

The Tree and the Vine Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Do you prefer the city or the countryside?
2. What was one of your favorite pastimes as a child?

Read the following passage: John 15:1-17.

The Old Testament prophets occasionally used the metaphor of a tree to represent various powers or kingdoms. Jesus used the metaphor of a vine to refer to himself. Each day we make choices to put our confidence in some “tree” or to put our confidence in Jesus, the “vine.”

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Jesus says that God the Father cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit. What kind of fruit do you think God is looking for? (The prophet Isaiah uses a similar metaphor in Isaiah 5:1-7.)
2. According to John 15:2, even fruitful branches are “pruned.” What might this look like practically?
3. Jesus commands his disciples to “remain” or “abide” in him (verse 4). What does this mean? How do we remain in Jesus?
4. In verse 5, Jesus says that apart from him, we can do nothing. Clearly there are millions of people who do not know Jesus who do all kinds of things every day: start businesses, have families, make scientific breakthroughs, etc. So what is Jesus getting at with this comment? How should we understand his statement in the context of our own lives?
5. Jesus gives a great promise for prayer in verse 7. How should we understand what he is saying here? Most followers of Jesus can point to many unanswered prayers in their own lives. How do we reconcile that with what Jesus teaches? What can we do to more fully experience what Jesus promises in this verse?
6. In verses 9-11, Jesus talks about remaining in his love, keeping his commands, and living in his joy. How are the three related? Describe your own experience of love, joy, and obedience. What changes, if any, would you like to see in your experience of love, joy, and obedience?

7. Jesus' final command in this passage is to love one another. Why is this so important? What makes this command difficult? Regarding this command, in what ways are you succeeding and in what ways do you need to improve?

Pray