

## Growth Group Discussion – Quick Tour of the Bible

### Discussion 1 – The Christian Life Defined

#### Reading 4 Summary: John 15

Jesus uses the illustration of a gardener pruning a tree and says "I am the vine, you are the branches" to show that our ability to bear fruit comes through our relationship and connection to Christ. As we maintain our Christian walk, he also warns against the persecution that we are to expect because of His name. But our peace is in the Holy Spirit which is sent to be an Advocate for us.

#### Warm-Up

1. Growing up which household chores were you responsible for?
2. Have you ever experimented with gardening? What was the result?

#### Talk it Over

3. What from this week's readings stood out to you?

**Leader Note:** This will be a standing question each week for the group to reflect on all the week's reading. Hearing from the rest of the group can create a curiosity for further study on their own.

4. Read John 15:1–17 In this passage Jesus gives us a couple illustrations explaining the privileges and responsibilities we have as Christ followers. What are the privileges identified in the passage for following Christ?

- What responsibilities come with these privileges?

**Leader Note:** as the group gets specific on the responsibilities, consider some probing questions: you can ask how they are doing in these areas. How does thinking of these as their responsibilities change their approach?

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes<sup>al</sup> so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. <sup>5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you **do what I command**. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.*

**Leader Note:** This passage is a summary of what a Christian life is to look like. Your group members may want to further explore these verses with deeper questions and study. If you notice the group drifting off track, you can acknowledge that there are many avenues to explore in this passage and that would be great for individual study outside of the group time.

Occasionally people think Jesus is only referring to evangelistic fruit. While that is an element, the fruit Jesus is referring to includes the attitudes, priorities, perspectives, and behaviors that line up according to the Bible. As we choose to do life how the Bible instructs, our attitudes, priorities, perspectives, and behaviors will increasingly align with God's.

5. Jesus explains that the purpose of pruning a fruit-bearing branch is so it will bear more fruit in the future. This can be a painful process when applied to our lives but ultimately comes with future blessing. How have you experienced this pruning in your own life?
6. In Verse 12 Jesus gives us the command to love each other as He loved us. *Put the goals and interests of others above your own* is a practical definition of the type of love Jesus is describing. What are some recent examples of this in your own life?
  - How has treating others this way, or not treating them this way, impacted your relationship with God?

**Leader Note:** When we choose not to love, God often steps back from the relationship with us and we begin to see selfishness, arrogance, and other sins begin to grow in our lives. As a person does the hard work of loving others how the Bible instructs, they receive more of God's help in their lives. Galatians 5:13-26.

### **Take It Home**

7. What are some practical ways you can put the goals and interests of someone you love above your own this week?