

Back to Our Root

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

John 15:1-6

This Bible study was written by Valerie Johnson, a member of the WELS Women’s Ministry Committee, and ministry coordinator of True North WELS Campus Ministry.

It has been reviewed by Pastor Joel Gerlach, a member of the Women’s Ministry Committee’s theological review team.

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Read: John 15:1-6

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Review

The setting is Maundy Thursday. Jesus has washed his disciples' feet, given them the new covenant (love one another). Judas has left them, so the faithful, dear 11 are with Jesus. In a matter of hours, he'll be in the Garden of Gethsemane.

1. In these verses, Jesus pictures his relationship with his disciples. Identify:

Vine: *Jesus*

Branch: *Us*

Fruit: *God-pleasing acts, evidences of our Christian faith*

Gardener: *God*

2. Does an adjective jump out at you in verse 1?

True...Jesus is the "real" & only vine that matters. There are certainly many vines that people connect themselves to. Such as?

3. Scan the verses above for yourself. Underline or note repetition of words.

[vine, branch, (fruit), REMAIN]

4. How do Christians remain in Jesus?

By staying connected...through study, prayer, etc.

5. What does it mean that Jesus remains in us?

He (the Holy Spirit) is in our heart – maintaining our faith, strengthening us, and insuring/assuring our eternal life.

6. Why can't we bear fruit without Christ?

In the John People's Bible, Gary Baumler says, "We need Jesus if we will do anything God-pleasing." (Romans 3:12, 7:18-19, 8:7-8)

7. Read 1 Peter 1:5-7. In real life, how does Jesus prune "every branch that does bear fruit"?
trials...why? So our faith may be refined...may result in praise, glory & honor to God

"We must surely acknowledge him a great master who knows how to employ the devil's and all the world's wickedness for the vine's good and not for its harm and ruin, as these [evil forces] intend." – Martin Luther

8. What happens if a branch bears no fruit?

It will be cut off...(Faith without deeds is dead. James 2:26)

9. Read Luke 8:13,14. How does it come about that some people become separated from Jesus?

they will fall away in time of testing or be choked out by life's worries, riches & pleasures.

Staying Connected to the Root

10. What is the Word?

- 2 Corinthians 4:6

There to give us the knowledge of the glory of God

- John 5:39

The Scriptures that testify about Jesus

- John 20:31

There that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ

11. Why do we need the Word?

- *It's how we get to know God*

- *It's how God talks to us*

- *It's where we receive our motivation for sanctified living...a gardener only prunes living branches*

- *Any other ideas from participants...*

What do the following passages tell us about why we need the Word?

Colossians 3:16

To dwell in us

Romans 15:4

To teach us endurance and encourage us

Matthew 6:33

To learn about His kingdom & righteousness

Matthew 11:28-29

To give us comfort...learn humbleness & gentleness

12. How does our being connected to the vine benefit:
Us?

Our family?

Our personal ministry?

13. How do you struggle to remain connected to the vine?

14. What opportunities do you have to be in the Word?

15. If time allows, share some personal gems from the Word.

Leader may defer to end of study

A Personal Connection...Goal Setting

16. Are there some obstacles you've overcome in staying connected to the vine?

Share successes as a group. Older women, mentor younger. Moms, empathize, encourage each other.

What obstacles are you still struggling with? What obstacles do you currently have?	List Possible solutions or ways to overcome those obstacles and improve your study habits

Prayer

In the middle of the study, while fresh on participants' minds, pray for God's grace and strength to overcome these obstacles and for God's blessings on the solutions.

Joyful Reminders

Read Romans 11:18: ¹⁸*do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

17. What is the reminder in this verse?

It's not our responsibility to "hold up" God and his ministry...

18. What is the comfort in this verse?

It's the other way around...He is there to support us and others.

Read John 15:7-11: *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

19. What great privilege does Jesus say belongs to those who remain in Christ?

Whatever we ask for will be given to us.

20. In light of the context of this verse, what might be some things we should ask for?

Help in remaining in the Lord and bearing fruit.

21. How does our bearing fruit glorify the Father?

It's a witness to His great love for us...

22. How has the Father loved Jesus?

By supporting Jesus and sending the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of so many...

23. How has Jesus loved us?

The greatest demonstration of love...exactly what he would do the next day! The final verse is so refreshing: Why does Jesus give these directives? Read verse 11 a loud as a group.

Closing Prayer

Dear Precious Vine,

Thank you for showing us where our roots are. Thank you for connecting us to you through baptism and helping us stay connected. Please help us through our struggles. We're excited about your sure promise that when we ask, you *will* help us. So, we boldly ask: please help us make our spiritual nourishment a priority, so that your joy is in us, and our joy may be complete. For your sake & to your glory, Amen.

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Fruit:

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26. Scan the verses above for yourself. Underline or note repetition of words.

27. How do Christians remain in Jesus?

28. What does it mean that Jesus remains in us?

29. Why can't we bear fruit without Christ?

30. Read 1 Peter 1:5-7. In real life, how does Jesus prune "every branch that does bear fruit"?

"We must surely acknowledge him a great master who knows how to employ the devil's and all the world's wickedness for the vine's good and not for its harm and ruin, as these [evil forces] intend." – Martin Luther

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37. What opportunities do you have to be in the Word?

38. If time allows, share some personal gems from the Word.

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46. How has Jesus loved us?

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