**1. Motivate**

When has a task looked bigger than your ability to get it done?

* put in a new lawn
* sew the dress for a special occasion
* cook the Thanksgiving dinner for the extended family
* clean out the attic/garage

A video introduction is available. Watch it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_7v1h2sx3> If you have no Wi-Fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/2ulh89t2>

* redo the bathroom on our own
* lay a new floor in the whole house
* eat the whole pizza
* build a wood canoe
* finish another degree at the university
* earn enough money to send the last kid to college

**2. Transition**

We know that believers are to join God’s work in both the church and the world.

* We may well feel that the task to be beyond our abilities.
* We must realize we are not alone. God will be working through us.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 God’s Expectation

Listen for an analogy.

John 15:1-3 (NIV) "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 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. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

Consider the three personalities spoken of in the passage, God the Father, Jesus, and believers. What is the role of each as specified by the passage?

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Role of the Father | Jesus’ Role | Believers’ Role |
| * the gardener * remove fruitless branches * prune * increase fruitfulness | * communicate Truth * cleanse believer * the Vine * indwell the believer (remain in us) | * remain in Christ * bear fruit only by remaining in Christ |

In gardening, what is the purpose of pruning?

* stimulates new growth, more growth
* results in increased fruitfulness
* removes unproductive elements of the plant (our lives)
* direct growth in a certain direction
* reduce risk of falling branches

What are some common types of pruning that Christians need?

* get rid of sins in our lives
* get our focus back on Jesus, get Him back into first place in our lives
* shape or direct our lives in a certain direction
* limit areas of our lives that are not productive
* divert our energies into production of more or more important fruit
* create new areas of our lives that produce more fruit

In what ways might God be wanting to remove "dead" or useless pieces in our lives?

* changing how I spend my time
* changing my entertainment choices
* changing who I hang out with
* changing my personal health habits (eating, exercising, getting enough sleep)
* quit spending weekends away from church
* changing my career goals to be less selfishly centered
* cause me to be willing to be faithful in tithing

What are some things that God expects believers to produce? What does it mean to bear fruit as a Christian?

* can mean leading others to Jesus
* involvement in Kingdom ministries
* make our lives more spiritually useful
* involvement in ministering to others
* can mean displaying the Fruit of the Spirit
* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control

3.2 Our Relationship with Jesus

Listen for an essential connection.

John 15:4-5 (NIV) 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. 5 "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.

What is essential if one is to be spiritually effective, or fruitful?

* “remain in” Jesus
* allow Jesus to “remain in you”
* living in trust and obedience to Jesus and His teachings
* allow God’s indwelling Holy Spirit to work in and through us
* surrender daily, moment by moment to His guidance and promptings

How does Jesus describe the relationship between Himself and believers?

* you cannot bear fruit by yourself
* you must remain in the vine
* you must draw your strength, your spiritual life from Jesus
* that is an ongoing attitude of trust and obedience

What did He say that makes it clear that believers are completely dependent on Him?

* if you remain in, abide in Jesus you will bear much fruit
* if you are not trusting and obeying Jesus continuously, you can do nothing

What does it mean to “remain in” or “abide” in Christ? What does this look like in a practical sense in one’s life?

* daily, moment by moment dependence on the Lord
* a close relationship where we speak with Him easily, hear His promptings in our hearts and minds
* implies an ongoing relationship and dependence, not just a one-time experience
* Jesus is the most important influence in your life
* results from submission to, obedience of Christ, of the Holy Spirit

What are some ways the world’s advice differs from that of Jesus in 15:4?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| World’s advice | Jesus’ advice |
| * make it on your own * “I did it my way” (Frank Sinatra) * you’re the only one who can accomplish anything for yourself * you can accomplish anything you set your mind to | * you cannot accomplish anything apart from God * it’s up to God * I’m sinful, weak … Jesus is righteous and strong |

Jesus says apart from Him we can do nothing. How would you answer someone who brags to you of his or her list of accomplishments?

* ask what part the Lord played in their accomplishments
* ask them to consider these verses in light of their accomplishments
* ask them how they interpret verse 5
* remind them of the necessity of God’s working in his/her life

When is it difficult to develop and maintain a personal relationship with Jesus?

* when you are busy, distracted by normally events of daily living
* when you are severely ill … physically hurting for extended time
* when you have decided to go off on your own, ignoring God’s principles, God’s guidance
* when you have not been receiving God’s Truth into your life every day

What are practical things we do to stay connected to Jesus? How do spiritual disciplines help us remain/abide in Jesus?

* daily reading of God’s Word
* to have God “remain in” you means you are taking His Truth into your mind and your heart as an integral part of your day
* talking to God, declaring your trust, your praise and worship
* bringing to God those issues which burden you and allowing Him to bear those burdens with you
* asking God for guidance, seeking His principles on which to make decisions
* being sensitive to the opportunities He opens or closes before you

3.3 God Is Glorified

Listen for the fate of fruitless branches.

John 15:6-8 (NIV) 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. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

What did Jesus say would happen to the branches that did not remain in Him?

* the branch is removed and thrown away
* separated from the vine
* withers
* thrown in the fire and burned

Whom or what do you think the withered branches represent?

* unbelievers
* similar to those in the parable of the sower … seed that fell on the path or rocks
* could be areas of our individual lives that need removal or renewal

What privilege was given to the branches that remained in the vine?

* allow God’s Truth (His words) to guide and direct you
* you can ask what you wish (in the context of His direction)
* He will give it to you, He will accomplish it
* God will be glorified by what He has accomplished

What is the ultimate purpose for bearing fruit?

* demonstrate God at work in your life
* bring glory to God
* minister to others – both other believers and people who need Jesus

How does the fruit we produce bring glory to God?

* when it accomplishes His purposes
* when it is in harmony with the rest of the Church
* when we give God the glory and do not claim it for ourselves
* when we are motivated and empowered by God’s Spirit

When have you seen God glorified through the spiritual fruit of believers?

* kindness displayed to someone who doesn’t deserve it
* God’s peace is seen in someone’s life, even though they are struggling with health or financial issues
* someone who always has a positive attitude, the Joy of the Lord is evident
* a patient teacher who helped your child struggling with a subject
* the gentleness of a health worker who gave encouragement

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Remain in Christ.

* Surrender your plans and choose to remain in Christ, living in Him and in His power.
* Pray for open eyes to see the ministry opportunities He places before you.

Mentor.

* If you are already involved in a ministry, offer to mentor someone who is not.
* Disciple them in the discipline of abiding in Christ.
* Help them discover how they can minister too.

Lead.

* If God is calling you to ministry leadership, accept His call.
* Talk with your pastor about this calling and your next steps.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| APART | ASK | AWAY |
| BRANCH | BURNED | CLEAN |
| DISCIPLES | FIRE | FRUIT |
| FRUITFUL | GARDENER | GLORY |
| PRUNE | REMAIN | SPOKEN |
| THROWN | TRUE | VINE |
| WITHERS |  |  |

Should I tell them about help at <https://tinyurl.com/2ulh89t2> ?

They might want to try a different Family Activity too …



Humph! Spiros the Spy is treading on my territory. He says there’s a 54-letter hidden message between the above words you must find in the grid. As usual, they go up, down, left, right, and diagonal. The message will read left to right from the top down. Verify your results with the Qanei Swilesan missions representative on the Mission Board. Humph! Spiros is going to owe me a book report!