

# Vine and Grapes

## “Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control”

Week 5 – June 25, 2023

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-23

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

**Share:** Do you prefer the green of spring or varied colors of fall? Why?

**Read the scripture noted above together:** Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

### Discuss the following context:

Throughout John 15 Jesus tells us that if we remain in Him we will produce fruit. But not just any fruit, He says that we will produce *much* fruit. And the key to producing much fruit is Christ – He has set us up to produce fruit when we remain in Him. **Galatians 5:22-23** says, “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!” The Fruit of the Spirit are a gift from God, they are evidence/results of a relationship with God and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They cannot be taught, earned, learned. This fruit is produced and increasingly evident in our lives as we abide in Jesus.

Today we'll lean into the final three attributes:

FAITHFULNESS – trustworthy or reliable

GENTLENESS – submissive to God's word and considerate of others when discipline/correction is needed

SELF-CONTROL – self-mastery, curbing fleshly impulses and desires

### Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. The invitation of life with the Spirit, is the invitation to become a person who inwardly forms and outwardly displays love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If we outwardly display love while inwardly being indifferent or hateful, or outwardly display patience, but inwardly we're hurried, we are not abiding in Jesus and producing the fruit that results from a relationship with Him. What else can be evidence of not abiding?
2. Faithful friends are consistent, committed, and trustworthy. They stand the test of time. They celebrate the joys of life with you, comfort you in your sadness, can be counted on to be there, to show up. Read **John 11** focusing on the faithful friendship of Jesus and Lazarus. Consider your own life and discuss. We can be people of comfort when we are present in the lives of others. Who is God asking you to be *with*? To rejoice with, or like Jesus, to weep with?
3. Gentleness soothes, is humble, kind, and can calm the anger, anxiety, or fear of another. A gentle person creates space that is disarming and safe, is a sanctuary and a place of refuge. Review **John 11** looking for the gentle heart of Jesus. Consider your own life and discuss. We can be people who enter the experience of others, desire to understand, weep with those who weep, and speak in a way that is comforting and disarming. Where is God asking you to ask more questions rather than give monologues about your own opinions and beliefs?
4. Self-control is a recognition that we cannot control others, we cannot control our circumstances, our world, and we cannot control God either by making him into our own image. Jesus modeled this many times. Read **Luke 23:34**, Jesus' prayer as he's being crucified. Consider your own life and discuss. Where can you choose to outwardly express self-control as an expression of the love of God that is formed in you?

**Pray together:** Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Ask God to help you take inventory of the kind of person you are becoming. Praise Him that abiding in Jesus truly transforms us from the inside out – He sees the person you have been, the person you are right now, and who you are becoming, and He loves you every step of the way.

# Vine and Grapes

## “Patience, Kindness, Goodness”

### Week 4 – June 18, 2023

#### Scripture: Galatians 5:22-23

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

**Share:** What is your go-to meal to cook when you don't have any time?

**Read the scripture noted above together:** Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

#### **Discuss the following context:**

Throughout John 15 Jesus tells us that if we remain in Him we will produce fruit. But not just any fruit, He says that we will produce *much* fruit. And the key to producing much fruit is Christ – He has set us up to produce fruit when we remain in Him. **Galatians 5:22-23** says, “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!” The Fruit of the Spirit are a gift from God, they are evidence/results of a relationship with God and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They cannot be taught, earned, learned. This fruit is produced and increasingly evident in our lives as we abide in Jesus.

Today we'll lean into the next three attributes:

PATIENCE – forbearance under provocation

KINDNESS – benevolence in action; caring for others

GOODNESS – uprightness of soul; reaching out to do good

#### **Share your thoughts about the following questions:**

1. All nine of the fruit are relational. They all show up or fail to manifest in how we relate to others. Without real relational closeness, what God desires for us becomes a list of dos and don'ts. As you think about abiding in Jesus, where do you see a need for more intimacy with Him in your life?
2. Patience is an aspect of love and other-centered living. When we lack patience, it suggests that we have become the focus, the center, and we will not tolerate someone's behavior which adversely affects us. **Read 1 Peter 2:23** and **Colossians 3:13**. Consider your own life and discuss. Would people who live with me, or work with me say I am a person of patience? Am I unoffendable, or easily offended, or a *person of peace* in all circumstances?
3. Kindness is a spirit-produced quality seen in a propensity to avoid of judgment and harshness that we too often see in the world. Read **Romans 2:4** and **Psalms 103:10-14**. Consider your own life and discuss. How do I respond to people who have messed up? Do I represent the graciousness of God?
4. Goodness comprises two aspects – first, moral uprightness, living with God's will according to how He made us, and second, a lifestyle of intentionally doing good for the benefit of others. Read **Matthew 5:16** and **1 John 3:17-18**. Consider your own life and discuss. Do I live in awareness and responsiveness to the needs of others around me? Is my light shining before others?

**Pray together:** Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that we can draw near to Him, abide in Him, and He will produce fruit in us. Against the picture of patience, kindness, and goodness painted by Jesus, ask Him to help us see what we reflect to others, and where He sees a need for more fruit, or a different kind of fruit in us.

# Vine and Grapes

## “Love, Joy, Peace”

### Week 3 – June 11, 2023

#### Scripture: Galatians 5:22-23

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

**Share:** If you could be any fruit or vegetable, what would you be and why?

**Read the scripture noted above together:** Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

#### Discuss the following context:

Throughout John 15 Jesus tells us that if we remain in Him we will produce fruit. But not just any fruit, He says that we will produce *much* fruit. And the key to producing much fruit is Christ – He has set us up to produce fruit when we remain in Him. **Galatians 5:22-23** says, “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!” The Fruit of the Spirit are a gift from God, they are evidence/results of a relationship with God and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They cannot be taught, earned, learned. This fruit is produced and increasingly evident in our lives as we abide in Jesus.

Today we'll lean into the first three attributes:

LOVE – unconditional sacrificial love, intense & pure

JOY – deep abiding inner rejoicing, almost like a wellness of the soul

PEACE – inner repose, even in the face of adverse circumstances

#### Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. The Fruit of the Spirit are the standard of spiritual health against which we can take inventory and see our growth and/or lack of growth. Compare **Galatians 5:23-23** to the fruits of the flesh found in **Galatians 5:19-21** and how the natural bent of our nature is toward the flesh.
2. The root word for love (agape) is connected to the idea of preference. Agape love is “other’s focused” love. Read **Philippians 2:3-8** and **John 15:13**. Consider your own life and discuss. How do I live in a way that reflects that I prefer others well-being above my own?
3. The root word for joy (chara) is related to the root word for grace (charis). Joy is connected to an awareness of God's grace. Joy can be present in all circumstances, even unpleasant ones. Read **Hebrews 12:2** and **1 Thessalonians 1:6**. Consider your own life and discuss. Am I able to experience joy in all circumstances, rooted in God's grace and my certainty regarding His goodness?
4. The idea of peace in the Scriptures is about a sense of *wholeness*, i.e. when all essential parts are joined together. When peace is disrupted by life's circumstances, that sense of wholeness is gone. The peace the world can offer is circumstantial and temporary. Read **John 14:26-27** and **Philippians 4:6-7**. Consider your own life and discuss. Am I living free of a troubled heart, experiencing the peace that passes understanding?

**Pray together:** Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that His promise is that if we choose to abide in Jesus, the Spirit who is with us and in us can cultivate this fruit and produce more love, joy, and peace. Thank God that this is not about striving for more of these but abiding more in Jesus.

# Vine and Grapes

## “Pruning Shears”

Week 2 – June 4, 2023

Scripture: John 15:1-2; Psalm 18:2 and 40:1-2

*Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!*

**Share:** If you have a yard to care for, do you regularly prune the plants and shrubs in your yard, or does pruning sound scary or foreign?

**Read the scripture noted above together:** Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

### Discuss the following context:

In order to obtain a maximum harvest of high-quality grapes, pruning is an essential part of the process. Pruning grapevines can control the number of canes and nodes, can help improve grape quality, and adjust the vine size and shape. And when it comes to our lives as Christ followers, Jesus talks about pruning us, the branches, in John 15. The same intent as to why a gardener prunes his vineyard is the reason Christ prunes our lives. Pruning is the sanctifying work that God desires to accomplish in our lives. Pruning is done out of God's love towards us, as a restorative process not something done out of punishment. Each one of us is unique, and our pruning won't look the same. Jesus will prune each of us differently, but we are to each trust Him in the process believing that He is good and doing a good work in our lives. What can seem like it is destroying the branches of the vines is actually preparing it to produce new life.

### Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Think about the things in our lives that grow such as relationships, careers, and finances. Also consider physical, emotional, and spiritual growth. What are some barriers that prevent growth or shrink past growth? Discuss the effects of disbelief, fear, setbacks, discouragement, pride, denial, not taking responsibility, lack of motivation, comparison, busyness, distractions, or sin.
2. Read **John 15:1-2**. At first glance cutting off branches that bears no fruit seems harsh, unkind, and unloving. The Greek word in this verse has traditionally been translated as “cuts off”, but it could be translated to “to lift up”. Reread the verse with this translation and discuss the difference.

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He **lifts up** every branch in me ...”*

- a. “Lifting up” is repositioning and adjusting us. Sometimes these adjustments can be easy and gentle, but other times they can be uncomfortable or profound. Can you think of a time in your life when God repositioned or adjusted you?
  - b. Did it develop your character, trust, or faith? Did it start or end something in your life?
  - c. The main trunks of the vines in Judean vineyards would be lifted up with a rock. Read **Psalm 18:2** and **Psalm 40:1-2** with this context and discuss God as the rock lifting us up.
3. In order for us to continue to grow in the vine and produce fruit, our loving Vinedresser prunes us. God desires to prune the out-of-control areas of our lives and cut back what's dead or dying, what's infected or diseased, or what's hindering us. Sometimes pruning looks like loss or correction, but God's pruning is always rooted in love. Take inventory of your own life. Are you in the process of being lifted up or pruned? Is there anything that continues to get in the way or harm you? How can you trust God in this process?

**Pray together:** Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that the beauty and transformation of abiding in Jesus leads to true life and fruitful living. Ask Him to help you trust that He will lift you up and prune you with love and care. Ask God to remove any part of you that resists this process and holds on to something that keeps you from a posture of surrender.

# Vine and Grapes

## “The Vine”

Week 1 – May 28, 2023

Scripture: John 15:1-9

*Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!*

**Share:** Do you have a green thumb, or do you shy away from growing plants?

**Read the scripture noted above together:** Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

### Discuss the following context:

As a culture we do not like to rely on others. We pride ourselves in independence and we're consumed with pursuing life by our own efforts and means. In contrast, we look at how a vineyard works. The vines depend on the environment and resources provided by the vinedresser to produce healthy and delicious grapes. When we think we can do it all and gage our outward success by our achievements and productivity, we believe these things will bring us fulfillment, and a sense of security and worth. But what happens when they don't? If we're honest, we cannot do everything by our own efforts. Sometimes we are left broken, hurt, dissatisfied, and stuck after things fail. All of our independence does not equate success or an abundant life. We are invited to do life another way, to have an intimate and flourishing relationship with Jesus that has the power to transform and shift our hearts towards a posture of dependance and rest in Him.

### Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Independence means different things to different people. Life experiences and personality influence how we are motivated. How would you finish the following sentences?
  - a. "I seek \_\_\_\_\_ and believe I can provide it."
  - b. "Success is important to me because it allows me to gain \_\_\_\_\_."
  - c. "I believe hard work can help me experience a greater degree of \_\_\_\_\_."
2. The grapevine is a prolific plant: a single vine can produce much fruit. And it's also an allegory that is found all throughout scripture. One of the most significant references to a vineyard is found in **John 15:1-9**. Jesus reveals that he is the vine. He is shifting the people's sense of place from a literal location (Israel) to a person (Jesus). We all long for a sense of place. Discuss the areas we often search for a sense of place (security, peace, comfort, control, status, stability, resources, etc).
3. Sometimes we look to God when life gets tough, but when times are good we rely on our own strength. Jesus explains that we are to abide in Him. To abide means to stay, continue, remain. Abiding is not sitting still or being immobilized. Abiding is active, it is something we do. It's a curiosity to uncover more of the character of Jesus. Read the following scriptures and discuss how we can depend on a God who loves us and defends us.
  - a. Abiding means being united with Jesus (**John 15:4**)
  - b. Abiding means relying on Jesus (**Matthew 6:25-26**)
  - c. Abiding means finding rest in Jesus (**Matthew 11:28-30**)
4. What could it look like to intentionally remain in Him? Think about your day-to-day schedule, how could you purposefully spend more time united in Him, relying on Him, and resting in Him?

**Pray together:** Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that being a branch to the vine means living with Him, doing the day-to-day with Him. Ask Him to help you be more aware of His presence in your life, especially when you try to do things your own way, even in the mundane places of your life. Praise Him because the more we abide, the more His grace, love, and power transforms us.