

Read: Isaiah 5:1-7

You Are God's Garden

Isaiah 5:1,2

I will sing for the one I love
a song about his vineyard:
My loved one had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside.
He dug it up and cleared it of stones
and planted it with the choicest vines.
He built a watchtower in it
and cut out a winepress as well.
Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
but it yielded only bad fruit.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Imagine you wanted to make the most wonderful garden of all time with delicious vegetables and gorgeous flowers. You would find good soil and carefully plant seeds. You would pull weeds and put a fence around it so nothing could nibble the plants. You'd water it and wait. Gardening takes a lot of work and a lot of patience, but at the end of the growing season, what do you expect to find? Tasty food and fragrant flowers.

In today's Bible passage, God planted a vineyard, which is a garden for grapes. God did a lot of work. He found a hillside with really good soil. He pulled out all the stones. He planted the best grape vines and made a tower to keep the vineyard safe. After all that work, God expected tasty grapes. But when he went to look at his plants, he found stinky, nasty, rotten things. Ugh. He did everything to help the garden, but it all went bad. How frustrating! Would you blame God for wanting to destroy his vineyard? Of course not.

God didn't actually plant a garden. It's a story to help us understand how God feels about people. He chose us to be believers. He paid for our sins by sending his Son Jesus. When we were baptized, God planted faith in our hearts. He protects us by sending parents to love us and angels to guard us. He gives us Bible stories about his faithfulness and promises that he'll always love us. God is the best gardener. He has done everything to help us grow. So God expects to find beautiful things in us, fruits of faith like respect for people in charge, kindness toward people around us, and gentle words coming out of our mouths. But we all know he doesn't find those things. Sometimes our attitudes are stinky, our words are nasty, and our behavior is rotten. God would be right to destroy us.

But here we are, not destroyed, not trampled. By some miracle, God still loves us. How amazing! It turns out God doesn't love us because we're good. He loves us because *he* is loving. He will be patient with us when we stink, and he will celebrate with us as we produce more and more fruits of faith. That's what people do when they love God. And how can you not love a gardener as generous as God?

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What did God do to help his vineyard grow?
- What has God done to help you grow?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Explain why God was so frustrated with his vineyard.
- Think of how you are like the vineyard in today's story. What is the same? What is different?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- How would you change the story of the vineyard (not the meaning) to appeal to an audience of teens today?
- How might you test to see if God's work in your life is producing fruit?

Closing Prayer:

Lord thank you for all you've done to grow my body and soul. Help me to love you more and more so that my faith produces lots of fruit. Amen.