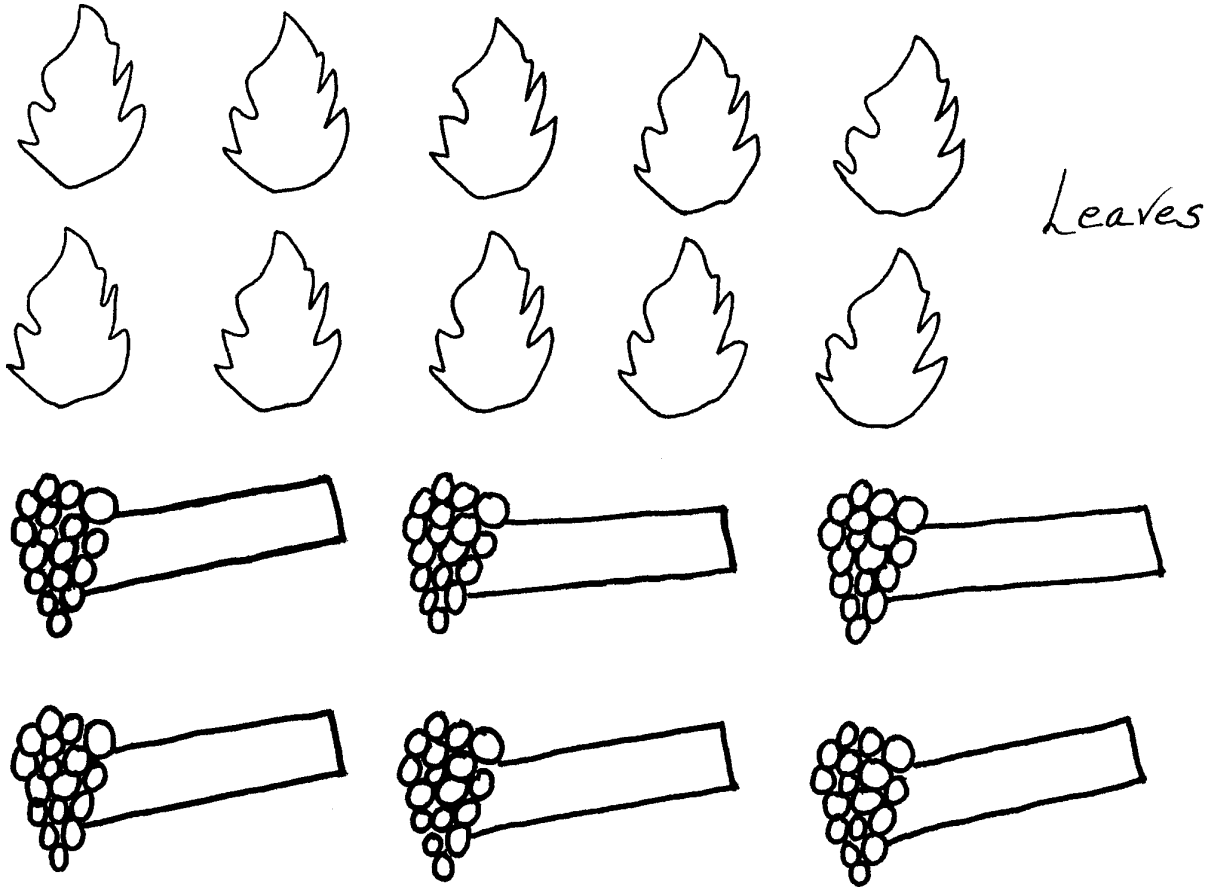


Unless we try to listen to the Lord and do what He says, we will not be happy, and we will not be able to make other people happy, either.



Vine and Branches
John 15
LEVEL 2 – BEARING FRUIT

What to do: Color the vine on page 2, which represents the Lord.
Cut out the fruit and leaves.
Put your name and the names of family members on the leaves.



The fruit stands for good things you do.
Think of good things you have done and ask your mother to write them all on the fruit now, or you can put them on one at a time as you do the things written on them. Glue the leaves and fruit on the vine.

(Parent - if your child gets stuck, here are some ideas of good works)

Sharing toys

Reading the Word

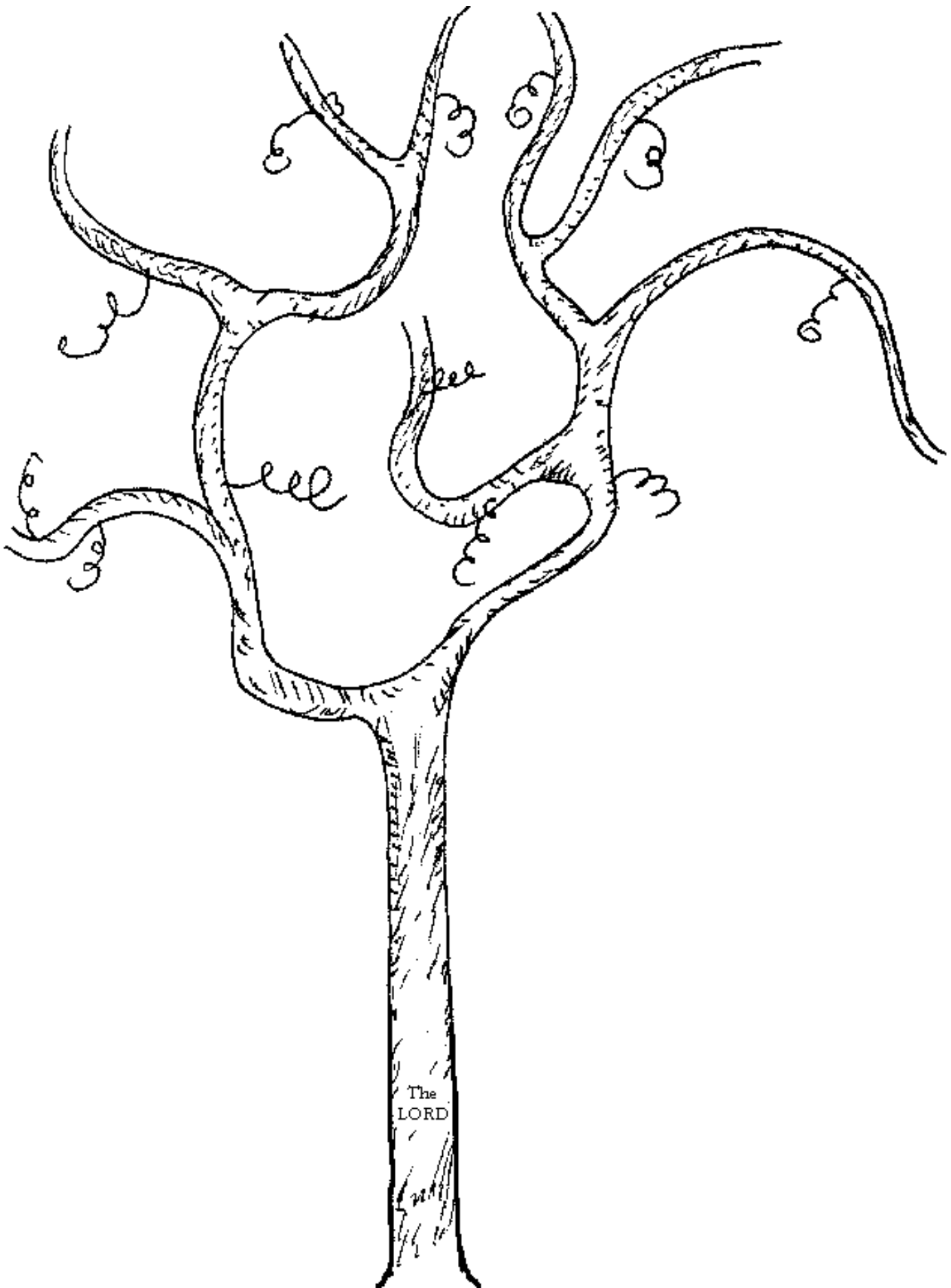
Helping your mother

Worshiping

Helping brothers and sisters

Picking up toys

Working



"He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit."

Vine and Branches

John 15

LEVEL 3 – ARE YOU A BRANCH?

**"I am the vine, you are the branches:
He who abides in me, and I in Him, bears much fruit."**



Are you a branch?
Do you produce fruit?
The Lord says you are, and you do. How is this true?

By now you know what a parable is—it is a story that tells us something true about us by showing us something true in the Lord's natural creation.

Here the Lord tells us that just as a branch cannot bear fruit if it is cut off a vine, we cannot do good things if we separate ourselves from the Lord. If we plant our "roots" in selfishness, or ideas from someone else rather than the Lord in His Word, we may be able to do things, but they will not be "good fruit."

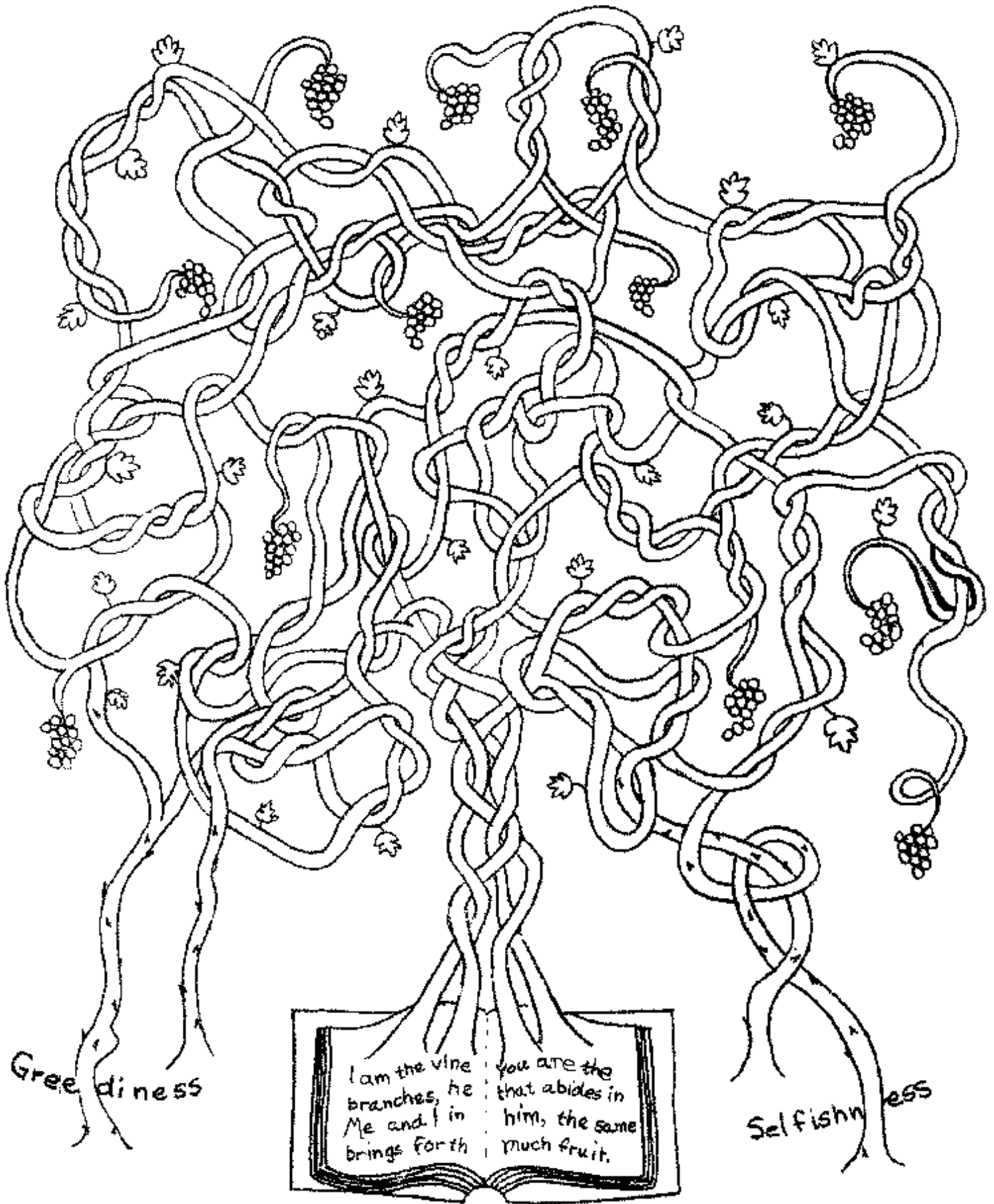
Follow the maze showing vines rooted in the Word and in other ideas.

On page 2, color the grapes which grow from the Word purple, and their vines gold and the leaves green.

Color the grapes from other ideas brown, and their stems and leaves brown.

Only rotten deeds come from selfishness. But good, useful deeds come from the Word.

***As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,
unless it abides in the vine,
neither can you, unless you abide in Me."***



Vine and Branches

John 15

LEVEL 4 – TEACHING THROUGH PARABLES



The Lord had many truths to teach His disciples before He would be crucified and rise again.

While the Lord and His disciples were in the room in Jerusalem where they had just eaten the Last Supper, the Lord told His disciples some things they would need to know, in order to teach other men His truths.

The Beginning of the Christian Church

The disciples were to spread the new truths which the Lord taught while He was on earth. In spreading these truths, they would be starting a new church, the Christian Church. The Lord wanted to teach the disciples how to spread the church so that it would remain a true church, and also warn them about some of the hardships they would have to endure from the enemies of truth.

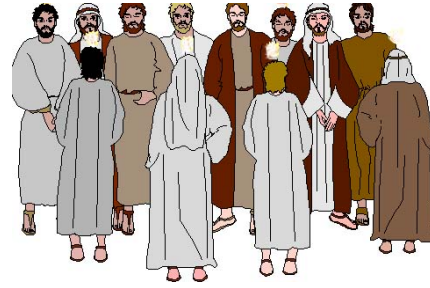
He began by telling them the Parable of the Vine and the Branches. Every gardener knows that in order to make a plant grow strong and produce more fruit or flowers, he must cut off the weak or diseased branches or leaves. The branches he cuts off will die because they have no life in themselves, but can live only when they are attached to the plant.

The Lord told the disciples that He was the vine, and they were the branches. By this He was telling them that as long as they preached the truths which He taught to other men, the church would live and grow. If the disciples began to make up their own doctrines to teach other men, then they would be cutting themselves off from the life and truth of the vine. The church would wither and die if it tried to grow on man-made doctrines.

Then the Lord warned the disciples that they would be persecuted by men who did not want to believe the new truths and did not want to do what the Lord taught. These men wanted to make up their own truths and keep the people in their power. They persecuted anyone who preached the Lord's truths because these they did not want to lose their power. They wanted men to follow them, not the Lord.

Apostles for the Lord

After the Lord rose to heaven, the disciples went out and preached His truths. Now they were called “apostles.” The apostles gained many followers, and the Christian Church grew rapidly.



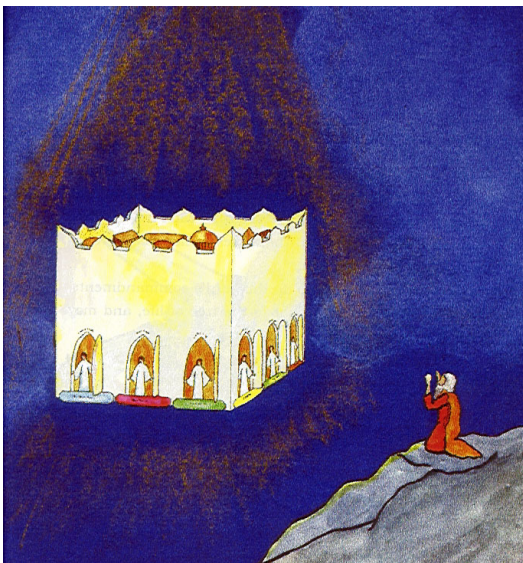
The Romans who controlled most of the civilized world at that time began to be afraid of the number of followers the disciples were gaining, and found reasons to arrest Christians. The Romans even had Christians fight against lions and be eaten by them in the big stadiums which the Romans called circuses. This was an entertainment for the people, and also a warning to them not to believe in the Lord’s teachings or the same thing would happen to them.

After a while, more and more Roman rulers began to believe in the new teachings. The Christian Church became established, and the old beliefs in gods and goddesses faded.

The Branches are Cut Off from the Vine

The leaders of the early Christian Church did preach the Lord’s truths, but after a few centuries the priests began to explain the truth in their own ways. They drifted away from the Lord’s truth, and preached more and more man-made doctrine. The priests became the only people who could read the Word, and they preached their own version of it to the people. The branches cut themselves off from the vine.

The New Church is Established



When this happened, the Lord started a new Christian Church so that the people could understand His truths. This new church was started when the Lord revealed the truths of the Heavenly Doctrines to Emanuel Swedenborg.

The Lord also sent His disciples throughout heaven on the 19th of June, 1770, to preach the new doctrines. The Lord’s New Christian Church was established in heaven through the preaching of the disciples who had followed Him on earth. Now it is being established on earth through many people telling others about the Heavenly Doctrines and what they teach.

Many people have helped spread the new teachings

Everyone who tells another person about the Lord’s new truths must be very careful that he stays with the vine. He must not make up his own truths and become a branch that is cut off, withers and dies.



There have been many people who have spread the new truths. In the United States there was a man named John Chapman who became known as “**Johnny Appleseed.**” In the early 1800’s he traveled from farm to farm in Ohio and Indiana. He was called “Appleseed” because he gave the farmers appleseeds and taught them how to grow apple trees. He also gave them something else—pages from the books of the Heavenly Doctrines, given by the Lord through Swedenborg. When he arrived at a farmhouse, he would tell them about the things he had heard on his travels. This was earthly news. Then he would give them “news from heaven” by reading to them from a book of the Writings, and leaving some pages with them which he would pick up on his next visit.

Forty to fifty years ago, there was a minister who traveled in the western part of Canada. He was the **Reverend Karl Alden.** In the summer he would pack his violin, his minister’s robe and the Writings. He left Bryn Athyn and traveled from family to family in Canada, teaching them more about the Lord’s new doctrines, holding worship services for them, and playing his violin.

Perhaps your family heard about the New Church through one of these people, or others like them. As you grow up, you can also be one of the Lord’s apostles and help to spread the new doctrines. When you tell others about the new doctrines, you must be careful to try to live according to the Lord’s teachings yourself, and to make sure that what you tell others is the Lord’s truth and not something you make up. If you do this, you will be one of the Lord’s branches bearing fruit.

Application

- 1) Ask your parents how they, or their ancestors, or someone they know learned about the Lord’s new truths, and why they believe in those truths.

Then write about it on page 5.

- 2) Answer the questions on the next page.

QUESTIONS ON JOHN 15

1. Where was the Lord when He taught the Parable of the Vine?

2. What happens to branches which don't bear fruit?

3. What can man do without the Lord?

4. What is the greatest kind of love? (*John 15:13*), and how did the Lord show this love?

5. What happens to a church when men preach their own ideas instead of the Lord's?

6. The twelve men who followed the Lord in the world were called _____.
7. After the Lord's resurrection, when they went out to teach all people about the Lord Jesus Christ, they were called _____.

Vine and Branches

John 15

LEVEL 5 – THE LORD’S JOY

“That My Joy Might Remain in You...”

(John 15: 11)

Please do not hurry too quickly through this little exercise. Its point is simply to stop and picture the Lord’s joy. People often think of the Lord’s temptations and striving when He was in the world, but seldom think of His deep, inward joy.

In the following sections you are asked to stop and picture the Lord’s joy in your mind. It is hoped that after this you will not be one who says, “I have never stopped to think of the Lord’s joy.”

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced . . . “ (Luke 10: 27).

1. When you have wonderful news for another person, you enjoy giving the good news. The Lord knew about heaven, and He knew that the disciples were going to heaven. They had neither the knowledge of heaven nor the great hope. But once the Lord said to them, **“Rejoice because your names are written in heaven”** *(Luke 10: 20)*. Picture in your mind the Lord giving that happy news.



2. The Lord once told a vivid story about a man seeking one lost sheep. **“And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!”** *(Luke 15: 6)*.

Although you know that story well, have you stopped to think of the Lord as the good shepherd coming into this world to seek and to save and just full of joy in the doing of it?

3. When a teacher senses that what he or she wants to convey is getting across and really making a difference, it makes that teacher feel good. Here are two things to picture:

a. The Lord being so glad that innocent people and the young can see good and true things.

“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes.” (*Luke 10: 21*).



Then the Lord said, **“Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see.”**
(*Luke 10:23*)



b. One of the vivid ways to picture the Lord’s joy when He is received is to have in your mind a story from the Word in which someone is so happy they just bow right down to the ground with joy. For example, Genesis 23, verses 7 and 12, in which Abraham bows down with sheer joy. The Writings tell us this is a picture of “the Lord’s joy” when people receive Him (*Arcana Coelestia 2729, 2950*).

4. What about the thought of the sun rejoicing to rush through the sky?!!!

You know that the sun does not do the moving, and you know that the sun does not think or feel. But what fascinating imagery!



The Nineteenth Psalm calls our attention to the sun and says that it is:

“Like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race” (v. 5).

There is a great joy in running. (Maybe you saw the film *Chariots of Fire* in which one of the heroes of the film said that when he ran fast he felt God’s pleasure.) Think of the joy of action. Think poetically of the sun joyously going across the sky. *Then* think of the Lord’s joy.





5. What about a rejoicing plant?!! Remember the dream that Joseph interpreted? He saw a vine that sent out shoots and blossoms and grapes. (Does this not fit nicely with the fifteenth chapter of John?) Now what comes to mind when a plant bursts into blossom? Speaking of this blossoming, the Writings say that all nature is a THEATER representing the Lord's kingdom—the blossoms are a kind of rejoicing. (AC 5116)

“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit”

(John 15: 8).

Note: To glorify is to praise with joy. The Word speaks of the hills and the earth rejoicing, and even the trees of the field clapping their hands. (Isaiah 55: 12).

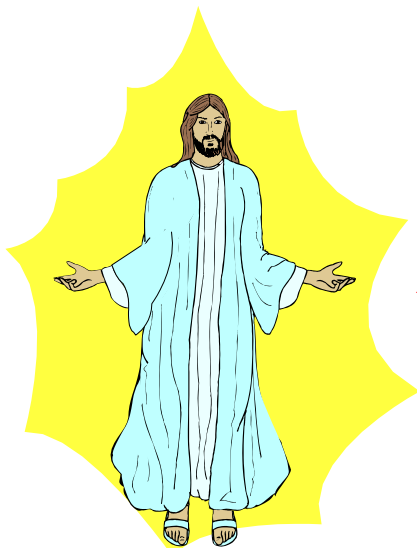
6. Perhaps the deepest description of PEACE there can be is this:

“Peace is the joy felt by the Lord in angels, and by angels from the Lord” (Heaven and Hell 286).

The Lord said, **“My peace I give to you”** (John 14: 27).



7. When the Lord's work in the world was completed, “He had peace,” and so did the angels and men have peace. (Arcana Coelestia 10730: 2.)



The Lord's greeting to us is **“peace be to you.”**

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

(John 15: 11)