



Begin the session by reading the text for today's lesson - John 15:1-11

Ask the class to share the moment last week when they were most aware of their connection to Christ and when they were least aware of it. Have someone lead a prayer asking the Vine Dresser to bring us into closer communion with the Vine.

Review the major points of the sermon using the outline on the back of this sheet.

- Did you learn anything new from this lesson?
- How are you challenged by the lesson?
- Does it raise questions you would like to discuss?

Ask the following Thought & Discussion Questions giving plenty of time for discussion. Try to anchor the discussion to the text for today.

1. Take a moment to visualize the image of Jesus being the "True Vine." What insights does this give you about your relationship to Him?
2. What fruit do those who abide in Jesus bear?
3. Is this kind of fruit dependant upon a persons health, natural abilities or circumstances? In other words, could someone who is deeply rooted in Jesus bear much fruit while confined to a hospital bed?
4. What is the relationship between the Father's pruning and our abiding in the Vine? In other words, how does each help us in relation to the other?
5. What season of your life has been the most painful for you? Did that season make you more fruitful?
6. Has this lesson increased your confidence that you are abiding in the Vine, or has it caused you to doubt it?

Take Aways:

I will ask the Father to do whatever it takes to strengthen my attachment to the Vine.

I will renounce my ability to accomplish anything pleasing to God, independently of Jesus.

I will thank the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for producing whatever fruit I have borne today.

Close by singing *Abide With Me*

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide:
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide:
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

I need thy presence every passing hour,
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies,
Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Abiding In The Vine I

John 15:1-11

The fruit of a holy life grows out of a person's union with Christ or not at all. Without a vital connection to Jesus, no one will ever be holy, but all who are united to Christ and remain in Him will produce the fruit of a holy life.

I. Overview & Context:

- A. Judas goes out on his errand of betrayal, Jesus begins His final address (Jn. 14:30-31).
- B. The analogy of the vine:
 - 1. **Jesus is the true vine.** The vine was a symbol of Israel (Isa 5:7; Jer 2:21). Hanging from the branches of the human race (Jew&Gentile) are clusters of bitter fruit. So, when Jesus said "I am the true vine." They understood him to mean "I am doing what you have not been able to do."
 - 2. **The branches** are those who are visibly connected to Jesus.
 - 3. **The Vine Dresser** is God the Father who cultivates the vine.
 - 4. **The Fruit** is the godly character produced in the lives of true Christians.

II. Fruitfulness is impossible apart from Christ and bareness is impossible in Christ (vv.4-5).

- A. **What does it mean to be fruitful?** Does it mean we're all going to have awesome careers and we're never going to get sick and everybody is going to love us? NO!
 - 1. Many people have families, get jobs, build businesses, and even attain prominent positions within the church, all without having a real connection to the vine.
 - 2. The fruit Jesus speaks of is clearly not worldly success or even outward religious achievement. Jesus is speaking of a "fruit" that CANNOT be produced without real union with Him.
- B. **The fruit Jesus produces in the lives of those in whom He dwells is the fruit of the Spirit** (Gal 5:22-23).
 - 1. Not shiny ornaments hung on a tree that have been manufactured somewhere, but have no life in them.
 - 2. This is the very character of Christ showing up in you as evidence that He is personally present and active in your life.

III. Two things the Father does. He *takes away* fruitless branches, and He *prunes* fruitful branches (Jn 15:2b,6)

- A. **He removes and destroys the branches that do not belong.**
 - 1. There are always pretenders, shams and hypocrites who, want to be identified as Christians, but do not genuinely trust in Christ. In His time and in His way, the Father cuts them off (Jn 15:2,6).
 - 2. Judas is the prime example of this cutting off. He was formally attached to Jesus for three years. He was in the circle of the twelve. He took part in their ministry. But he was not a genuine believer. Jesus said in Jn 6:64-65: *But there are some of you who do not believe.* (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)
- B. **He prunes the true branches. He trims them clean** (John 15:2b).
 - 1. Untended vines send off many unproductive shoots. A vine master knows which ones to trim (See: Heb 12:6, 10-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10-11; 2 Cor 12:9-10).
 - 2. The seasons of life that believers grow more deeply attached to the vine are times of loss. Loss of self-assurance. Loss of health. Loss of loved ones. Loss of financial independence. Loss of reputation.
 - 3. Jesus is wanting us to see that what happens to us in life is not isolated from our union with Him.
 - a. The growth of our experience in Christ is influenced by the external events of our lives.
 - b. Therefore the Father prunes accordingly. Persecution, hardships, calamity do not come willy-nilly.
 - 4. Do not resent the pruning ministry of the Vine Dresser.
 - a. Jesus is telling His true disciples that the Father's pruning will establish them in the Vine, prove that their faith is real, make them more productive, and bring Him glory.
 - b. May God give us the courage to pray. *"Father do whatever it takes to strengthen my attachment to the Vine and produce in my life, the fruit that is sweet to You."*