

The Heights Baptist Church

OUR NEED FOR PURPOSE • OUR NEED FOR PURPOSE • JOHN 15:1-8 • 10/31/2021

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the Vine who empowers us to live productive lives for God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

“I’m sooo busy.” We hear that a lot, don’t we? Some people say it with a sigh, but they may also betray a hint of pride. Being busy is a badge of honor in our society. It can be a way to convince ourselves we are significant and important. It also can present a problem. Why? Because busyness doesn’t equal productivity. The truth is, we never find ultimate purpose in what we do. Purpose is more personal. Finding purpose is about knowing a Person and allowing Him to shape our lives. Real life—deep, meaningful, satisfying life—comes from connecting to Jesus and allowing His life to flow through ours. Jesus made this concept very practical, and He did it by talking about a vineyard.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:1-3.

Only hours before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus made His seventh “I am” statement. By calling Himself the True Vine, Jesus established Himself as the Source of all that flows from Him to His followers. Since He is the Source of life for every branch (His followers), it is critical that the branches are vitally and solidly connected to Him.

What does this “I am” statement teach us about Jesus’ nature and character?

What did Jesus mean by trimming or pruning the branches, and how does that relate to God’s actions to believers? In what specific ways do you think God prunes His disciples?

Verse 2 describes the process of pruning, when dead branches are removed and the decaying parts are trimmed away. Jesus announced the Vineyard Keeper (God) would remove every

branch that doesn't produce fruit—meaning, visible evidence of a living connection to the vine. People who falsely claim to be followers of Jesus are unmasked by their lack of spiritual fruit. As a result of their counterfeit faith, God removes them from their pseudo-relationship with Christ. As Christians, we're represented in the branch that produces fruit but still requires pruning. This process of removing the dead parts occurs as God challenges us and disciplines us so we can continue to grow in Him. Pruning is a good process, and it promotes spiritual health and strong faith.

Describe a time in your life when God pruned you so you would grow closer to Him.

Was it a good process? Why or why not? What was the result of the pruning?

Is the process of pruning ever painful? Explain.

What role does the Holy Spirit play in our pruning and fruit-bearing process?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:4-7.

Jesus used one word repeatedly in this passage: "remain." In fact, He used it 10 times throughout John 15:4-10. Jesus wanted to emphasize the mutual interweaving of His life with the lives of His followers. If we are to truly **make a difference** in the lives of people around us we must have a clear understanding of what remaining/abiding in Christ means.

What does it mean for Jesus to abide in us?

Why are both remaining in Jesus and Jesus abiding in us necessary to produce fruit?

What does "remaining in Christ" look like in your daily life?

To "remain" in this context carries the idea of personal, intimate residence. Jesus emphasized that His followers must abide in Him, and He in them. The intricacy and the interconnectedness of the relationship between Jesus and His followers is difficult to express—and impossible to overstate!

Jesus also included a warning: "If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers" (v. 6). If half-hearted believers fail to live in Jesus and produce fruit, not only will they be removed (see v. 2), they will face destruction.

In stark contrast to the calamity awaiting false believers, true believers have fantastic privileges—including unlimited access to God in prayer. Jesus promised, "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you ask whatever you want and it will be done for you" (v. 7).

Do you really believe you can do nothing without Christ? How do your thoughts and actions affirm this mentality? How fruitful have you been without Him?

When you remain in Christ, your thoughts are saturated with the mind of Jesus, your heart beats with the compassion of Jesus, and your will bows to the Lordship of Jesus—all of which changes your prayers. Rather than praying a laundry list of self-serving demands, the believer who remains in Jesus will pray like Jesus prays.

How would you summarize the commands and promises in these verses?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:8.

Bringing glory to God is the goal for every believer. To glorify God means to make His name famous, give Him the accolades, and put Him on prominent display. We can glorify God in two ways: 1. You glorify God when you “produce much fruit” and 2. “You glorify God when you “prove to be My disciples.” When you lead people to faith, accomplish difficult ministry and service, or overcome ingrained personal weaknesses, people will notice. And when you humbly acknowledge your inability to generate any of these accomplishments on your own and point to God, He gets the glory. No one can generate genuine life change on their own. Therefore, changes in you will point to Someone beyond you—to God.

How can we work together to produce fruit?

Purpose is found when you step off the ugly treadmill of duty-bound religious busyness and get on the slow-but-sure track toward bearing fruit for Christ. A life in Christ is a productive life. It's a life with purpose.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What steps will you take to remain, or abide, in Christ this week?

What are some specific things we can ask God to accomplish through us? (If God is doing something through us it is bigger than us). What step might He want us to take to accomplish this?

Consider attending Starting Point. Registration is available online at thb.church/events

PRAYER

Thank the Lord for His power in your life and ask Him to use you in fresh new ways.

COMMENTARY

| JOHN 15:1-8

15:1. "I am the true vine" is the last of Jesus' seven "I am" sayings in John's Gospel. "True" contrasts Jesus with OT Israel. Joseph was called a "fruitful vine" in Gen 49:22. The reference to the Father as the vineyard keeper harks back to Isaiah's first vineyard song, where God is depicted as tending His vineyard, only to be rewarded with sour grapes (Isa 5:1-7; cp. Ps 80:8-9).

15:2. Three types of believers are named or inferred in this first part of the chapter: those who bear no fruit, those who bear some fruit and, later in verse 5, those who bear much fruit. The fruit-bearing branches, it would appear from the text of this verse, represent true believers. But to whom does the text refer when it says, he cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit?

This passage is capable of dangerous interpretation, especially when the idea of fruit-bearing centers in evangelism. Some people teach that those who do not win others to Christ will themselves be snatched out of the vine. Such an idea is alien to the teaching of the New Testament. Perhaps Galatians 5:22-23 helps us here: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

15:3. The disciples, however, needed neither cutting off nor trimming clean because they had already been cleansed by the Lord's word. One thing is clear at the outset of the chapter: this is not a passage on salvation, a topic John covered in earlier chapters. Here he dealt with requirements for a fruitful life on the part of believers.

15:4-6. Another key here is the word remain (abide) which appears no fewer than eleven times in the passage. It seems to suggest an effortless resting in the Lord, confident in the promised union between the vine and the true branches.

Furthermore, John used the word remain forty times in his Gospel and twenty-seven more times in his epistles. In the context of this passage, it seems to emphasize an ongoing faith and loving obedience to the Father and the Son that results in fruit. The fruit in this passage seems to focus on spirit-generated behavior of Christians, though again this is not the only interpretation. Many

sermons have been preached on emphasizing fruit as other people who have been influenced by the gospel.

15:7. Jesus added a specific dimension to the mutual abiding of the Christian life (v. 7). He set forth the condition that His words abide in believers. On the basis of this condition, He made the promise of fruitful praying. An abiding life is an obedient life. My words abide in you points to a willing acceptance of Jesus' authority as expressed through His teachings and commands. Words that remain ultimately become words that are obeyed. Whatever you wish defines the possible agenda of a believer's praying. The agenda is unlimited. Any concern is a proper subject for prayer. We can pray for anything that Jesus desires and for which He would ask the Father.

15:8. When followers of Jesus bear much fruit, God receives glory. Since believers cannot bear fruit of themselves but only by means of Christ's indwelling life, their fruitfulness is a manifestation of divine life. It thus glorifies God and serves as evidence of genuine, vital discipleship.