



A Worship Discussion Guide for Individuals, Groups & Families for the week of April 13, 2025

Read the Bible passage aloud in your group meeting. This is a worship discussion guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for your meeting, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

Warm Up

"People who are no longer sure that God loves them and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons... Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce, defensive assertion of their own righteousness, and defensive criticism of others." --Richard Lovelace

I Am the True Vine

John 15:1-11 (emphasis added)

¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide 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. ⁵I 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. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

- Jesus is the true vine, and His Father is the vinedresser (1). What do you notice about the care of the vinedresser? (2-3)
- In the Old Testament, Israel is called God's "vine" or "vineyard" ([Psalm 80:8-16](#); [Jeremiah 2:21](#)). And, Israel is judged for not bearing fruit. How is Jesus as the true Vine different than Israel?
- What repeated words and phrases do you find in vv.4-8? Why might Jesus focus on these things, hours before His trial and crucifixion? What does Jesus want His disciples to know about Him and about themselves?
- What do we receive from Jesus when we (the branches) abide in Him (the Vine)?

- What is the connection between love and abiding? (9-10)
- It is only through abiding in the vine (Jesus) that fruit can be born. What does fruitfulness look like?

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."

"We cannot love grace into a child, nor mercy into a friend; we cannot love them into heaven, though it may be the greatest desire of our soul... But now the love of Christ, being the love of God, is effectual and fruitful in producing all the good things which He wills unto His beloved. He loves life, grace, and holiness into us; He loves us also into covenant, loves us into heaven." --John Owen

When Jesus says to abide in Him, He is using Old Testament language that echoes God's promise to dwell with His people and Israel's fruitfulness ([Isaiah 27:6](#)).

- Can you share a time when knowing you abide in Jesus strengthened you to bear fruit (show His love)?

The word "prune" also means to "clean" or "purify." The Father purifies those He loves, so that they can bear more fruit, and know even more fully His love. Being purified or pruned is usually a painful process – when our heart idols are being stripped away (anything we hold more closely or trust in more than Jesus), we see our weakness more clearly. But we also the beauty of Jesus our Savior and God's love for us more clearly.

- Share about a time when the Vinedresser pruned you (sin exposed, prayer seemed unanswered, grief). Can you see a way God cared for you in a painful process?

If Jesus is the true vine, He implies that there are false vines that we can connect to. As the true vine, Jesus encourages us to live, remain, draw power from, and make our home in Him. Believers have an ongoing, active connection to Jesus. Lest we be tempted to fear our own efforts to abide won't be enough, His grip on us is much stronger than our grip on Him. We can hold fast to the One who is holding us.

- Do you see the fruit of Christ in someone? Tell them.
- Consider a person or group of people you find difficult to love. Why do you struggle to show them love? Confess this to Jesus, who knows your heart, and ask for His grace to repent, that resting in His love for you will give you strength to move towards them in love.
- Pray together in response to God's Word.
Heavenly Father, thank You for Christ Jesus the true and living Vine. Thank You that You have called me to be a branch on that living Vine and abide with You. Thank You that by grace through faith in Him, I have been saved by the cleansing power of Your Word. I pray that I may grow in grace, day by day, and live and work to Your praise and glory. Take away the sin I cling to, refine me according to Your Word, that, with every passing day, I may bear fruit of the Spirit, as I abide in You and You abide in me. Amen.

Stories from the Church: Jesus Makes Himself Known
Each Sunday in Lent we will hear testimonies of how Jesus is faithfully revealing Himself to His people.

This week, we heard from Katie Funk in worship.

My name I Katie Funk and I'm from Richmond, VA. I've lived here my whole life and went to college here at VCU (Go Rams.) Throughout my childhood I went to a church here in Richmond. My dad made us go every Sunday, he was a Sunday school teacher, and was strong in his faith in God. I liked going to church and I liked that this was our family dynamic. Looking back at this, I can see God loving and protecting me. I was taught a lot about God in the Bible, and was always asking questions and looking for things to read. But there was much I didn't know. I grew up believing I had to measure up and be good enough for people and for God. I believed I had to perform and earn my way towards heaven and earn love from God and others by doing the right thing or being kind or fun with people or whatever it was I could achieve. I didn't know about his *grace* for me, or the *depths* of his love for me, even if I was messing up, even in the midst of my sin.

When I was born, my family and I lived in a nearby neighborhood off Ridge Rd, and we had a babysitter who lived across the street named Liza. Our families got to know each other and became good friends. Liza was present through some difficult times for our family and she remained our babysitter for the next few years. Some of my earliest memories are with her.

Fast forward to high school, and Liza actually became my Young Life leader at Freeman High School. YL is a ministry to high school students, introducing them to Jesus and helping them grow in their faith. She was always around at school, at my games. No one showed up like Liza did, and I

didn't understand why. She definitely had a life of her own: she had her own friends, she was in nursing school, and I just wasn't useful to her. So why did she show interest in showing up for me, and even delighting in me? I didn't earn it. So I didn't get it.

In high school, Liza was a picture of the love and pursuit of God when I didn't earn it. She loved me until I asked why. Literally. My sophomore year, I asked her to dinner on the night of our homecoming football game. I wanted to know *why* she was hanging out with me, *why* she spent her time the way she did with wild high schoolers. So I planned to ask her at El Caporal that night. And I did.

And she told me the Gospel. That she knows Jesus loves her so much that he would die for her. That she loves people the same way she knows that she is loved. She can see people, value people, enjoy people, and lay down her life for people, because she has this vibrant love that was secured for *her*, on the cross.

And my response was just classic. I said "That sounds like something I want. But I think I need to become a better person and clean myself up a little before I'll be able to receive that."

And her response was something I repeat to myself all the time: she quoted the hymn Come Ye Sinners and said "Katie, If you tarry 'til you're better, you may never come at all."

I said okay. I get that. And we drove to the game and she prayed with me in the parking lot, and I think that's when a true relationship with God began for me. Before this, I was trying to keep up with God, earn my way to being pleasing to Him. I was performing for Him, basing my life on my performance, not what had already been done *for me* on the Cross. I think I understood the cross in this moment for the first time; that *while* I am a sinner, *while* I am a mess and not enough, he delights in me and pursues me.

"God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Liza actually took me here to church when I was in high school every now and then. I really got to see a body of people living in the grace of Jesus, not their performance or social standing. Over the years through this church and through different ministries I've been a part of, I've seen Jesus' grace come to life for me and for others. I have been able to love and be loved not because of what I can do for someone, but just for who I am.

To hear sermons and access past study guides visit
www.wepc.org/resources/sermons-media-study-guide

Hear sermon audio for West End Presbyterian Church RVA on [Spotify](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#); Worship Study Guides during Lent 2025 are coordinated with the I AM Statements from the Gospel of John sermon series and the Lent 2025 Churchwide Devotional

Questions? Worship Arts Director, Becca Wethered, becca@wepc.org