

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 6: The Vine: A disciple will bear fruit.

Main Idea: When we are attached to Christ, His life flows through us so that we bear fruit.

John 15:1-5

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14)

## **OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Gather in groups of three to five people and discuss the Observation and Interpretation sections.

Observation Exercise 1: The vine image

Read John 15:1. How did Jesus describe Himself and His Father in this verse?

*Suggested Response: Jesus described Himself as the true vine and His Father as the gardener. The verse introduces the image and identifies the main roles within it.*

Observation Exercise 2: What happens to the branches

Read John 15:2-3. What did Jesus say happens to branches that bear fruit and branches that do not? What did He say about the disciples' present condition?

*Suggested Response: Jesus said branches that do not bear fruit are removed, while branches that do bear fruit are pruned so they will become more fruitful. He also said the disciples were already clean because of the word He had spoken to them.*

Observation Exercise 3: Abiding and fruitfulness

Read John 15:4-5. What did Jesus say about remaining in Him? What result did He connect to that?

*Suggested Response: Jesus said His followers must remain in Him to bear fruit. He explained that a branch cannot bear fruit apart from the vine and that apart from Him they could do nothing.*

## INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### Interpretation Exercise 1: Meaning of the true vine

Read John 15:1. Why do you think Jesus described Himself as the “true” vine instead of simply “a vine”? What does that suggest about where real life and fruitfulness are found?

*Suggested Response: By calling Himself the true vine, Jesus was distinguishing Himself as the genuine source of life. The wording suggests that not every source that claims to give life actually does. Jesus was identifying Himself as the place where real, lasting fruitfulness is found.*

### Interpretation Exercise 2: The meaning of fruit and pruning

Read John 15:2-3. What do the images of fruit-bearing, pruning, and being “clean” suggest about God’s expectations and work in the lives of those connected to Jesus?

*Suggested Response: The images suggest that fruit is expected wherever there is real connection to Jesus. Pruning shows that God is actively involved in shaping those who belong to Him, even when growth is already present. Being “clean” points to a relationship that has already been established through Jesus’s word, not something that must be earned.*

### Interpretation Exercise 3: What remaining means

Read John 15:4-5. What did Jesus mean by “remaining” in Him? Why did He connect that so closely to fruitfulness?

*Suggested Response: Remaining in Jesus describes an ongoing, dependent relationship rather than a one-time decision. Jesus connected remaining to fruitfulness because life and growth flow from continued connection to Him. Without that connection, fruit is not just difficult but impossible.*

## APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

Question 1: Which words or images from John 15:1–5 felt most noticeable or memorable to you, and what do you think made them stand out?

*Suggested Response: Responses will vary. Encourage participants to name specific words, phrases, or moments in the conversation that caught their attention. Use follow-up questions to invite deeper reflection rather than quick answers.*

Question 2: Jesus stated that fruit comes from staying connected to Him, not from effort alone. Where do you notice yourself focusing more on outcomes than on connection right now?

*Suggested Response: Some may mention work, family responsibilities, spiritual habits, or personal goals. Others may recognize a general pressure to “keep things going.” This question helps reveal places where productivity or results may be overshadowing dependence.*

Question 3: Jesus said a branch cannot bear fruit by itself. What does trying to carry life or growth on your own look like in everyday terms for you?

*Suggested Response: Some participants may describe the pressure to keep everything functioning through personal effort, planning, or control. Others may recognize patterns of over-responsibility, where rest feels unsafe because things might fall apart. Still others may notice emotional independence, avoiding vulnerability or prayer until exhaustion sets in. The goal of this question is to help participants name familiar habits of self-reliance rather than dramatic failures of faith.*

Question 4: What practices or rhythms help you stay aware of your connection to Jesus during ordinary, unremarkable weeks?

*Suggested Response: Answers may include prayer, Scripture, silence, community, or simple moments of attentiveness to God. Encourage honesty about what is life-giving versus what feels performative or forced.*

Question 5: If remaining in Jesus is the source of fruit, how might our group help one another stay connected rather than measure one another by visible success or spiritual progress?

*Suggested Response: Participants may suggest prayer, listening well, checking in throughout the week, or creating space for honesty. Emphasize that group support is about shared dependence, not accountability through pressure. Sometimes the support people need most is permission to slow down and stay connected rather than feeling the need to prove growth.*