



“

I am the vine;  
you are the  
branches. If  
you remain  
in me and I in  
you, you will  
bear much  
fruit; apart  
from me  
you can do  
nothing.”

John 15:5



# From the Editor

## Staying Connected

Several weeks ago, after a pretty big rainfall, a walnut tree fell in our backyard. And when I say this was a massive tree, I am not exaggerating. It hit a few other trees on the way down and caused a major mess. I knew it was going to take a while to chop up. But I noticed that because it was on a little knoll or hill, some of it was still partially in the ground even though it had fallen. I started cutting it up little by little as I had the time. After a few weeks, I looked at some of the branches I had not cut yet and saw where new walnuts had grown! I kept cutting and kept cutting. And even after most of it was cut up, even after more weeks, there were new shoots coming out of part of the tree.

The new growth is not just a physical principle; it's a spiritual principle. Jesus tells us in John 15 that HE is the true vine, and His Father is the gardener. He wants us to not only stay connected to Him, but produce much fruit. I have read this verse many times but never thought of how even when life knocks us to the ground (like my walnut tree), if we stay connected to Him and remain in Him, we can continue to produce fruit. So many times, we feel that when the storms of life rock our world and humble us, we can not continue to serve the Lord or be of use to His church or His Kingdom. That is not true at all! We have seen time and time again how Jesus continues to use those who have been knocked down and humbled.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 *"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed."*

This past year, especially in the last few months, we have witnessed tremendous growth amid trials and hardship. Churches are coming alongside some of the most vulnerable by providing foster care and adoption. Mission teams have traveled to places like Buenos Aires to care for and support our missionaries, who are at times lonely and looking for help. And even as I write this, SBCV Disaster Relief teams are in the midst of the aftermath of major storms, providing help, comfort, and the Gospel to those trying to recover.

As you read this issue of the *Proclaimer*, you will find that I've just scratched the surface of all that God is doing through the incredible churches of the SBC of Virginia.

Our theme for this year's Annual Homecoming on November 12-14 at The Heights Baptist Church is *The Lord is With You: Relying on His Strength*. Remember, as you stay faithful to the Lord and serve him in Virginia and beyond, He desires for you to produce not just fruit—but MUCH fruit. It's not up to us to produce. Our job is to stay connected to our true vine. Let us encourage one another to lock into Jesus and see how that no matter what happens in your life or ministry, as you rely on His strength, He will do what He says and produce much fruit.

John 15:4-5 *"Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit because you can do nothing without Me."*



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