

March 6, 2013

I am the Vine

John 15:1-9

LESSON FOCUS

You cannot do anything without me. John 15:5 (CEV)

I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me. John 15:5 (CEV)

Today's Bible Lesson:

It's clear that Jesus used every-day events as a springboard for teaching eternal truths. He was setting an example of what all of us are called to do. In the Old Testament, Moses told the Israelites how they were to pass God's truths along to each new generation. He said: Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 11:19

That's the kind of teaching that works. We need to be ready for "teachable moments" that come while we're going about our daily lives: sitting down to breakfast, walking (or more likely for us, driving) our children to school, putting the kids to bed at night. All of these daily events provide opportunities to teach about God. That's the way Jesus taught. He was always alert to "teachable moments" when he could tie eternal truth to the events of the moment.

Jesus made his last recorded I AM statement after the Last Supper. It is likely that he and his men were walking from the Upper Room to the Garden where Jesus would be arrested. During that walk, they would have seen a prominent symbol that hung over the entrance of the Temple. The symbol was made of gold wire and beads, delicately twisted to look like a huge golden grape vine. Jesus may have pointed to that golden vine when he told his Apostles, I AM the true vine. John 15:1

Jesus was using a word-picture that was very familiar to his men. For one thing, grapes were central to Israel's economy. The climate of Israel is ideal for growing healthy grapes. For another thing, the grapevine had always been a symbol of the nation of Israel. In fact, the symbol of the grapevine was on Israeli coins up until the time they were conquered by Rome.

In scripture, grapevines are used as three types of symbols, representing the past, present, and future.

Jesus said, I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

BIBLE STORY

I am the Vine – John 15:1-9

Open your Bible so children can see you “reading” God’s Word. Show them your Bible and the words to they know what you’re saying is coming from God’s Word. Use Tell the Story idea below.

Today’s parable is about a vine with a lot of fruit on it. The kind of vine in the parable is a grape vine. What foods are made from grapes? (Some kinds of grapes are sweet and eaten just as they are, other kinds are made into juice or wine.)

Grape vines are planted in rows in vineyards. The vines are carefully cut or pruned so that the branches grow along a trellis or wire. This supports the vines. The vines are carefully spaced so that each one gets plenty of sunlight and water and produces the best crop. Trimming the vines lets more energy go into producing good fruit.

Jesus and His followers have just left the room where they were eating supper and are walking through the city of Jerusalem. Jesus talks to them about vines and branches. There would have been many grapevines throughout Jerusalem, out on the hills all around them. Jesus uses a very simple and familiar thing for them, grapes, to explain how they would be able to make it through the days after His death, and throughout their lives. Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches of that vine, and God is the one who takes care of the garden of vines.” I don’t know about you, but when I think of vines and branches, I think about them on two different kinds of plants, like branches on a tree and vines being smaller and longer. But for grapes, the vine is the part of the plant that is planted in the ground and the branch is what grows out of the vine and out of which the grapes actually grow. What do you think would happen if I cut off one of those branches? Do you think grapes would grow from the part of the branch that I cut off? No! But, why not? Does the life of the plant come from the branch itself or does it come from the vine that is deep in the ground giving nourishment to the whole plant? The life comes from the vine and without a connection to the vine, there is no fruit.

Do you think it is always a bad thing to cut branches off of the vine? Believe it or not, if it is done correctly, cutting branches off is a very good thing. Jesus even talked about this as He was walking with His followers. He told them that if a branch had no fruit on it that it was good for nothing and needed to be cut off and burned up. But Jesus also said that if a branch had fruit on it, it should be cut away, or pruned. Pruning means that good wood is cut away to make room for more growth. When you cut a good branch, more than one new branch comes from it. And if more than one new branch comes from where there was only one before, do you think there will be the same amount of fruit or more? There will be a lot more!

Do you and I look like branches? Well, we can hold our arms out like branches, but we are not wooden with leaves growing from us! So, what could Jesus mean saying we are the branches to His vine? Jesus explained to His followers, or those who believed in Him, that just like a branch cannot have grapes if it is not attached to the vine, Jesus would not do great things through them if they didn’t stay joined to Him. The same applies to us. Jesus even told them that they couldn’t do anything without Him. That means that if they tried to do anything without His help and guidance, they were not accomplishing a thing! But, if they let Him be in control and work through them, they would be able to do things they could never imagine doing! We need to stay joined to Jesus. He needs to be in our lives and in our daily activities, because we cannot do anything without Him!

BIBLE CHALLENGE

You cannot do anything without me. John 15:5 (CEV)

I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me. John 15:5 (CEV)

Read this passage from your Bible. Ask students to locate it in a Bible too. Help them learn these verses.

Watch the Gospel of John video piece “I Am the Vine, you are the branches”

Video – John 14 & 15 – Disc 2, Chapter 5 – Watch as time allows – live action of Jesus with his disciples.

NOTE:

You may want to all come together to watch video clip first. Then you can dismiss and continue your classes.

GAMES

Connected to the Vine Game

Explain to students that they are now going to do a different type of relay in which they are literally connected to each other - like a branch to a vine.

Teams of three or more people join hands to form a line. If possible, the person in the middle should be the one wearing shoes that tie. A leader sticks the joined hands together by wrapping them with masking tape. This is to ensure that the group stays together. If the grip is broken, the team must be re-taped before continuing.

Teams then go from station to station around the room to complete tasks (See below.) - in any order they choose, except for the final task, which must be completed last.

There must be at least two more tasks than teams. Use tasks that require two hands.

- Fold a paper airplane.
- Cut out a shape from a piece of paper.
- Roll up a newspaper and put a rubber band around it.
- Untie and tie the shoe of the middle person.

For the last task, have groups jump over a masking tape vine or branch, or other shape taped on the floor. The group must all jump at the same time.

Encourage students to encourage each other as they move through the tasks and cheer for everyone as they finish.

As everyone is being un-taped, pull them into a discussion about their experience:

- What was fun? Hard? Easy?
- What did groups have to do to be successful?

Remind students that we are connected to Jesus at all times

SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

Connected to the Source

You will need to share equipment for this experiment. Please roll the cart from the hallway into your classroom and then back out into the hallway so all classes can use the pieces.

Use this simple science experiment to show the concept of the "connectedness" of vines and branches, and demonstrating how something withers when it's cut off.

This science experiment uses wire, switches, batteries, and various buzzers and small lights and fans.

What happens when we're not connected? When we're burned out? When someone cuts us off from the source?