

DARLENE MARIE  
WILKINSON

SECRETS  
*of the*  
VINE  
*for Women*



Breaking Through to Abundance

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MULTNOMAH  
BOOKS

SECRETS OF THE VINE FOR WOMEN  
PUBLISHED BY MULTNOMAH BOOKS  
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200  
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

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ISBN 978-160142-397-9

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Cover design by Kristopher K. Orr

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Published by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

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Printed in the United States of America  
2011—First Trade Paperback Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# *A Place to Grow*



Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up *Secrets of the Vine for Women*. I'm praying that you, along with thousands of others, will remember this little book as a turning point in your life.

A turning point, a pivotal experience, something that leaves you forever changed—that's what so many women are looking for today. And I can tell you from personal experience that Jesus' words in John 15 are life changing! In this conversation in a vineyard the night before He died, Jesus showed His followers how God would be at work to bring each of them to a truly abundant life.

I invite you to step with me into that vineyard and listen carefully to what Jesus said. And as you read, may you be in awe of your Father's faithfulness and greatness, because incredible spiritual abundance is His plan today for you, too.

With affection,

*Darlene Marie*



*“I have come that they  
may have life, and that they may  
have it more abundantly.”*

JOHN 10:10

# *A Spiritual Harvest*



*The train creaked to a stop. A young woman standing ready at the door gazed out over the rooftop of the railway station to the golden hills of Tuscany. “How beautiful it is!” she sighed. The bustling cities of the north were behind her now. Finally, she was home.*

*Descending to the wooden platform, she felt her weariness slip away. Eagerly, she scanned the sea of faces until she saw him. Her father, a tall, bronzed man, was easy to find in a crowd, and she had sought him out many times. When she caught his eye, he rushed toward her, arms outstretched, and wrapped her in an embrace.*

*“Welcome, my beautiful girl!” he cried. “I’ve missed you so much!”*

*It didn’t take long to have her bags sent on ahead. As usual, her father wanted to take her on foot out of the village and up the twisting lanes that led to their home. Leaving the station, they walked hand in hand, talking and laughing. He asked about her life in the city. She asked about the approaching*

harvest. And as they talked and walked, she reveled in the warm sun of an Italian autumn.

At the crest of the hill her eyes fell upon a familiar scene—her father's vineyard, rolling away in neatly tended rows. She had grown up following her father as he worked up and down those rows. And since childhood she'd known that her father was well-respected throughout the region as a champion vinedresser. But at her first view of the vineyard, now heavy with fruit, her breath caught in her throat.

"Papa!" she exclaimed. "I've never seen such a promising crop!" She walked down a row to look more closely. Huge clusters of dark, satiny grapes hung from every branch.

Turning back to her father, she saw the pleasure on his face. "You must be very proud," she said. "I still remember the wretched state of these plants when we first came here. How diligently you have worked all these years to produce such an incredible yield!"

She tucked her arm in his, steering them toward the house. "I'm so glad to be home to celebrate this harvest with you!" she said. This was the most anticipated season in the vineyard, and she didn't want to miss any of it. She could hardly wait.

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*A Spiritual Harvest*

**T**he young woman in our story has, for many years, observed the tending of her father's vineyard. She is well acquainted with all that is required to produce a harvest. And she knows how much a great harvest of prize-winning grapes will mean to her father.

You, on the other hand, may never have walked through a vineyard or even seen grapes hanging from a branch. For that reason, in the chapters to come we'll revisit our young friend and her father as the grape harvest approaches. I want you to feel the sun, smell the earth, and touch the rough leaves of the grape plant. I want you to celebrate with them as they anticipate a bumper crop.

Why should you think about grapes?

Because the truths I want to explore with you in this little book, based on Jesus' teachings in John 15, have a lot to do with grapes and how they grow. The vineyard we're interested in is a spiritual picture rather than an actual place. But I promise that the lessons you learn there will be so real to you that they will change your life forever.

I can make such a promise because our teacher is Jesus,



*Abundance—  
a life as full as  
possible of  
God's best.*



and His words are part of His last conversation with His friends on the night before He died. What He said surprised His disciples. I'm sure it wasn't what they wanted to hear. But Jesus knew it was what they desperately needed to hear. Otherwise they would never experience the abundant life God had in mind for them.

Abundance—a life as full as possible of God's best. It's the picture God has in mind for us, too. Unfortunately, if we don't understand what God does to bring that wonderful



*But then Jesus  
makes a string  
of disturbing  
announcements.*

harvest about, we can actually work against His good hand in our lives without ever knowing it.

By the time you finish this little book, some important principles of how abundance happens in your life will become clear, and you'll learn how to cooperate with your Father's hand—for your greatest fulfillment, and for His glory.

For example, you'll discover how He intervenes when sin is holding you back. You'll understand how He responds when your own good intentions are leading you astray. You'll learn, perhaps for the first time, just how much He longs to enjoy intimate fellowship with you, and you'll have a clear idea of what you need to do to make that relationship

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happen. And finally, you'll know for certain that you can expect more lasting results from your life than you ever thought possible.

Listen in now as Jesus talks quietly with His friends over dinner.

### DINNER REVELATIONS

It is the night of the Passover. Jesus and His inner circle of followers are eating together in the upper room. They have much to celebrate. The events leading up to this meal have confirmed to the disciples that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. They're convinced that by tomorrow, if not before, Jesus will give the word and usher in His new kingdom. And it's a kingdom they can't wait to be part of.

The atmosphere is electric. But then Jesus makes a string of disturbing announcements: One of the disciples will betray Him. One will deny Him. He is leaving, and they can't follow. And the final, shattering disclosure: that "the ruler of this world is coming"—and it will not be Him.

The men are speechless. Just moments ago they were poised for a great future. Now Jesus seems to be saying that



*He was thinking  
of His love for them.*

*And I believe He was  
thinking of you.*

it will never happen. All their dreams and plans have turned into a crushing disappointment.

At the end of the evening, Jesus says, “Arise, let us go from here.” As He leads them out into the night, questions and doubts swirl in their minds. By the light of lamps and torches, they follow Him quietly through the winding streets of Jerusalem, down to a lower gate of the city, and out into the Kidron Valley.



*We anticipate  
a bright tomorrow,  
only to find ourselves  
peering into a  
dark today.*

Here, they walk through ancient vineyards, carefully tended for generations and famously productive. Jesus and His followers find their way through the rows of vines on their way to their destination—the Garden of Gethsemane on a nearby hill.

It is in this very vineyard, many scholars believe, that Jesus paused to deliver His parting message to His disciples. And here, as He so often did, Jesus used an earthy, familiar illustration to impart timeless spiritual truths. Before, He had talked about water, lambs, coins, runaway sons, and bread. This time Jesus talked about fruit. “I am the vine, you are the branches,” He said (John 15:5).

As He talked, I believe He was pointing to a branch, to

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leaves, to a vine. But He was looking right at His friends. With every word, He was thinking of His love for them, of the challenges they'd face, of the amazing and specific future God had in mind for each one of them.

And I believe He was thinking of you.

### A PICTURE OF HIS PLAN

One of my favorite childhood memories is of our family working around a table over a 500-piece puzzle during the Christmas holidays. I loved sorting through my pile of pieces—blue ones, green ones, multicolored ones—trying to find a perfect fit. Piece by irregular piece, the picture slowly came to life. Of course, every once in a while I'd turn the box lid over and take a long hard look at the painting on the cover. There it was—the gorgeous finished picture we were all working toward.

That box lid was proof that no matter how stuck we were at the moment, our individual pieces were made to fit together. Eventually, we knew, we'd have spread out in front of us a grand scene—a harbor full of colorful sailing boats, maybe, or a Swiss



*Every touch of  
His hand is intended  
to bring us to a place  
of great spiritual  
abundance.*

mountain village. We didn't have to guess at our goal. We could see where we were supposed to end up. And we could see that it would be beautiful.

You've probably been around that table with your family many times, too. And like me, you probably can't imagine how difficult those puzzles would have been to complete without having the big picture right there at hand.

That night in the vineyard, Jesus "turned the box lid over" and showed us the big picture. He wanted us to see—



*Women*

*consistently express a  
desire to go deeper.*

no matter what circumstance we're in at the moment—what God the Father is trying to accomplish in and through us for eternity. He wanted us to know how to respond to His will. He wanted us to remember that every touch of His hand is intended to bring

us to a place of great spiritual abundance.

And to accomplish all that, Jesus showed us a picture of a vineyard.

Using the illustrations of a vinedresser, a vine, a branch, and fruit, Jesus told us plainly that He wants something specific from us. And He wants it so much that He continually intervenes in our lives—sometimes even with pain—to make it happen.

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Maybe you can identify with what those disappointed disciples experienced that night. So many women can. We know what it's like to anticipate a bright tomorrow, only to find ourselves peering into a dark today. Things are going along according to plan, then for no apparent reason we find ourselves ambushed by confusion or pain. We wonder, *Why is this happening? Has God forgotten me? What on earth is He up to in my life?*

If you have already read *Secrets of the Vine*, you know the answer. If not, what I want to share with you may come as a surprise—yet it's a surprise full of promise. Either way, if what you want most is greater fruitfulness and service and impact for God in your life, then the teachings of the vineyard are for you.

### WHERE WOMEN WALK

You might be wondering why I decided to write *Secrets of the Vine for Women*. After all, *Secrets of the Vine* is already a publishing success. And it turns out that it has been even more widely read by women than men. Bruce was flooded with letters from women saying things like, “This book felt like a big hug from God,” and “*Secrets* explained what I experienced just last week!” Everywhere I go I meet women who have been changed by the truths of John 15.

But in fact, the special appeal of this message for women is the very reason I feel compelled to pick up my pen (and yes, I start out by writing in longhand!). Wherever I teach on this subject, woman consistently express a desire to go



*I realized how  
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was doing to help  
me flourish.*

deeper. They want to learn more about how Jesus' vineyard conversation applies to their experiences as women in today's world. In short, they want to continue the conversation!

And so do I.

In the pages to come I will introduce you to some women like yourself. They are mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, and singles with one thing in common: They believe God does have a loving and amazing plan for greater fruitfulness in their lives...and they want it with all their heart!

The message of *Secrets of the Vine for Women* is also a very personal one for me. More than any other teaching I've explored, it has dramatically changed the way I respond to challenging circumstances in my life. I realized how much I actually resisted what God was doing to help me flourish. It wasn't until I understood what Jesus taught about God's ways with us that I went from questioning God's motives to

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embracing His plan for my life. The best word I can come up with for the result is *abundance*.

If that's what you want with all your heart, please join me in the pages ahead.