

Bible Stories for Adults

Final Preparations for the Disciples

John 15 - 16

Opening

- Gathering: How do you know if someone is a fruit-producing branch for Jesus or just a sap-sucker?
- Today's Focus: Jesus showed His love to His disciples by giving them powerful words of comfort and hope on His last night with them.
- Key Verses: *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.* John 15:5
- If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love... My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* John 15:10, 12

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Jesus' Top Priority at the End (*John 13*)

- With less than 24 hours to live, what concerned Jesus the most?
John 13:1 = Showing His love to His apostles
- Why was He so concerned about showing His love to His apostles at this time?
John 13:31-33 = It was time for His glory, He would be leaving soon, they'd be alone & confused
- What did they really need to understand that would help get them through this pending difficult time?
John 13:34-35 = To love one another as Jesus had loved them
- How did He begin His evening with an object lesson to teach this to them?
John 13:14-15 = Taught them to show His love by serving others
- How well would they show they were His disciples?
John 13:21-22 = One would betray Him that night, it could have been any one of them
- What did He then do that would help them remember His love regularly?
1 Corinthians 11:23-25 = He instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper
- Did this participation in Jesus' sacrifice help secure their commitment as His disciples?
John 13:37-38 (Matthew 26:31-35) = Peter would deny Him 3 times that night; all would fall away

While I'm Gone (*John 14*)

- What hope did Jesus give His disciples that they could hang onto when He was gone?
John 14:1-3, 6 = He was leaving to prepare a place for them and would come back to get them
- What assurance would they have of this promise?
John 14:11-12 = The assurance of faith and power given by the Holy Spirit
- What would Jesus do to help them while He was gone? = *paraclete* - aid, helper, advocate (1 John 2:1)
John 14:16-17 = He would send the Counselor to be with them and in them forever
- Besides the power and faith mentioned in verse 12, what else would this Counselor give to them?
John 14:25-26 = Remembrance and understanding of what Jesus taught
- What would the Counselor give them that they would need in the short-term?
John 14:27 (Philippians 4:7) = Jesus' peace to comfort them even in times of great trouble

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In the Room or on the Road? (*John 14:31*)

- Why do some believe that the lessons in John 15-17 were spoken enroute to the Garden of Gethsemane?
John 14:31b = He finished His teachings on the Spirit and then said it was time to go
- Why do some have trouble with the idea that Jesus spoke these words while walking?
John 17:1 = John 17 is a very intimate prayer
- What are we told that says they likely stayed in the upper room for these words?
John 18:1 = They left after the prayer (could also mean that they left Jerusalem)
- Their path would have taken them by the temple – Prayer in John 17 could have been outside the temple
A golden vine over the temple entrance could have prompted Jesus' vine metaphor in John 15

The True Vine (*John 15:1*)

- What metaphor did Jesus use to explain His relationship with His disciples?
John 15:1 = Jesus is the vine and the Father is the gardener - The seventh "I am" in John
- What would the disciples understand to be the vine that Jesus replaced as the *true vine*?
Psalm 80:8-11 = Israel was the vine that God took from Egypt and planted in a cleared ground
- How did this vine that God planted turn out?
Jeremiah 2:21 = It became a *corrupt, wild vine*
- Why did this vine produce bad fruit? = Ignored calling to be Blessed to be a Blessing (Gen 12:2-3)
Hosea 10:1-2 = It focused on producing fruit for itself
- What did God do as a result? = short of complete destruction
Jeremiah 5:10; 6:9 = Sent others to strip the branches, leaving a remnant
- How would God then produce the fruit He had intended from the vine?
Psalm 80:12-17 = He would raise a fruitful vine from its root – His Son from His right hand

The Lord's Vineyard (*Isaiah 5:1-7*)

- How did Isaiah use this symbolism to tell Israel's story? = perfect for vineyard to thrive & produce fruit
Isaiah 5:1 = God had a vineyard on a fertile hillside - rich soil and lots of unobstructed sun
- How much care did God take of His vineyard so that it would produce lots of good fruit?
Isaiah 5:2 = Much personal focus and loving care, but it only produced bad fruit
Fertile hillside = Best place with the best conditions – Canaan, crossroads for world
Dug it up = Couldn't plow mountain slope, had to be hand-turned with a hoe – personal attention
Cleared it of stones = Carefully removed obstructions – removed Canaan of former inhabitants
Choicest vines = Should expect lots of good fruit – God personally chose and prepared the Jews
Watchtower = Provided protection since it was so important – God protected Israel
Cut out a winepress = Much work in rocky ground for permanence – Vineyard intended for fruit
Bad fruit = b'ushim – Not just wild, but harsh, sour grapes (*stinking things* – Exodus 7:18; 16:20)
- Did God feel that He had done everything that He could have done for this vineyard?
Isaiah 5:3-4 = Yes
- What would God do with the vineyard as a result?
Isaiah 5:5-6 = He would remove His protection and care to become the wasteland it deserves
Hedge = green, thorny hedge surrounding vineyard to stop man or animal
Wall = low stone wall inside hedge to stop intruders that fit under hedge
- How did Isaiah make sure the Jews understood the meaning behind this story?
Isaiah 5:7 = He interpreted it for them
- Where would God get the fruit that He had desired from His vineyard?
John 15:1 = He would plant the true vine – Jesus

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Judas Branches (*John 15:2a*)

Would every branch on this vine produce the fruit that God wanted?

John 15:2a = No, some would be unproductive so He would cut them off

Judas branches = People in the church (Christ's body) but without fruit-producing faith

Are there really people who call themselves Christians who won't be saved?

Matthew 7:21-23 = Yes - Not people outside the church, but people inside the church

How can these Judas branches be recognized?

Matthew 7:16-20 (1 John 2:9, 19) = By their fruit, or lack thereof

What will God do with these cut-off branches? = Grape vine wood not usable, only good for burning

John 15:6 = Be burned - eternal punishment, fire never dies

Fruitful Branches (*John 15:2b*)

Would God leave every productive branch alone to produce its fruit?

John 15:2 = No, He lovingly prunes them so they will produce more fruit

Does God really allow His fruitful branches to undergo the pain of pruning?

Hebrews 12:5-8 = Yes, because He loves us

How could God let us go through painful times if He really loves us?

Hebrews 12:10-11 = Because it can produce a harvest of righteousness and peace

How did Peter explain this process?

1 Peter 1:6-7 = Our faith is refined through the fires of trials

Painful Pruning (*John 15:18-16:4*)

What painful pruning did Jesus warn that His apostles would face when He left?

John 16:1-4 = They would be persecuted for their faith in Jesus

Why should they (we) expect this hatred from the world?

John 15:19 = Because they (we) do not belong to the world

Should we take this hatred personally?

John 15:18, 20-21 = No, it follows from the hatred the world has for Jesus

No Excuse (*John 15:22-27*)

Why might it have been better for the world before Jesus came? = Excused before truth was revealed

John 15:22-25 = They rejected Jesus' truth, thereby rejecting the Father - no excuse for their sin

Can people today be excused for rejecting Jesus since it has been so long since His truth was revealed?

John 15:26-27 = No, the Counselor continues to reveal the truth through our testimony

The Convicting Counselor (*John 16:5-15*)

When would this Counselor begin His testimony to the world?

John 16:5-7 = After Jesus left and sent Him

How would He convict the world through this testimony?

John 16:8-11 = The world would be judged for rejecting Jesus and His righteousness

Did all of this make sense to the apostles?

John 16:12-15 = No, but it would when the Spirit of truth came and explained it

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The Pruning Word (*John 15:3*)

What key tool does the Spirit of truth use to prune fruitful branches and to convict the world?
Hebrews 4:12-13 = God's Word - sharper than any double-edged sword, uncovers everything
How had Jesus' disciples already experienced this pruning tool? = See NIV note for verse 2
John 15:3 = Jesus' Word had already pruned (Greek word means both prune and clean) them

Bearing Fruit (*John 15:4-8*)

What is the only way that we can bear the fruit that God wants?
John 15:4 = We must remain (abide) in Jesus, Draw our life-giving faith from the vine
Does abiding in the vine give us the strength needed to work to produce the fruit God wants?
Philippians 2:13 = No, abiding in the vine allows God to produce this fruit through us
How does Jesus point out that as branches we are unable to produce fruit on our own?
John 15:5 = In the vine we will produce much fruit, without the vine we can do nothing
Why has God made it so easy for us to produce fruit just by abiding in the vine?
John 15:7-8 = It is to the Father's glory since He is producing the fruit

Abiding in the Vine (*John 15:9-17*) = Greek *meno* (abide, remain) used 11 times in 8 verses (4-11)

What does it mean to abide (remain) in the vine?
John 15:9 = We just need to abide (remain) in His love
How do we abide (remain) in His love?
John 15:10 = We will abide (remain) in His love as we obey Jesus' commands
What commands do we need to obey?
John 15:11-12 = We are to love one another as He first loved us

Are we to obey this command because Jesus our Master told us to do so?
John 15:13-15 = No, but because He is our friend and has revealed everything to us
So we need to choose Jesus as our friend and we will be able to bear fruit?
John 15:16-17 = No, He chose us and will produce eternal fruit through us as we abide in Him

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I been a non-productive sap-sucking branch for Jesus?
(*John 15:1-2a, 4, 6; Matthew 3:7-10; 7:15-23; 13:22; 21:19, 34, 43; Luke 13:6-9; Romans 10:1-4; Revelation 2:4-5*)
2. When have I been a productive fruit-bearing branch for Jesus?
(*John 15:1-3, 5, 8; Genesis 41:52; Isaiah 37:31; Matthew 3:8; 12:33; 13:23; Romans 7:4; Colossians 1:10*)
3. When have I been separated from Christ?
(*John 15:4-6; Isaiah 59:2; Jeremiah 5:23-25; Hosea 9:10; Ephesians 2:12*)
4. How do I remain and abide in Christ?
(*John 15:4-8, 16; 14:20, 23; 17:26; Romans 8:35-39; 11:17-24; Ephesians 2:22; 3:16-17a; Philippians 1:9-11; 2 Timothy 1:13-14*)
5. In what ways do I reveal the nourishment of remaining connected to the true vine?
(*John 15:5, 9-17; Galatians 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9; Hebrews 12:11; James 3:17-18; 2 Peter 1:3-11*)