



LESSON 15 ~ THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

John 15

DISCUSSION STARTER

- What best describes you now: Towering Oak? Weeping Willow? Tumbleweed? Crabapple Tree? Sugar Maple? Creeping Vine?
- What is the greatest sacrifice that a friend has ever made for you?

INTRODUCTION

John chapter 15 continues Jesus' Farewell Address. Jesus is getting his disciples ready for his leaving and explains what his relationship with them will look like after he is gone. To help them understand, he uses the analogy of a vine, its branches and its fruit to illustrate the intimate, productive connection they will have in the future. Jesus also makes his final "I Am" statement in this Gospel. "I Am the true vine," he says, "and my Father is the Gardener."

The *vine* is frequently used in the Old Testament as a symbol for Israel. When this is the case, the emphasis is usually on the vine's failure to produce good fruit. In contrast to that image, Jesus declares that he is now the *true vine* and the source of *good fruit*. To be part of the vine of God and to bear good fruit no longer requires the keeping of the Jewish Law. Now these things are attained by a close, enduring relationship with Jesus – a relationship marked by dependence, communion and obedience.

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **John 15**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

Spirit of the Living God, the One who comforts, strengthens and encourages me.

I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.

I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.

So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

I ask this in the powerful Name of Jesus (as if Jesus were asking it).

Amen

2. Read **John 15** slowly and thoughtfully in your own Bible. As you read and reread, *underline or highlight* any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a *question mark* beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

You may also want to read this chapter in another translation. The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *Amplified Version* of the Bible. It is important, however, that you don't try to answer the questions in the lesson from just the *Amplified Version*. The questions are phrased to be answered from the *New International Version* (NIV), the *New Living Translation* (NLT), or something similar. Using **only** the *Amplified Version* may be confusing. It is given only as a supplementary text.

QUESTIONS

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

Read John 15:1-8.

1. In this analogy, identify the **vine**, the **gardener** and the **branches** (15:1, 5).
 - ♥ Describe the first picture that comes to your mind when you read 15:1 and 5a.
 - ♥ What is the significance of Jesus calling his disciples "branches" (15:5)?
2. Describe the different types of branches found in this analogy (15:2, 5).
 - ♥ How does a person become a branch of the true vine?
3. What is the job of the gardener or vinedresser (15:2)?
 - ♥ How much fruit does a branch have to bear to avoid being cut from the vine (15:2)?
 - ♥ **What** do you think it means that the Father cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit? **When** and **how** might this happen? **Why** does the Father do this?
4. Can you think of other functions a gardener might have in a vineyard? **Isaiah 27:2-3** and **Jeremiah 2:21** might help you with your answer.
 - ♥ How does God the Father fulfill the function of gardener in your life and in your relationship to Jesus?
5. What is pruning and what is its purpose (15:2)?
6. What do you learn about pruning from **James 1:2-4** and **Hebrews 12:7-11**? What fruit does it produce?
 - ♥ Is pruning always painful? Why or why not? Is pruning always correction? Why or why not?
 - ♥ In the past, how has the Gardener trimmed and pruned you? What happened? What was the result?
 - ♥ What do you see in your own life that needs trimming or pruning? What tools might the Gardener use? What fruit would result?

7. From the following Scripture, list the fruit that the Gardener is looking for in your life.

Scripture

Fruit

Galatians 5:22-23 -

Ephesians 4:2 -

Ephesians 5:8-9 -

Colossians 3:12-13 -

- ♥ Is bearing a lot of this kind of fruit important enough to you to go through pruning? Why or why not?
 - ♥ For what purpose is our fruit-bearing (15:8)? Why is this important?
 - ♥ As a branch on Jesus' vine, how would you describe your fruit: Ripe? Green? Growing? Wormy?
8. What is the *only way* you can bear this kind of fruit (15:4-5)?

- ♥ When Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing," (15:5) did he really mean nothing or was he just using a figure of speech? How so?
9. The Greek verb *meno* is translated into English as *remain, abide, dwell, live, endure* or *continue* and it means "to stay" or "to be present." To remain in Jesus means to be close to Jesus spiritually and to stay in his presence. What are some specific things that you do to remain or abide in Jesus?

- ♥ According to **John 6:56, 1 John 2:6, 24; 3:24** what are some things that help us to remain in Christ?
 - ♥ Have you ever felt far from Christ since becoming a Christ-follower? What made you feel this way?
 - ♥ What part of our remaining depends on Jesus? On us?
10. What are some specific reasons why remaining in Christ is important (15:4-7)?

- ♥ Is it possible to be in Christ (14:20), but not to *remain* in Christ? Why or why not?
- ♥ *When* or *why* do you find it difficult to maintain a close, personal relationship with Jesus?
- ♥ Sometimes a parent says to their child, "Stay close to me and hold my hand. Don't let go and we won't get separated." What might Jesus say to us, his children, to prevent our spiritual separation from him?

Read **John 15:9-17**

11. How can you be sure to experience Jesus' love for you (15:9-10)? How can you know his commands?

12. What is a huge "perk" of living life in the presence of Jesus (15:11)? How would you define this term?

- ♥ For Christians that you know, what percentage, would you say, live lives more characterized by a joyless observance of rules than the genuine experience Jesus' joy? What makes the difference?
- ♥ Jesus desires that our joy be *complete* or *overflowing* (15:11). On a **scale of 1 to 10**, how complete is the joy you are now experiencing in life? How might you boost your joy level?

13. Jesus continues to stress that after he leaves, it is of utmost importance that his followers love one another (15:12, 17). List as many reasons that you can think of as to why this is so important.

- ♥ To what extent are we to love our Christian brothers and sisters (1 John 3:16)? Is this realistic?
- ♥ What effect does loving others have on your relationship to Jesus?

14. Who are Jesus' friends (15:14)? Do you see your relationship to Jesus as a friendship? Why or why not?

15. In your own words, what is the difference between being Jesus' friend or his servant (15:15)?

- ♥ Do you feel more like Jesus' friend or servant? Why? What will you do to strengthen your friendship?
- ♥ Who is your best friend? How is your relationship with Jesus similar to this friendship? How is it different?
- ♥ What kind of friend do you think Jesus sees you as? Best friend? Fair-weather friend? Faithful friend? Soulmate? Comrade? Pen pal? Why?

16. How is it that we become friends of Jesus (15:16)? Why is this significant?

- ♥ How does it make you feel that you were chosen? How will you show your gratitude?

Response

- What is the biggest promise you see Jesus making *you* in this chapter?
- In light of how you are doing spiritually in your life today, which verse in this chapter do you think is the most important for you at this time? Why?
- Which of these terms do you now have a better understanding of because of this lesson: True Vine? Gardener? Prune? Fruit? Remain? Love? Joy? Friend? Chosen? What difference will this new understanding make in your life?

Encounter with Jesus

Take a few moments to be still and quiet in the presence of Jesus. Tell Jesus what you think of him as a friend. Ask him what he thinks of you as a friend. Listen for his reply. Write down what you hear.