

THE CHURCH ABIDES IN CHRIST

YEAR: UNITE / FOCUS: I AM PART OF A FAMILY
SERIES: GOD IS FATHER - I AM PART OF THE FAMILY

BIG TRUTH: THE CHURCH ABIDES IN CHRIST

John 8:31; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:6; 1 John 2:6, 24-28

BIBLE VERSE: JOHN 15:4-5

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

BIG IDEAS

- Jesus is the vine and we are dependent branches.
- Pruning is a normal part of the Christian life and community.
- The church that bears fruit glorifies God and finds joy in Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE: JOHN 15:1-12

UNITE - I AM PART OF A FAMILY

The Unite Year is an exploration of what it means to be united in Christ as the family of God (Romans 12:5). When we are saved, we are given a spirit of adoption as sons (Romans 8:15-16), are made a child of God, and we are also saved into a family- the Church. The Unite Year explores how we are to live as a part of a family, and to live in light of our calling as servants and disciples of Christ. We use our gifts to build up the church as we pursue unity, humility, and gentleness with our brothers and sisters in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-2).

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know that...

- The church is a family.
- The church is given by God.
- The church exists for God.



Every student should strive to...

- Prioritize gathering to worship each week with their church family.
- Learn more about membership in their local church.
- Do something to intentionally serve someone in their church family each week



Every student should feel...

- Thankful for the unique ways God has gifted them and their church.
- Appreciation for the elders and leaders that God has gifted their church.



Every student should want...

- To devote themselves to pursue holiness with their church family.
- To have their lives be marked by love for the church.
- To live in a way that is sacrificial and generous for the good of others and the glory of God

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.

BIBLE VERSE: JOHN 15:4-5

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God’s people collectively abide in Christ.

“Abide in me, and I in you.”

- When a person is redeemed from their sin, they are no longer separated from God. This means that every believer can know Jesus personally and grow in their knowledge of Him daily. God’s people are called to abide, or dwell in Him daily.
- When God’s people do this individually, they can abide in Christ collectively. As each believer seeks Jesus and desires to grow in their knowledge of Him in their daily lives, they will join with other believers to do this collectively. When they gather, they will pursue Christ together as the brothers and sisters in Christ they are.

The church can and should bear fruit as they abide in Jesus.

“As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”

- Jesus rescues His people and then enables them to live for Him. Those who seek Jesus and pursue a life of dependence upon Him will bear fruit for Him.
- Jesus is the source of life for all and it is only through a daily walking with Him and growing in Him that we can bear fruit. The church does this when it gathers as a group and seeks to glorify God by following Jesus. When the church seeks to put on the characteristics of Christ, it will bear much fruit for Him and through Him.

Jesus is the vine and causes His church to bear fruit.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

- Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. Jesus is our source of power and gives us the ability to please the Father. Because it is Jesus’ righteousness that is applied to every believer, it is only through and by our connection to Him that we can glorify God.
- Jesus is the vine that gives us our source of power to please God and to live for Him. Only the church that is connected to Christ and seeks to submit to Him and live for Him each day will bear fruit that is pleasing to the Father.

BIG IDEA #1: JESUS IS THE VINE AND WE ARE DEPENDENT BRANCHES.¹**[THIS]**

In John 15:1, Jesus uses the analogy of a vine and its branches to describe the relationship between believers and Jesus. In order for branches to bud and bear fruit, they must be connected to the vine. The vine is the source of life for all branches. It provides all the necessary things for life and flourishing. Branches bear fruit because the vine enables them to. Jesus is the true vine. He is a believer's life source. He provides physical life and spiritual life. He alone is the source of everlasting life. The church has life because Jesus is the vine and He gives life. There are no other life-giving vines for a believer. The church cannot be connected to any other "vine" and expect to produce fruit that glorifies God. Jesus says in John 15:1, that He is the true vine. He alone can give life and enable His followers to live a life that is pleasing to God.

[THEREFORE]**What are some false vines that we might be tempted to depend upon?**

We often depend upon our own wisdom and ourselves instead of depending upon God. Proverbs 21:2 reminds us that though we may think we know what is best, only God truly does. Also, we are tempted to follow the leading of our hearts, but Jeremiah 17:9 teaches us that our hearts are wicked and deceitful!

Jesus is our life source. How have you found life in Jesus?

It is through Jesus that all things were created. In the beginning, life was made through Jesus and it is through Jesus that man can have eternal life. Acts 17:28 and Hebrews 1:3 remind us that Jesus is the life source and it is only through Him that our sins can be forgiven. When we know Him as our Savior, we have eternal life.

[THIS]

Everyone who has saving faith is connected to Jesus. A believer is eternally joined to Jesus, the true vine. It is only through Him that a person is saved. The church needs Jesus every day in order to please God. A believer's life and spiritual journey depend upon a connection to Jesus. Because eternal life is possible only through a connection to Jesus, the church depends upon Him for all things. In John 15, Jesus teaches that in order for a believer to bear fruit, he or she must be connected to the true vine. When the church is connected to Jesus and relies upon Him for all things, she will bear fruit. By daily abiding in Jesus through a study of His Word and prayer, the church can depend upon Him and will bear much fruit.

[THEREFORE]**How can you better abide in Jesus every day?**

We can abide in Jesus every day when we study His Word, pray, and obey His commands. 1 John 2:6 and 3:24 help us see that obedience is connected to abiding in Jesus. When we study His Word and grow in our understanding of who He is and what He requires, we will obey Him. The more we know Jesus, the more we will love Him. The more we love Him, the more we will obey Him.

What are some obstacles to abiding in Jesus?

Often, we do not abide in Jesus when we give in to our flesh. Galatians 5:22-23 teaches us the fruit of the Spirit. These are the traits we will exhibit when we abide in Christ. When we are not doing these things, we are abiding in ourselves. Hebrews 12:2 also helps us understand that when we do not set our eyes on Jesus and look to Him for our faith, we are not abiding in Him. These attitudes can be obstacles to abiding in Jesus.

1. John 15:1: Jesus is the true vine that enables His people to bear fruit.

BIG IDEA #2: PRUNING IS A NORMAL PART OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND COMMUNITY.²

[THIS]

In John 15:2, we see the idea of pruning introduced. Pruning means to trim or remove parts of something to increase its fruitfulness. Pruning is a technique used in gardening that increases the fruitfulness of the garden. Plants bloom more when they are pruned. Gardens produce more when they are weeded and pruned. Trimming branches on a tree allows more branches to grow. The same concept is true for the believer. Our lives are full of things that hinder our fruitfulness, like our daily activities that use a lot of our time, or our extra-curricular activities. God removes these things in order to make us fruitful. God also works in our hearts to challenge us and to stretch us that we might bear even more fruit. Believers should expect pruning in their lives because pruning is necessary to the Christian life. God will work in the lives of His people to make them more like His Son. He will work in their hearts to remove things that keep them from being fruitful.

[THEREFORE]

How have you resisted the pruning of God in your own life?

Often, we think of pruning and discipline as a bad thing. Because of our pride, we do not like to be corrected or to have wrong thoughts and ideas pointed out. Proverbs 12:1 reminds us that if we heed the instruction of God, we will gain knowledge. We will grow. Revelation 3:19 and Hebrews 12:10-11 show us that God's correction and discipline are for the good of His people. Our hearts should be open to His pruning of our lives.

[THIS]

Pruning is a part of every believer's life. This individual pruning results in a body of believers who are becoming more and more like Jesus. The community of believers should expect a pruning, too. God works in His church to guide her and help her produce more fruit. The fruitfulness of the church is a significant part of God's plan and purpose to make His name famous in the world. God works in the body of believers to remove the things, programs, practices that inhibit fruitfulness. He allows challenges and difficult times to increase the faith of His church which in turn produces greater fruitfulness. This pruning in the body of believers is normal and the church should expect it and embrace it as she pursues becoming more like Christ.

[THEREFORE]

What are some ways that God prunes us individually? How does He prune the church?

One way God prunes us individually is by correcting us and disciplining us as Hebrews 12:5-6 reminds us. He prunes the church by instructing them and correcting them. Hebrews 5:8 and Proverbs 15:32 help us understand that God works in the life of His church to prune it. He removes the things we do not need and gives us what we do need to serve Him.

Why is it important that God prunes the church?

The church is the means by which God spreads His gospel to the world. The church is God's people and the bride of Christ. Ephesians 2:20-22 shows us that God is working in His church to make it more like Christ as a testimony to the world. Colossians 3:16 teaches us that the church should grow in holiness and become more spiritually mature. God's pruning is necessary to spiritual growth.

2. John 15:2: God prunes or removes those things that keep us from being fruitful.

BIG IDEA #3: THE CHURCH THAT BEARS FRUIT GLORIFIES GOD AND FINDS JOY IN JESUS.³

[THIS]

God's purpose for His people is that they bear fruit. Bearing fruit means we are abiding in Jesus and submitting our lives to the leading of His Spirit every day. When we bear fruit, we are seeking to know God and become more like Him. Jesus teaches in John 15:1-12 that in order to glorify God, believers must bear fruit. The chief end of man is to glorify God; therefore, the church's chief end is to glorify God. The church can collectively obey God, love others, and pursue holiness. When a body of believers holds one another accountable, builds one another up in love, and bears with one another, they will bear the fruit of the Spirit and bring God glory. The church is unique from other groups and organizations because only the church can truly bear the fruit of the Spirit.

[THEREFORE]

How can a church become sidetracked from God's mission and fail to bear fruit?

When the church is distracted by foolish controversies or things other than the Word of God, it can be distracted from fulfilling God's mission. This distraction occurs when we fail to individually submit to God and our leaders. When we make minor things major, we will fail to bear much fruit for the glory of God. When we focus on temporal things and opinions and preferences rather than spreading the Gospel, we will fail to bear the fruit God requires of His people.

How can you join with your church to bear fruit for the glory of God?

We can bear much fruit and bring God glory in our local church when we use the gifts that God has given each believer. 1 Peter 4:10-11 and 2 Timothy 1:6 teach us the importance of using our gifts within the body of Christ. When every believer does this, we will be a part of a church that is bearing much fruit and glorifying God.

[THIS]

For a believer, joy is not found in circumstances. Joy is found in Jesus and the work He has done on the cross. For the believer, joy is possible always because Jesus is available always. When the church individually and collectively abides in Christ, she will be joyous as John 15:1-12 shows us. Jesus is the source of everything and when the church rests in Him and seeks Him always, she will find joy. Resting in Jesus means always trusting in Him, believing His purpose are always best, and seeking to glorify Him always. Even when our life circumstances are bad and we feel overwhelmed by the darkness of this world, we can find joy in Jesus. The church that looks to Jesus in the good times and the bad times will find joy every time.

[THEREFORE]

How can you discipline yourself to look to Jesus in every circumstance?

Philippians 4:8 helps us see that we have to focus our thoughts on the things of God. When we do this, we will develop the habit of looking to Jesus in every situation. Colossians 3:2 always reminds us of thinking on the things that are above, which means to remind ourselves of our heavenly home and the finiteness of this life. When we do this, we can find joy always because we will abide in Christ daily and bear fruit for Him.

3. John 15:8: The church should bear fruit and bring God glory. Doing this will result in the church having joy.