



*[Jesus said,]  
"I am the vine,  
you are the branches.  
Whoever remains in me and  
I in him will bear much fruit."*

JOHN 15:5

ALEXANDER NORBERG / SHUTTERSTOCK

## In or Not at All

**T**he little word *in* appears eleven times in the Greek text of today's short passage from John's Gospel (ten times in most translations), and it has the same meaning in all cases. It refers to an intimate relationship: We are in Christ; Christ is in us. This being *in* does not mean "inside," like being in a room or in a country. It means being an intimate aspect of something, like the relationship of a branch to the vine. Perhaps a way of understanding this intimacy is to remember that the branch cannot exist by itself, and there is no vine if there are no branches. We cannot be partially in. We are either in or out.

If we want to live and thrive, we must cherish and protect our relationship with Christ, who is our source of life and nourishment. Otherwise we risk being nothing more than dead branches, the usefulness of which is mere fodder for the fire. This sounds

like a harsh punishment. However, it is not really punishment. Rather, it is the inevitable consequence of cutting ourselves off from our supply of life-giving nourishment. Furthermore, being cut off does not happen accidentally; we choose it deliberately.

Finally, this metaphor of vines and branches is an image of the Church. Though each of us, by grace, is "in Christ," our source of life, the risen life of Christ surges through members of his body. Thus, when we are united to Christ by grace, we live in him as Christ lives in all of us.

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### FOR Reflection

- \* Think for a moment of the ways Christ lives in you.
- \* Now think of how you might live in Christ.

