



**Mission Statement Focus: Branching Out to Reach Others**

As we begin a new year, most of us will reflect on how we'd like to shape our lives in a different or better way. Often, this is done through resolutions. However, just as often, resolutions don't work because they can be limiting and don't allow for a change of mindset and vision. Knowing this, it may serve us better to reflect on how our lives are right now and ponder the following questions as they relate to our relationships with God, with Christ, with ourselves, with others.

In John 15:5, it speaks of Christ as the vine and us as the fruit and the branches. In order for the vine to flourish, and for the branches to grow and fruit to develop, a constant attention needs to be given to the plant. We need to help cultivate the vine by being aware of its needs and attending to them just as we need to be aware of what Christ needs from us. We also need to be prepared to prune in order to give the vine the room, the strength, and the ability to gain nourishment while cutting away what saps the energy from the plant. In the same way, we must make tough decisions in our own lives about what to prune in order to give ourselves the ability to thrive in Christ. We need to keep our lives simple and focused, so that we do not block out the Son. We must also be able to see what is already healthy for the vine - how it is thriving in the environment it is in. We need to take the time to be aware of the things in our lives that are working, that are healthy, that are nourishing and continue to give those things the room and attention they need to thrive. There are so many more ways to think about this analogy. Let's look at the questions and be mindful of the vine.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What area of your life do you want to expand? How can you branch out from your everyday routine and allow yourself to nurture who you are made to be? You may be finding a need to branch out more in friendships, in spirituality, in family relationships, in personal interests or hobbies - whatever the area may be, discuss what you would like to see change and how you might go about doing this. Remember to be forgiving of yourself and trusting in God as you try to do new things.
2. What in your life needs some pruning? Are there perhaps relationships that you are hanging on to that are not healthy for your life with Christ? Maybe you have a bad habit that you would like to be rid of by the end of the year. Or maybe you have a certain area of negative mentality that you would like to change. How might you go about changing these things in order to grow more as a confident, humble, and spiritual person? Keep in mind that it typically takes 90 days to change a habit! Again, be forgiving of yourself. Think of how you are with your children - if they are trying to change something or try something new, you allow them failure and several chances - apply this attitude to yourself as well. God will give you support and many chances! He is simply thrilled with your awareness and desire to be a better you! :)
3. What in your life is working? What do you like about your life? What do you do well? Who is a great person to have in your life? It is not bragging to admit these things. God is so very proud of these things that are working in your life and He wants you to be aware of them as well. Take the time to share these things with others. It is through these successes that you are being most true to God and are spreading His word most successfully. Allow others to hear about these things, so they might hear God and see ways they can bring Him more into their lives. There is nothing too small in this category! You may have a wonderful friend, spouse, parent, child that truly brings God into focus in your life and allows you to see the good in you. You may have a talent that you are using to make others happy. You may have a propensity to give without pomp. You may simply be a happy person that wakes up thankful for each new day and what it may bring. Be aware of these things. How can you cultivate them? How can you keep them shiny and new?!

As you finish your discussion, pray for each other. Pray that we are able to grow the vine! Pray that we remember to count our blessings.

Peace, Hope, Energy, Support, and Prayers as we journey through this new year!

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**January Birthdays**

Catey Kinnison..... 1/18  
 Andrea Dunn ..... 1/30

"The secret to staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age."  
 - Lucille Ball

## MITM Leadership for 2010-2011

Please take time to pray for MITM 2010-2011. E-mail Jessica at [pluta1096@mchsi.com](mailto:pluta1096@mchsi.com) or call her at home: 630-697-3856 or on her cell: 630-697-3856 to discuss in more detail possible ways to help with leadership next year. Also, be watching for an e-mail regarding an informational/no-obligation meeting for those wishing to find out more about leadership roles for next year!

### Reminders for February

- Pop tabs (this will be our last month of collecting pop tabs so bring them in now!)
- Fruit for Lazarus House

### Meeting Notes

#### Our Mission:

**Planting** seeds for service

**Nurturing** one another through friendship

**Growing** deeply rooted in Christ

**Branching out** to reach others

