

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, May 9, 2010

Passage: John 15:1-17

Memory Passage: John 15:5

TODAY: From your study this past week, what is one thing that impressed you that can be of help in your life?

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Isaiah 5:1-7 & Matthew 21:33-44.** In Isaiah 5:1-7, who is represented by the vineyard owner? Who is represented by the vineyard? How did the vineyard owner care for His vineyard (note the verbs in v. 2)? What did He expect of His vineyard?
- (b) How would you answer the questions the vineyard owner asks in Isaiah 5:4? What does the vineyard owner promise to do in vs. 5-6?
- (c) In Matthew 21:33-44 Jesus uses the imagery from Isaiah 5:1-2 to tell more of the story of Israel. In this passage, who is the vineyard owner/planter? Who is the vineyard? Who are the vine-growers/tenants? Who are the slaves/servants? Who is the son?
- (d) In v. 41, a transfer of the vineyard to other vine-growers takes place, and this is explained in v. 43 as taking the kingdom of God from an unfruitful people and giving it to a people producing proper fruit. Who are these new people? What is the fruit they produce?
- (e) *Family:* In both of our passages for today the fruit that is spoken of is obedience to God. Describe situations in your life in which you are expected to be obedient to someone. What does obedience look like? What does disobedience look like? What happens when you are not obedient? What does it mean to be obedient to God? Read Philippians 1:9-11 and discuss how one accomplishes obedience (“the fruit of righteousness”)?

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read John 15:1-5.** What does Jesus mean when He call Himself the “true” vine in v. 1 (consider what you learned from answering the questions from day 1)? What is the importance of the relationship between the vine and the vine-dresser?
- (b) What does “fruit” represent in this metaphor? What does the Father do with fruitless branches? What does it mean to “bear fruit” (remember that this is a passive action!)? Think of a time in which God has pruned you. Was it painful? Was it beneficial (see the end of v. 2)? What did you learn from it? Are there areas of your life in which you sense God’s pruning shears approaching right now? How might you be more submitted to the will of the Father in these areas?
- (c) Explain what Jesus means when He says in v. 3 that we “are already clean” (see also Matthew 13:8-10). How does Jesus’ word accomplish this cleansing (cf. John 5:24 & 6:63)? How does the truth that Jesus speaks in this verse encourage you as you consider your role of a fruit-bearer?
- (d) Jesus uses the word “abide” 7 times (and assumes it 3 more!) in this passage. Describe what abiding in Christ looks like (see v. 7; John 6:56; 8:31). Is it a passive or active action? What is the result of abiding (v. 5)? Consider your walk with God over the past 30 days. How much “abiding” have you been doing? What are 3 specific ways in which you might increase your obedience to the command “abiding in Me and I in you”?
- (e) *Family:* Read John 15:1-5. What must happen to a person before he/she can abide in Christ or have Christ abide in them? If a person is not connected to (abiding in) Christ, v. 5 tells us that they can do nothing. Does this mean that a person just sits around and does nothing all day long if they are not connected to Jesus? To what does the “nothing” refer? What kind of fruit does one bear when one is abiding in Jesus? What is the main thing abiding requires of us?

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read John 15:6-8.** “Fire” in Scripture is often used as a symbol for God’s judgment (i.e. Matthew 3:12; 5:22; Hebrews 12:29; 2 Peter 3:10; et. al.). Compare v. 2 with v. 6. Is Jesus saying that people who are “in Christ” can be sentenced to Hell? If not, why not? What is the difference between the branches that are thrown away and burned and those who are pruned? Can you think of a specific person to whom this verse might be referring (remember that Jesus is teaching the night before His crucifixion)?
- (b) What is the condition given for God granting us anything we ask of Him (v. 7)? Can you think of any other conditions that apply to the promise of God answering our prayers in this way (see John 14:13-14 for help)? How does abiding in Christ and His word help us pray according to these conditions? Is your prayer life guided by these principles? How can you better pray according to Jesus’ name and for God’s glory?

- (c) Notice the progression from “bear fruit” (v. 2) to “bear more fruit” (v. 2) to “bear much fruit” (v. 8). Do you see this progression in your own life? If not, why not? During the next week, in what ways will you live differently so that you begin to bear much fruit (consider what you have learned about God’s word, prayer, and abiding)?
- (d) *Family*: Read John 15:6-8. Throughout this passage we have learned that being truly connected to Jesus (the True Vine) results in us bearing fruit. There are, however, some branches that seem to be connected, but in reality are not. They are taken out of the vine by the Vine-dresser and burned. Discuss these truths in relation to being “connected” to a church. Can you look connected on the outside but not be truly connected? How does this look? How can one tell the difference? What must you examine in your own life in order to be sure that you are truly connected to Jesus?

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read John 15:9-11.** Jesus says that He loves us “just” as the Father has loved Him. How has Jesus been loved by God (see John 17:24-26)? Spend a few moments in prayer right now, thanking Jesus for His eternal, faithful love for you.
- (b) According to v. 10, how does Jesus say we are to abide in His love? How would you answer someone who uses this verse to say “When I obey Jesus I earn His love”? What is the proper motivation for our obedience (John 14:15, 21, 23)?
- (c) Jesus obeying the will of His Father is a predominant theme in this Gospel. Read the following verses and write down what you learn about this obedience: 4:34; 5:19-20; 6:38; 8:29, 55; 10:17-18; 12:27-28; 14:31. Develop several principles from what you observed about Jesus’ obedience to His Father that will help you grow in abiding in Jesus’ love.
- (d) Is all of this talk of obeying and keeping commandments and abiding or burning starting to overwhelm you? Are you starting to feel like this kind of life will be like living in prison? Jesus could have been sensing this in His own disciples as well at this point, so He reveals to them the result of this kind of connected life: Joy! Not any joy, but His joy. Full and complete joy. Would you consider your life a joyful life? Better yet, would others describe you as joyful? Would you like to live a life characterized by joy? Then ask God right now to help you grow in abiding in Jesus and His love, for “the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart” (Psalm 19:8).
- (e) *Family*: In what ways does the world try to find joy? Do these things ever bring lasting joy? Why or why not? For a believer, how do we attain full and complete joy by abiding in Christ? What is different about this joy compared with the happiness some people find in “stuff & things”? Now that you understand the connections between obedience and joy, memorize Psalm 19:8a as a family so that you can recall this truth when you are tempted to find joy in anyone or anything other than Christ. Remember, Jesus said “If you love me you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read John 15:12-17.** Consider all the friends you have. For how many of them would you lay down your life? What would it take for you to die for another person? What words would describe this kind of love?
- (b) How will we know who Jesus’ friends are, and specifically if you yourself are Jesus’ friend (v.14b)? Why is it important to know whether or not you are Jesus’ friend? Can you be truly connected to the True Vine, abiding in Him and His love, and experiencing His complete joy without being in Christ (which means He laid down His life for you)?
- (c) Meditate on the truth of Jesus’ sovereignty found in v. 16. Write down all of the ways that you can bear fruit that does not include the work of Jesus (If you wrote anything down, please go back to day 1 and read v. 17 before re-answering each question!) ☺
- (d) *Family*: How does Jesus’ command to love one another just as Jesus has loved us affect your relationships in your family? Why does it seem more difficult at times to love your family members than to love those outside your family? When Jesus willingly laid down His life for the sins of all who would believe in Him, it was the most sacrificial act of love ever made, and we love others because He first loved us in this way. How can you sacrifice for members of your family in ways that show your love for them?

DAY 6 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

Read John 15:1-17. You have read, learned and thought much this week about fruit bearing and abiding in Christ. Take a moment to re-read your notes from this week and write down the three or four most influential truths/applications you learned. Spend some time in prayer thanking God for these insights and asking Him to conform you to the image of His Son in these areas as you seek to live a life connected to Jesus this week.

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