

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK THIRTY-TWO: JESUS IS THE TRUE VINE

READING

1 “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. John 15 (NLT)

TEACHING

In this passage, Jesus teaches his disciples using a very important metaphor. A metaphor is a figure of speech that help us understand one thing by comparing it to something else. For example: When a teacher says “the classroom was a zoo,” she doesn’t mean there were actual animals in the classroom; she is comparing the wild animals to her students to help us understand their behavior. So, when Jesus says he is the true vine, what truths is he trying to help us better understand?

- 1) Notice that Jesus uses the adjective “true” to describe himself as the vine. This implies there are false vines. There are other teachers, other belief systems, other religions, other world views that claim to bring life if you will only connect with them. Throughout the Old Testament, the people of God turn from the true God to look for life and deliverance in blind, deaf, mute, powerless, lifeless idols. People still do the same today. Never look to a created thing to do for you what only the Creator can do!
- 2) Branches must be attached to the main vine (think of this like a tree trunk) if they are going to be alive and bear fruit. Jesus is teaching us that we cannot live a life that honors him and blesses others if we are not rooted in him. We must remain in his word so we can remain in truth. We must pray constantly, so that we have his perspective on all matters. We must depend on His Spirit so we can have power to serve him. And we must stay in community with other “branches” so we can celebrate the “true vine.”
- 3) There is a real danger in trying to live life apart from Christ. A branch that doesn’t bear fruit is torn from the vine. In the next paragraph, we learn that those branches are burned up. Only by remaining in Christ can we be sure that our lives won’t be useless in this life or the next.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Can you think of an example of a metaphor? Do you have a favorite one?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- Who is the true vine? Who are the branches?
- Why is it important for the branches to stay connected to the true vine?

CHILDREN:

- Who is the true vine? Who are the branches?
- Why is it important for the branches to stay connected to the true vine?
- What is the danger in trying to live your life apart from Jesus?

TEENAGERS:

- How would you explain the relationship between the true vine and the branches?
- What are some “false vines” that you see teenagers connecting their lives (hope and dreams) to?
- What is the danger in trying to live your life apart from Jesus?

ADULTS:

- What does it look like for someone to “remain” in Jesus? How do you do that?
- In which area of life are you asking God to help you bear more fruit?

PRAYER

God, thank you that Jesus is the true vine. Thank you that life is in Him and thank you that I can be connected to him. Help me to remain in Him. Help me to be fully satisfied in Him and keep me from turning to false vines. Forgive me for the times when I have looked for life and meaning outside of Jesus. Help me to bear much fruit – not for my glory, but for yours. Give me a heart for those branches which have not remained in the true vine. Help me to lead them back to you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

The ESV Study Bible notes on this passage indicate that:

The OT frequently uses the vineyard or vine as a symbol for Israel, God’s covenant people, especially in two “vineyard songs” in Isaiah (Isa. 5:1–7; 27:2–6). However, Israel’s failure to produce fruit resulted in divine judgment. Jesus, by contrast, is “the true vine,” and his followers abide in him and produce fruit.

Take a few minutes and read those passages from Isaiah and see what else you can learn about this important metaphor.