

The True Vine

John 15:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

JOHN 15:9

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A stalk of celery, a clear cup, and red food coloring.

As many sheets of black and green construction paper as the number of children in your class, scissors and glue.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Soak It Up!

About twenty-four hours before your class, prepare a cut stock of celery into two pieces. Take one piece place it in a clear cup of water that has been heavily dyed with red food coloring. The celery will soak up the food coloring, exhibiting what it has been abiding in. Leave the other piece of celery out of the water without refrigeration.

Exhibit the two pieces of celery to your class. Explain that the one piece has been left out and has not abided in anything. It should now be limp and beginning to discolor. Explain that the other has been abiding in the colored water. Show the class how it has taken on the characteristics of what it has been abiding in.

LESSON TIME!

Listen to this story closely. Decide if it's true or false. Don't call out, but raise your hand when you think you know if it's true or false. At the end we will discuss it together:

One day a little girl by the name of Laura was visiting with her grandma in Napa Valley, California. Napa is famous for its splendid grapes grown in its plentiful vineyards. It was summer and the vines were heavy with green leaves and long branches.

Laura and her grandma took an early morning walk through the vineyard across from the house. As they walked Laura heard a groaning and moaning sound. She looked with alarm up at her Grandma, "What's that sound? It's all around us," Laura cried. "Oh, don't be alarmed!" her grandma said, "That is just the branches working hard moaning and groaning to produce grapes. They really have to sweat and strain to get those grapes to bud and mature. Its very exhausting work. That's why they groan that way."

Acknowledge the hands that are raised. Ask, "Is this story true or false?" Listen to their answers. Have the children say why they think it is true or false. Of course we know grapevines don't groan. They are just abiding and their fruit naturally grows because it is connected to the vine. Today we will hear Jesus speak of the true vine, the vinedresser and the branches that bear the fruit.

JOHN 15:1

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."

Jesus Himself is this present true vine. He meant He was the original vine, the source of life. Jesus was giving us this picture to help us understand our relationship to Him. We see that Jesus is

the large strong vine out of which the branches grow. **We can do nothing without Jesus.**

The vine is the source of life and the branches growing there belong to the vine. The vine supports and nurtures and feeds the branches. Without the vine the branches would not live. Without Jesus we could not live spiritually. The vinedresser or gardener is the Father.

JOHN 15:2

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

The Father is our gardener. Part of His job is to prune the branches. Pruning is God's loving way of getting rid of not only the bad, but even the good and the better so that we can produce the best.

Pop the Whip

Clear your class of chairs and furniture and choose a few of children to play a game of "pop the whip". Have three or four (or as many as the size of your classroom will accommodate) hold hands. Have one child be the leader and very rapidly lead the group in a random course. It will be difficult for the last couple of children to hang on when there are many turns.

The object of the game is to stay connected to the "whip" no matter what. Explain to your class that our object as believers is to stay connected to Jesus no matter what.

Pruning can hurt, but our Heavenly Father is never nearer to us than when He is pruning us. We may not enjoy it, but we need it. He prunes us. He does that good work out of love. How does He prune us? He may use His word to convict and cleanse us. Sometimes He chastens us (Hebrews 12:1-11). He may remove

something precious from us to provide something better. He might allow various trials in our lives to draw us closer to Him. If we weren't lovingly pruned, we might produce many clusters of grapes, but they wouldn't be very good or sweet.

JOHN 15:3-9

"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."

Jesus mentioned the word "abide" ten times in verses 1-11. Wow! It must be important. Abide means to stay continually, dwell, settle down and make myself at home. It is a relationship word of intimacy. A branch was made for relationship with the vine. **We can do nothing without Jesus.**

In our story earlier the branches groaned and moaned. Branches don't really do that! They are just abiding in the vine and it is the vine that causes the fruit to grow. To abide means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work through and in us to produce fruit. **We can do nothing without Jesus.**

Collage of Abiding

Prepare as many pieces of construction paper as the number of children in your class. Use a black piece for the background and have your students cut green paper into the shapes of stocks, leaves and fruit.

Have your students tape some of the stocks as vines, some as branches with leaves and fruit. Encourage them to make sure their branches are attached to the vine.

How can we tell if we are "abiding in Christ"? There is no special feeling, but there are special evidences that are unmistakable. When we abide in Jesus, we produce fruit. We also experience the Father's loving and tender pruning. Our love for Christ and others will keep growing, and our prayers will be answered because our will matches that of Jesus.

We will also have joy. Abiding doesn't just happen; we have to have a healthy attachment to the vine which means we worship, meditate on God's word, pray and serve. Remember the branches don't eat the fruit, others do! We aren't producing fruit to please ourselves, but to serve others! The fruit that comes out of the abiding life is listed in

Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law...

We will also desire to win others to Christ. We will grow in holiness and obedience (Romans 6:22). Even our praise is actually fruit to the glory of God (Hebrews 13:15). **We can do nothing without Jesus.**

JOHN 15:10-11

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

How do we abide? Simple! We abide by obeying His commandments. We obey because we love Him and don't want anything to hurt our relationship with Him. Every one of His commandments comes out of His perfect wisdom and love for us.

As we abide (enjoy our relationship with Christ and obey Him) the Holy Spirit who lives in us will bring forth the fruit of Christ through us. We can't do it ourselves. It is a supernatural life, His life! We aren't called to try and imitate Jesus and His teachings; we are called to "abide", to allow the life of Christ to flow through us. He lives through you and me. He produces the fruit. We just cleave to Him and obey; He does all the beautiful works. **We can do nothing without Jesus.**

Before we can "abide" in the Vine, or be in Christ, we have to be connected to Him through salvation. (Teachers take a few minutes to share the salvation message and make an invitation for your class to receive Christ if they haven't already.)

His Banner Over Me Is Love

Lead your class in a chorus of “His Banner Over Me Is Love”:

I'm my Beloved's and He is mine;
His banner over me is love.
I'm my Beloved's and He is mine;
His banner over me is love.
I'm my Beloved's and He is mine;
His banner over me is love.
His banner over me is love.

He is the vine and we are the branches;
His banner over me is love.
He is the vine and we are the branches;
His banner over me is love.
He is the vine and we are the branches;
His banner over me is love.
His banner over me is love.

He sets me at His banqueting table;
His banner over me is love.
He sets me at His banqueting table;
His banner over me is love.
He sets me at His banqueting table;
His banner over me is love.
His banner over me is love.

He sets straight paths before my feet;
His banner over me is love.
He sets straight paths before my feet;
His banner over me is love.
He sets straight paths before my feet;
His banner over me is love.
His banner over me is love.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to abide in Jesus. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them an opportunity to do so.