

Abide in Me: The True Vine (John 15:1-17)

JOHN 15:1-17 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Remain in Jesus' love; lasting fruit grows from him, not from us.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 21): John 14:1-14, The Way. Its big idea: Jesus doesn't hand us a map home; he is the way.
- After this passage (day 23): John 17:1-26, The Prayer. Its big idea: The Son who shared God's glory prayed for you before the cross.

Open

Recall last time: in John 14 Jesus told anxious friends that he himself is the way to the Father. Tonight, the same night before his death, he gives them a picture of life with him. Ask: When have you tried to hold something together by sheer effort, and what happened? Read John 15:5. Big idea: Remain in Jesus' love; lasting fruit grows from him, not from us. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. The Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-8, about 13 min)

The one thing: Life and fruit come only from staying joined to Jesus, the true vine.

Ask: Jesus says, "apart from Me you can do nothing." Does that sound like bad news or good news to you? Why?

2. Remain in My Love (John 15:9-11, about 9 min)

The one thing: What we remain in is Jesus' own love, the same love the Father has for him.

Ask: Jesus ties obeying him to joy. Why do so many people assume obeying God and joy are opposites?

3. Chosen Friends (John 15:12-17, about 13 min)

The one thing: Jesus chose us, calls us friends, and sends us to love the way he loved.

Ask: Jesus says, "I chose you." How might being chosen change the way you love the hard-to-love people around you?

Close (never cut it)

Land on the passage's own task in its own terms: remain in his love, and love one another as he has loved you, because he chose you first. Then give the bridge: we're passing over Jesus' longer private teaching to his followers in chapters 16-17 to stay on the road to the cross, and a later series for committed followers is where that teaching belongs. (Teacher check: the plan lists John 17 as the next reading. If you are teaching it, name only chapter 16 as passed over.)

PROTECT THE ENDING

If section 3 starts late, drop its discussion question, read verses 16-17 aloud, and go straight to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 (top to bottom) · Feelings: Jesus happy, God the Father happy, Jesus' friends, the disciples worried, A branch with no fruit sad · Code: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Act it out: The teacher stands as the vine. Kids hold hands in a chain as branches and hold up "grapes" (fists). One child lets go and slowly droops, then rejoins the chain and stands tall again.

1. The Vine and the Branches

JOHN 15:1-8 · ABOUT 13 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus claims the old picture of God's people: he is the true vine.
- The Father tends the vine. He cuts off and prunes so there is more fruit.
- A branch doesn't strain to make grapes. It stays joined.

Remain in Me, and I will REMAIN in you.

For apart from Me you can do NOTHING.

Discuss: Jesus says, "apart from Me you can do nothing." Does that sound like bad news or good news to you? Why?

Life and fruit come only from staying joined to Jesus, the true vine.

MUST COVER

- v1: "True vine." Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet, pictured Israel as God's vineyard that gave only wild grapes (Isaiah 5). Jesus is the vine that doesn't fail.
- v3-5: They are "already clean" by his word before doing anything. The branch's part is to remain.

IF THERE'S TIME

- v2: The pruning hand is the Father's. Cutting back is for more fruit, not spite.
- v6-8: A real warning about withered branches, then the promise about asking and the Father's glory.

Illustration idea: Cut flowers in a vase look fine for days. But they were cut from the root, and wilting is only a matter of time.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: "It sounds harsh, like I'm worthless on my own."
- Listen for: "It's a relief. I don't have to hold everything together."

If it drifts: Bring it back to verse 5: in Jesus' picture, what does the branch actually do? Stay joined, nothing more.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The branch's whole job is staying put. The fruit that lasts grows from him.

Short on time? Skip the optional points on verses 6-8 and keep the discussion brief.

Bridge → So what exactly are we remaining in? Jesus tells us next: his love.

2. Remain in My Love

JOHN 15:9-11 · ABOUT 9 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus loves his followers the way the Father loves him.
- Keeping his commands is how we stay in his love, as Jesus did with his Father.
- The goal is joy: his joy in us, and ours made complete.

As the Father has loved Me, so have I LOVED YOU.

I have told you these things so that My JOY may be in you.

Discuss: Jesus ties obeying him to joy. Why do so many people assume obeying God and joy are opposites?

What we remain in is Jesus' own love, the same love the Father has for him.

MUST COVER

- v9: The measure of his love for us is the Father's love for him. Nothing bigger exists.
- v10: Obedience keeps us in his love. It doesn't buy our way in. Jesus lived the same way with his Father.

IF THERE'S TIME

- v11: On the night before his death, Jesus talks about joy, and he wants it complete in us.

Illustration idea: A small child sticks close to a parent at a crowded fair. Staying near doesn't earn the parent's love. It's where the child is safe and has the most fun.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: "Rules drain the joy out of life."
- Listen for: "If I obey enough, God will love me."

If it drifts: Ask: in verse 10, who else keeps commands and remains in love? Jesus himself. It's family life, not a trade.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

We don't obey to get into his love. We stay in his love, and fruit grows from him.

Short on time? Drop the optional point on joy and take just one or two answers to the question.

Bridge → And what does staying in his love look like between people? Jesus gives one command.

3. Chosen Friends

JOHN 15:12-17 · ABOUT 13 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- One command: love one another as Jesus has loved you.
- The greatest love lays down its life for friends. Jesus was about to.
- We are not servants but friends, chosen and sent to bear fruit that lasts.

No longer do I call you servants... But I have called you FRIENDS.

You did not choose Me, but I CHOSE you.

Discuss: Jesus says, "I chose you." How might being chosen change the way you love the hard-to-love people around you?

Jesus chose us, calls us friends, and sends us to love the way he loved.

MUST COVER

- v12-13: Love's measure is the cross. The next day, Jesus laid down his life (John 19 tells it).
- v16: He chose and appointed us. The fruit that remains starts with his choice, not ours.

IF THERE'S TIME

- v15: Friends are let in on things. Jesus has told them everything from his Father.
- John 13:34-35, earlier the same night: people will know his followers by their love.

Illustration idea: Remember being picked first for a team at recess. Being wanted changed how hard you played, and how you treated the kid picked last.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: "I'm not sure I'd ever be the one chosen."
- Listen for: "Some people are really hard to love."

If it drifts: Return to verse 12: the measure isn't how people treat us. It's "as I have loved you."

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

He chose us and loved us first. Lasting fruit grows from him, and it looks like love.

Short on time? Drop the servant-and-friend point in verse 15. Keep verses 13 and 16.

Bridge → Now land where Jesus lands: his command, resting on his choosing.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Set the scene. It's the night before Jesus dies. He isn't speaking to a crowd. He's talking with close friends about what life with him is like.
2. Read verses 1-5 together. Ask what stands out. Note the claim in "apart from Me you can do nothing": everything real comes from being joined to him.
3. Face the hard part. Name the worry yourself: doesn't this sound like a group guarding its members? Admit that the fire image in verse 6 is a real warning. Let your friend say what bothers them.
4. Read verses 12-17. Look at what kind of leader this is. He lays down his life for his friends, calls them friends rather than servants, and tells them everything.
5. Leave his claim with them. Jesus says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you," and "Remain in Me." Leave the question open: if he really means that, what would it mean for you? No need to answer today.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

"Isn't 'you're nothing without the leader' what every controlling group says?"

It's a fair test. Controlling leaders take life from people. In this passage Jesus gives his own life for his friends (v13), calls them friends (v15), and shares everything he knows. Judge him by that.

"What about branches being thrown in the fire? Isn't that a threat?"

It's a real warning, and it's honest to say so. In a vineyard, dead wood gets burned. But he says it to people he loves, the way a doctor warns a patient. The door he holds open is "remain."

"What does 'remain' even mean for someone like me?"

It means staying connected: letting his words stay in you (v7), trusting his love, and loving others. It's closer to staying than to performing.

"'Ask whatever you wish.' Does prayer really work like that?"

The promise is for people whose lives are shaped by his words (v7) and who ask in his name (v16). It's not a blank check. It describes friends who want what he wants.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Let the Bible do the talking

The vine picture explains itself better than any outline does.

If you're new: Read verses 4-5 aloud twice and ask what the branch does before you explain anything.

If you've taught for years: Trace Isaiah 5 briefly so the class hears why "true vine" is a bold claim.

2. Admit what is hard

Verse 6 and the "ask whatever you wish" promise will trouble honest people.

If you're new: Say plainly that verse 6 is a warning. Don't soften it or dwell on it.

If you've taught for years: Hold the warning together with verses 3 and 16 so it reads as an invitation to remain, not a trapdoor.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

Jesus ends with a command resting on his love and his choosing.

If you're new: End on "Love one another" as he loved us. Don't add a homework list.

If you've taught for years: Keep the order Jesus uses: love and choosing first, then the command.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: When have you tried to hold something together by sheer effort, and how did it go?
- use an object: Hold up a cut branch or a day-old cut flower. Ask how long it will stay green.
- start in the text: Read "I am the true vine" and ask: why would Jesus need to say the true one?

CLOSINGS

- restate the big idea: Remain in Jesus' love. The fruit that lasts grows from him, not from us, and it looks like love for one another.
- allow quiet reflection: Read verse 16 slowly, then give thirty seconds of quiet to sit with "I chose you."
- send them out with a verse: Send them out with verses 12 and 17: "love one another as I have loved you... Love one another."

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone who has drifted from faith hears verse 6 and fears they are the branch that was thrown away.: Don't rush past it or argue. Point out that Jesus speaks the warning to invite them to remain, and read verse 9 to them: his love is still the offer. Talk more afterward if they want.
- Someone asks why "ask whatever you wish" didn't work when they prayed for a sick or dying loved one.: Honor the grief first and don't defend a formula. Note gently that the promise sits inside verse 7's "My words remain in you" and verse 16's "in My name." Admit that it still hurts, then offer to keep talking later.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- Isaiah 5:1-7
- John 13:34-35
- Galatians 5:22-25

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/15-1-17/lesson

Abide in Me: The True Vine (John 15:1-17)

JOHN 15:1-17 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: "I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit." John 15:5

THE BIG IDEA

Remain in Jesus' love; lasting fruit grows from him, not from us.

1. THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES · JOHN 15:1-8

- Jesus claims the old picture of God's people: he is the true vine.
- The Father tends the vine. He cuts off and prunes so there is more fruit.
- A branch doesn't strain to make grapes. It stays joined.

Remain in Me, and I will _____ in you.

For apart from Me you can do _____.

Discuss: Jesus says, "apart from Me you can do nothing." Does that sound like bad news or good news to you? Why?

2. REMAIN IN MY LOVE · JOHN 15:9-11

- Jesus loves his followers the way the Father loves him.
- Keeping his commands is how we stay in his love, as Jesus did with his Father.
- The goal is joy: his joy in us, and ours made complete.

As the Father has loved Me, so have I _____.

I have told you these things so that My _____ may be in you.

Discuss: Jesus ties obeying him to joy. Why do so many people assume obeying God and joy are opposites?

3. CHOSEN FRIENDS · JOHN 15:12-17

- One command: love one another as Jesus has loved you.
- The greatest love lays down its life for friends. Jesus was about to.
- We are not servants but friends, chosen and sent to bear fruit that lasts.

No longer do I call you servants... But I have called you _____.

You did not choose Me, but I _____ you.

Discuss: Jesus says, "I chose you." How might being chosen change the way you love the hard-to-love people around you?

Read this week: Isaiah 5:1-7 · John 13:34-35 · Galatians 5:22-25

For Kids: Abide in Me: The True Vine (John 15:1-17)

JOHN 15:1-17 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Stay close to Jesus, like a branch on a vine.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ Jesus says, "Love one another."
- ☐ Jesus says, "I love you."
- ☐ Branches stay on to grow grapes.
- ☐ God the Father cares for the vine.
- ☐ Jesus says, "I am the vine."

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

Jesus: happy · sad · worried

God the Father: happy · sad · worried

Jesus' friends, the disciples: happy · sad · worried

A branch with no fruit: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

H K N G B N J L F
D V I N E U O O A
H H Y O Y V Y V T
Y N F G F F B E H
K R E M A I N R E
B R A N C H F G R
U V P V S V R B O
O G U N F R U I T
C N F R I E N D S

VINE · BRANCH · FRUIT · FATHER · REMAIN · LOVE · FRIENDS · JOY

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=E 3=H 4=L 5=N 6=O 7=R 8=T 9=V

4 6 9 2 6 5 2 1 5 6 8 3 2 7

5. DRAW IT!

Draw a big vine with branches full of grapes. Write your name on one of the branches.

6. MEMORY VERSE

"I am the vine and you are the branches." John 15:5 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

I can stay close to Jesus by _____. _____