



# Groups



**Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!** If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions beginning at the bottom of page 2.

**NEW this year:** These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders. As always, use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group. And of course, please continue to give us feedback.

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## LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for the Sermon given on March 5, 2023

by Pastor Jon Kim

**"Union with Christ" ("I AM the Vine") John 15:1-17**

Question: Who or what do we truly abide with?

Bottom Line: We see that REMAINING in Jesus the *true vine* is vital for our ability to produce fruit - and to become better stewards of God's love."

As we enter the season of Lent, we begin a new series called, “**I Am**”. For the next 8 weeks we are going to be considering the seven “I Am” statements of Jesus from the Gospel of John. I am ... The Bread of Life, The Light of the World, The Gate, The Door, The Good Shepherd, The Way, the Truth and the Life, The Vine, The Resurrection and the Life. Today we look into Jesus’ statement “I am the vine” and what meaning it holds for us.

Let’s begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

### **Main Scripture Reading:**

#### **John 15:1-17**

<sup>1</sup> “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes <sup>[a]</sup> so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, as I also 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.

<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

<sup>9</sup> “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.

#### **John 15:1-17**

### **Group Discussion Questions**

Q – This message is about “abiding in Jesus.” So let’s take some intentional minutes and abide with the text. Maybe read it aloud again or spend time rereading silently but let’s stop and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us through the text.

After reading the text, what’s a feature or a detail or a truth that has spoken louder in repeated readings? Is there anything in this text that speaks to you more so in this season of your life than perhaps in previous seasons? What do you think God is trying to say to you today?

Q – Focusing on the first 8 verses, the imagery of the vine, the branches, and vineyard itself were instantly recognizable in ancient Israel. And this metaphor of the branches producing fruit would have been readily understood to Jesus' listeners. Jesus personifies himself as the vine that produces fruit in his followers as the branches and calls on his listeners to "remain in me." There is also a clear warning in what happens to the branches that do not remain in Jesus. From these first 8 verses, what do you find encouraging in this metaphor? And is there anything that causes you to pause with question or even hesitation?

Q – Pastor Jon made a point from Jeremiah 2 that if Christian disciples do not remain in Jesus, they can be corrupted by alternative vines and told a story of purchasing knock-off versions of brand name sneakers and clothing while visiting Korea. He came back to his high school in New York and was made fun of for wearing sneakers that said "Mike" or for wearing a "South Face" jacket or trying to pass off Adidas attire with incorrect branding. Can you describe a time where you either settled for an imitation of a true thing or can you make any cultural observations that are similar to bearing unreliable fruit from corrupted vines?

Q – The alternative vines can be enticing and their fruit is not always obviously bad but eventually we realize our mistake, sometimes it's quite costly. What are some practices we can grow in to help us remain in the vine of Jesus?

Q – A major fruit of abiding in Jesus is that we are able to show the love of God to those around us. In fact, it's the Gardner at work in our lives that creates the fruit that allows us to show love. So in remaining in Jesus, not only do we get to experience a closeness with God but also a closeness with others. How does this spiritual truth shape how we spend our time, energy, direct our resources and loyalties?

Q - Pastor Jon finished the message by asking "What is something that you are having a hard time depending on God?" Just as we began our time in reflection and silence, let's spend time quietly praying about this question and allow the Holy Spirit to move in our souls this Lent. After a few minutes, we will close our time in prayer and ask the Lord to help us live out the takeaway of this message : "We see that REMAINING in Jesus the *true vine* is vital for our ability to produce fruit - and to become better stewards of God's love." Let's pray in silence for a few minutes and then we'll close together.

### **Homework Until Next Time:**

Ask the members of your LG to complete the Discipleship Planning Tool and the GPS Assessment Tool before your next meeting. Here is some fresh language:

*We're all on a journey; where is yours taking you?*

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it's good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus; it comes from putting them into practice. Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The with-God life of our personal habits and routines;
- The with-others life of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The for-the-world life that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

### **Let's Pray**

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**Support for the Leader (These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and also opportunities in the life of our church).**

### **How to Use These Study Guides:**

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another.
- You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
- Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with, and see how the conversation flows.
- If your group meets over Zoom:

- You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.
- Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

**Group Leader Support:** Please reach out to your Campus Pastor or your Coach if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic. If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor Tim or Grace Lee from the Group Life team.