



HomeGroup Discussion Questions

Week 8: Feb 20th-21st

How does a vine illustrate abiding in Christ? Although this saying may be familiar to those who have followed Jesus for a long time, not many of us have the experience with or knowledge of vineyards necessary to understand this picture fully. Jesus chose to use the allegory of the vine as it was a traditional farming practice that would have been familiar to most at that time. Vineyards were one of the most popular cash crops of that day! However, the lesson he gives is an important lesson for those in attendance at the last supper and us today. So as we read and study this passage, even though distances and cultural norms might be different, we are encouraged to focus on the vine's critical elements, the branches, and the gardener.

Equally important, we will look at what "Abiding in Christ" really looks like and what Jesus means when he. Says, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love." (John 15.10). The connection to abiding and Jesus' last "I am" statement is intriguing. A vine is a common Old Testament symbol for the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. Comparing a vine is tied to a warning God gave Israel's people about being unfruitful branches in a desolate vineyard. This week, we will journey through Scripture passages to discuss what abiding in Christ looks like today and how the warnings remind us of the importance of staying rooted in Christ. Given these points, the invitation of this "I am" statement is a faithful, rich Christian life.

Main Texts: John 15:1-11

CONNECT

1. Are you a gardener? Or have you tried to be? What's your favorite produce that you have eaten or grown? (You might want to bring some fresh produce for your group to eat. It might be a good connection to the discussion.)
2. What did you find most significant in this week's sermon? What questions did it leave in your mind?

LEARN

3. Invite everyone to read Isaiah 5 silently. After a minute or two of silence, ask this question: What is Isaiah trying to communicate with Israel? How does this Isaiah passage connect with John 15.1-11? (Jesus is not merely saying Christians are fruitful by resting in him (though this is true), but he's making the redemptive-historical claim he is the new Israel. He both fulfills Israel's destiny (because Israel never could) and is the one in whom the people of God find real, flourishing, fruitful life. He is the true and better Israel, succeeding where they failed, bringing flourishing life and fruit where

4. Read John 15:7; how does abiding in Christ apply to the Christian individual who prays? (An add on to this question is asking everyone to share “best practices” for a prayer-filled life.)

5. As you read John 15:11, what is the promise Jesus gives those who abide in the true vine? (That we would have joy that comes from Christ. You might ask those in your group to define the word “joy.”)

APPLY

6. Fruit comes about as we focus on abiding in Christ (reading scripture, prayer, obedience, etc., are all part of abiding). What have been helpful spiritual practices in your life? Share some learning and insights from your abiding.

7. God loves cultivating fruit. What spiritual fruit does Jesus want to produce? (Think "Fruits of the Spirit" as found in Galatians 5:22-23 and here in John 15:7, 10, 12) (You could encourage your group to memorize the Fruits of the Spirit.)

8. Read John 15:2. Pruning is the removal of parts of a plant to encourage new, healthy growth. Maybe there is a dead part clinging on, or perhaps there is an unfruitful piece that drains nutrients. These need to be cut away. However necessary, pruning is also painful as it involves cutting something away. Can you think of a time in your life that was painful to experience but ultimately led to you be more fruitful? How can remembering this change prepare you for future painful pruning experiences? (This is the deepest question of the day. Be prepare for individuals to reveal real stories. Be ready to prayerful move in grace and listen well.)

GOING DEEPER (a.k.a., Extra Credit!)

At Calvary, one of the marks of life well-lived as a disciple is **Moral Excellence**. We encourage one another to pursue deeper holiness in everyday living. One of those ways of developing deeper holiness is abiding in Christ every day. As we talked about today, a simple step and one of the most challenging steps is making time to spend with Christ every day.

As a group, create a game plan on committing to each other about living two purposeful weeks and keeping each other accountable for spending time reading God's word and praying. Check-in mid-week on how everyone is doing and then come back to how people grew next week. (Since we are asking groups to take a break next week or do a social gathering. It be helpful to remember to remind those in your group to stay faithful to the groups commitment)