

## Small Group Discussion Guide

1. How have the big ideas of Bible Interpretation helped you understand this passage of scripture better?
  - a. The Bible is about God:
  - b. We Read the Bible as a whole.

“It is not a collection of parts, **It is an integrated message.**”  
Hendricks writes in Living by the Book

- c. Biblical Theology: Understanding what the author's intent, understanding and context.
  - d. Christ is Central, from Genesis to Revelation. Redemption and reconciliation to God through Christ is the key theme in all scripture
2. How do John 15:1-17 relate to the greatest commandment?

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Matthew 22:37-39

3. How does the Greatest Commandment help you understand Abiding?
4. What stood out from the teaching that you would like to explore further?

## Week 3 Homework

### WEEK 3 DAY 1

When telling a story, there is purpose to how the plot unfolds and how the thoughts are presented. We learned in the teaching time that John's purpose was to defend Jesus as the Messiah, the son of God, and that belief in him will result in eternal life.

We also learned that John structured his book differently compared to the other gospels. It was not a chronological sequence of events but specific signs and "I am" statements were chosen to defend who Jesus really was.

1. Take your bible and turn to John chapters 12-18. Create a timeline of events and teaching

Example

- a. Six days before the Passover, in Bethany. Mary uses nard to anoint Jesus' feet
  - b. Triumphal entry to Jerusalem etc.
2. This is the last "I am" statement in the book of John. Is there significance in that? Why or why not? Where is this teaching
  3. How does the teaching in John 15 add to or develop Johns' purpose in writing this gospel? (Video Session 2 Group Discussion)

**John 20:30-31** Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

4. We have learned that this discourse is happening as Jesus and 11 of his disciples leave the Last Supper and make their way to the garden of Gethsemane. How does this knowledge impact your approach to this text?
5. Spend some time praying about how the imagery, and teaching in John 15 helps give us more insight into who Jesus is and his concerns for his followers. Write down any thoughts you have.

## **WEEK 3 Day 2**

When phrases repeat, or an author uses imagery, we want to pay close attention. Some questions we want to consider are how these phrases or images have been used elsewhere.

When beginning the interpretation and application portion of a study, the message of the whole bible is our framework. What does this Story of God, His love letter, say as a whole? Then we look at how imagery, words, or ideas have been used throughout scripture. We use scripture to interpret scripture. As we are looking at how themes are presented through the scriptures, we are trying to build our understanding of how the original readers would have understood what is being said. We want to refrain from imposing our understanding and context on a passage because our context is completely different compared to when the passage was written. If we apply our own experience to the text too quickly, it can potentially lead us to poor or incorrect conclusions and applications.

We want to start looking at other passages that use similar language or imagery. They may help us gain understanding of the teaching that we are interested in studying. Again, without placing any bias of opinion onto the text, we want to see how the use of language and imagery in other areas of the Bible increases our understanding of what the original readers would have understood. How the Bible uses imagery, words, or phrases in other texts in similar ways to the passage we are studying broadens our framework from which to look at things.

Any time that we see imagery, we need to ask why the writer or speaker used that particular image. We talked about why Jesus chose to call himself the “True Vine” in our teaching time but we are going to look into it for ourselves.

1. We already discussed that the imagery of a vine was not new to the original Jewish readers.

Read Ps 80:7-14, Jeremiah 2:21, Jeremiah 6:9. Who does the vine refer to in these verses? What observations do you make? What is significant of the imagery of the vine in John 15?

(For more reading, Ezekiel 17, 19: 10-14 and Isaiah 5 are full of vine imagery.)

2. Who does the vine refer to in John 15:1-8? What do you think is different from Israel as a vine and Jesus as the “True Vine” (vs 1)? (How does Matthew 2:13-15 relate to Psalm 80:8?)
3. What is Jesus saying when he takes the imagery of the vine onto himself and away from Israel? What is the significance of this? What does that mean for us?

4. John 15: 1 addresses his Father as the Vinedresser. This is not new imagery either. Read Isaiah 5:1-7 What do you learn about the vinedresser?
  
5. Who do the branches refer to in this passage? The use of 'whoever' in verse 5 indicates that Jesus is speaking more generally here, and is speaking now not just of the disciples but of followers. There are three types of branches/ believers in John 15:2, 5:
  - a. Branches that bear \_\_\_\_\_ fruit ( vs 2a)
  - b. Branches that bear \_\_\_\_\_. (vs 2b)
  - c. Branches that bear \_\_\_\_\_ fruit (vs 5)
  
6. What could be the connection between prune in verse 2 and clean in verse 3?
  - a. In the Greek language, the word ἀίρω can mean "lift up" or "take away." Does this give any insight?
  
7. What enables a branch to bear fruit?
 

Where does a branch that is attached to the vine get it's life?

Why do you think Jesus is using this imagery?

What does Romans 11:16-18 add to our understanding?
  
8. What enables a branch to bear more fruit?
 

What might this "lifting up" and "taking away" look like in the life of a believer?

What do Hebrews 12: 4-11 and James 1:2-4 say?
  
9. What does this conversation between Jesus and his disciples add to our understanding of salvation?
  
10. Redemption means Jesus paid the ransom for us. The impact of this in the life of a follower is that through him, we are released from bondage to sin and death. How does the passage in John 15 help us understand this better?
  
11. How does John 15 keep Jesus central to the Gospel? What does John 15 tell me about my need for Jesus?

Spend some time looking back over what you have studied. Spend some time talking to God about what you have learned.

## WEEK 3 DAY 3

We have explored the various roles of the True Vine, the Vinedresser, and branches who abide. Now we will look at the branches who do not produce fruit and who do not remain.

I know we can respond poorly to God's judgment and as we read this, let's remember the Vinedresser of Isaiah 5.

1. Compare John 15:6 to Romans 11:21-24, read this passage in the ESV and NIV if possible.
  - a. What insight does this give you about the different branches?
  - b. How is the vine of John 15 like the root in the Romans passage?
  - c. What do Matthew 7:17-18 and Matthew 12:33 add to this?
  - d. What do you learn about God in the Romans 11:21-24 passage?
  - e. What other observations do you make?
  
2. We might be wondering what specific fruit the Vinedresser is looking for. What does bearing fruit demonstrate in John 15:8?
  - a. What kinds of fruit will demonstrate that we are Jesus' disciples? (John 13:35, John 14:21,23, and John 17:21-23)
  - b. How does John 15:16-17 speak to this? What fruit do you think Jesus is highlighting?
  
3. Read Galatians 5:8-11. Write down what you observe from this passage.
  - a. Notice fruit is not plural. Are the characteristics listed connected or or mutually exclusive?
  - b. Why does the author refer to them as a single fruit?
  
4. What observations do you make of Ephesians 5:8-11?
  
5. What do you observe in Colossians 1:8-10?
  
6. What do these passages tell us about the fruit of a follower?
  
7. What ways are you wanting to increase in abiding in the true vine?

## WEEK 3 DAY 4

Jesus continues to develop the idea of his relationship with his followers in John 15:12-17. Take a moment to prayerfully prepare to read and study. Read this section carefully again.

1. To call his disciples friends is actually revolutionary. Only one person in scripture was referred to with this term by God himself. Read Isaiah 41:8, 2 Chronicles 20:7, and James 2:23.
  - a. Who was God's friend in these verses?
  - b. What does Exodus 33:11 say? How is that like Jesus and his disciples?
2. Read Genesis 18:17-33. Write down all your observations about this friendship with God.
3. What does John 15:15 tell us about the difference between a servant and a friend. How does that compare to what you wrote in questions 1 and 2?
4. Carefully read John 14:1-15:8. Write down your observations on what makes intimacy with God possible. Be as specific and brief as you can in point form.

Through all of Scripture, God has been pursuing relationships with people and through all of scripture, people have rebuffed, rebelled, and turned away from Him. We do not allow just anyone to be our friend and yet sometimes, we expect God to be different. We will distance ourselves from people who are not good friends, but we get very upset when God does this to us and to be honest, that has always confused me.

God deserves love, kindness, respect, and faithful loyalty more than any creature does, yet we judge him as harsh, uncaring, and even cruel when he judges those who sin against Him. It is okay for us to cut off a relationship with someone who is a bad friend, but sometimes we do not acknowledge God has that same right. God longs that all will come to a saving knowledge of him (1 Tim 2:4), but he leaves that choice up to us.

5. What do these verses tell us about why Israel was called faithless? Psalm 78:10-11, 40-42, 56-57, and Hebrews 3:8-11.
6. How does the above description of Israel compare to what we learn Jesus is looking for in John 14:1-15:8?

Consider spending some time allowing God to reveal ways you have been an unfaithful friend to Him. Confess what He reveals and accept his forgiveness. Read Psalm 51 and respond through the psalmist's words.

## WEEK 3 DAY 5

Do you think of God as one who is gently and relentlessly seeking a relationship with you? He is the ultimate Gentleman, He initiates, He invites us into a relationship with Him, and then He waits for us to respond. His love for us is so great that He doesn't wait long before gently inviting us again. His love for us is so deep and abiding that He doesn't give up easily. He is gently relentless in His pursuit of us. Read Isaiah, Hosea, or Amos if you doubt this. Read any of the prophets. They all reveal a heartbroken God pleading for His children to return to Him.

1. Is intimacy with God for a few special ones or is it for every child of God? Use your observations from the previous days homework questions to explain your answer.
2. Read Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 62: 5-6, Psalm 63:1 and Psalm 73:25-26,28
  - a. What is the Psalmist expressing? Do you relate? Why or why not?
3. Read Psalm 119. What is the psalmist talking about? What verses catch your attention the most? Why?
4. Read Psalm 15:1-2 and Psalm 25:14. What do these verses talk about?
5. How do the above passages of scripture relate to John 15:7 & 10?
6. How does this friendship impact our communication through prayer with God (John 15:7,16)?
7. What insight into our prayer life does James 4:2-3 give?
8. How is your friendship with Jesus? What has today's study revealed that you would like to address in your relationship with Jesus?
9. How does John 15:1-17 h Spend some time thanking Jesus for his desire to call you friend and about how you sense Him inviting you to grow in your friendship with him.

