

## **May 30 - John 15:1-17 "The Organic Growth of the Jesus Follower"**

### **Leader's Guide**

#### **Read Isaiah 5:1-7**

1. Who does the vine represent? What was God looking for from the vine? And what was God's response?

*The vine represents the people of Israel*

*God's desire was that they would produce grapes – but they instead yielded wild grapes. Vs. 7 gives us an interpretive lens. God desired justice and righteousness but instead saw bloodshed and an outcry.*

*Fruit then is to reveal the character, love and justice of God. Israel was chosen to reveal that fruit to the world around them. So that the world would see (Deut 4) and wonder – who is the God who calls them to live this way? They failed to live into that calling. They went after other Gods. They failed to live any differently from the nations around them.*

*God's response is one of loving grief that leads him to a place where the vineyard is not fulfilling it's purpose and will be turned over in judgement.*

#### **Read John 15:1-17**

2. Jesus calls himself the true vine. Given your reflection on Isaiah 5 what is Jesus saying about himself?

*Jesus is true Israel – the one who truly represents the character, love and justice of God. Who reveals God's renewing purposes for the world.*

3. What is Jesus saying about the disciples by calling them the branches?

*That it will be in and through them that God will reveal his character, love and justice. The growth then of the follower of Jesus is not mechanical – do these things – believe those things and everything will work out. Not working – try harder – have more faith – No – the growth is organic. It will be enabled by a living vital connection with Jesus.*

4. Jesus calls his father the vinedresser. The vinedresser's sole job was to bring out the fruitfulness of the vine. The vinedresser would lift up (sometimes translated take away) the branches that aren't producing fruit, and prune the branches that are producing fruit so that they will produce even more fruit. What are some of the ways that the father lifts us up, and prunes us? (Note: The Father like any expert vinedresser will never take away anything that would have damaged us to keep and benefited us to lose)

*The following is taken out of the sermon where Tim reflected on some of the ways he has seen the lifting up and pruning work of God.*

*If you aren't producing fruit – the father will first lovingly lift you up – clean you off – perhaps bring you to confess sin and receive his forgiveness – perhaps have a broken part of your heart healed and restored – perhaps move you out of an unproductive environment for growth into a new conducive environment for growth – he so lovingly committed to our fruitfulness that he will lift us up.*

*At times that pruning comes as we are brought to an awareness of our sin – brought to see it for what it is – it's damage on us – on others – so that it might be cut away through repentance.*

*At other times pruning could come in the exposing of an idol – the revealing of where we put our true meaning and value in life – be it work – or money – or family – or looks – or success – or reputation – we are brought to see that such things can never satisfy – are not worthy of our worship – and are led to reject the idol for true worship of the living God in Jesus.*

*At other times pruning can take the form of exposing our wounds – we have all been broken – hurt – wounded through life – we learn to cope with those wounds – often in ways that keep us guarded – walling off our hearts from others – at times I have found God re-opening those wounds not to cause pain – but to reveal the need for a healing he longs to give – in order that I might open up my heart once more to others in love.*

*Pruning could also come in the form of severing our dependence upon things – relationships – in order to build deeper dependence upon God.*

*Money is a good example – something we are so often dependent upon – the size of our bank account linked to our level of anxiety – our paycheck linked to our sense of importance or attractiveness to others – our time*

*wrapped up in cleaning, insuring, repairing, storing and organizing all that we have – severing this dependence can foster deeper dependence upon God -making way for a freedom to bless others with what we have*

*Pruning could also come on our preoccupations and priorities in life, that while not wrong in and of themselves, rob time and energy and resources from what's truly important. Perhaps pruning calls us away from leisure to love – from rest to relationship – from consumption to compassion – from escape to engagement.*

5. Our growth is not passive but is given to us in a command. Abide. It is a continual command – go on abiding. It is a command given to a group of people – we need one another to abide. What do we learn about abiding from this passage? What does it invite from us practically?

*(4) It is a mutual abiding – the only way we can abide in him is by his abiding in us by the person, power, and work of the Spirit.*

*(5) Only the abiding is able to produce fruit*

*(6) Like the warnings of Isaiah those that are not producing fruit will face the grievous justice of God – for fruit is the evidence of abiding.*

*(7) It is linked to Jesus' words and (9) linked to his love – we are to allow his word and his love to make a home with us. To reorder – to shape – to push things out of – our lives.*

*(9) It cannot be separated from obedience – abiding isn't a feeling, isn't a believing (though it may include those things) it issues forth in an act of the will consistent with the word of God.*

6. Jesus leaves his disciples with a glorious promise. I chose you to bear fruit – so whatever you ask the father in my name he will give it to you. Why is it important to hear this promise in the context of the discussion around fruitfulness? What does it invite you to ask the Father for?

*It is not a general promise of answered prayer. I really desire X – so as long as I am in Jesus he will give me the desire of my heart. No – the*

*promise is in the context of fruit – whatever fruit I ask for he longs to give it – so may we ask. May we let go of our small desires – may we stop cynically believing that we or others won't change – for the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us that we would be fruitful to the glory of God.*

*The second part of this question is a personal reflection question. I would encourage you to end your time as a small group praying for yourself and others to grow in fruitfulness rooted in this promise.*