

Transition:

Jesus is preparing the disciples for His departure. His words and symbolism in John 15 are comforting to these disciples who can't imagine life without Jesus. But as we find out, Jesus teaches us all that He's a lot closer than you might think. The setting is the upper room. Jesus and the disciples just enjoyed the last supper together and will soon be heading to the Garden of Gethsemane. But before they depart, Jesus delivers one of the most-powerful "I AM" statements. Richard Trench, a biblical scholar and archbishop from Ireland says this about John 15. "It must occur to all who read this, how simple the text looks but how transcendent is the thought. This is the strongest food of the bible."

Tell the story:

Tell the story (with passion!) the best as you can, don't stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story.

Rebuild the story:

Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions. Have the group look for what was added or left out by looking in their Bibles and going back over the story. Then have someone else tell the story the best they can.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to abide? How do you stay connected to the vine everyday? (v. 4-7)
2. What did Jesus mean by saying, "apart from me you can do nothing?" Share a struggle or valley experience of trying to do it on your own. (v. 5)

Fundamental:

The vine was a very familiar symbol to the Israelites. First, there were grapevines everywhere in ancient Israel, but also there was a large golden vine displayed outside the front of the temple. The idea is that Israel was considered God's vine. Psalm 80:8. You have brought a vine out of Egypt. You have cast out the nations and planted it. In Matthew 21, Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard. So, because the vine was such a familiar symbol, Jesus calls Himself, "the true vine." We aren't to be rooted in the nation of Israel. We aren't to be rooted in the church. We are to be rooted IN HIM! Our identity is not in a nation or a congregation, but in Jesus. And the beautiful picture of relationship between a branch and the vine is how intimate and everlasting our relationship is with Jesus. There's a constant need for connection.

Homework/Challenge:

1. Try something new in your abiding time with Jesus. Incorporate worship music or writing to your prayer and abide time.
2. Take inventory. Try to identify anything in your life today that you depend upon more than Jesus

Discipleship Tip:

Anytime God feels distant or there's a question of faith... first inspect abide time. How much quality time are you spending with Jesus? We are what we consume. So, if distractions are winning and continue to compete with your abide time, it's time to re-examine your schedule.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are the true vine. I realize that I cannot bear fruit in my life without you. Help me see what I can eliminate from my life to spend more quality time with you