

Life of Christ

The Vine and the Branches

John 15:1-8

Younger Verse

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

Older Verse

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)

Bible Story

The following is a summary of the Bible story to help supplement your preparation. In your personal study time, use this summary as a guide, and make notes to help you remember your plans for the lesson. Please do NOT read to the children.

Have you ever noticed, that in some of the Bible stories that you have read or listened to, that the story seemed to be about plants or treasures or something other than people? The book of John doesn't have as many of these stories as Matthew or Mark, but there are a few. Do you remember studying about the shepherd and his sheep in John, chapter 10? Jesus explained that the shepherd represented Himself and the sheep represent us! And the story of the harvest in John, chapter 4? Jesus told His followers that it was harvest time, but he wasn't really talking about plants needing to be pulled from the ground. Jesus was talking about all the people who were ready to hear that God loved them so much that He sent His one and only Son for them. What about the verse about wheat falling into the ground and dying, from John 12? Jesus was talking about His death and our coming to know Him. Jesus liked to use every-day-kinds-of things to explain the things of God.

Well, as we continue studying the book of John, we arrive at John, chapter 15. 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 actu-

Lesson Goals

Explain the use of parables; stories of every day things with a spiritual lesson.
Realize the need to stay joined to Jesus.

ally grow. What do you think would happen if I cut off one of those branches? Do you think grapes would grow from the cut branch? 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 could not do great things through them if they didn't stay joined to Him, or close to Him, and neither can we. 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! Is Jesus in control of your life? Are you following Him and staying joined to Him? If not, let's talk!

**Memory Verse
Activity**

On medium-sized purple circles, write one word each from the memory verse. Allow your students to play with the circles, clumping them together and putting them in order. When they can say the verse without looking, attach the "grapes" in an ordered clump to take home.

Preparing for Next Week

Lesson 36
Loving Jesus
John 14:19-24, 15:9-27, 16:5-24

Preschool Lesson

The Vine and the Branches

Sing: “He is the Vine” to the tune of “His Banner Over Me Is Love”

He is the vine and we are branches, let's stay joined to Him.
He is the vine and we are branches, let's stay joined to Him.
He is the vine and we are branches, let's stay joined to Him.
We can't - do anything - without Him.

Teach: Have you ever thought that even while Jesus was teaching, He also told stories? Well, He did! Our lesson for today from the Bible is a story that Jesus told His followers. Jesus was trying to talk about things they knew about to make it easier for them to understand a difficult lesson. He talked about grapevines. Now, today, most of us don't know anything about grape vines because many of us live in cities and apartments. But maybe your grandparents have some wild grapes that you like to pick. Even if they do not, we will make sure you understand enough about grapes to understand Jesus' story!

(Use a picture of a grape vine here to help your students see what you are talking about.) Did you know that there are two parts to a grape vine? There is the vine part that is planted in the ground and grows up. The other part is the branch. The branch grows from the vine and the grapes hang from those branches. Good branches grow grapes. Bad branches do not. Bad branches need to be cut off of the vine because they don't do anything. But sometimes good branches also need to be cut! Good branches, though, do not get cut off all the way, they just get cut back. And then an amazing things happens. Those little short pieces of branches start bulging with green bumps. Those green bumps turn into small green leaves. Those small green leaves become short stems that eventually grow into new branches. But this does not just happen in one place on that short branch. On one branch that has been cut back, many new branches will grow. And if many new branches grow, there will be lots of new grapes! Yum!

But what in the world can you learn about God from a bunch of grapes? We can learn that just like a branch needs to be connected to the vine, we need to be connected to Jesus. We can do this by reading the Bible and coming to church. We can also learn that just as a branch should give us grapes, we should be doing good things. Those good things by themselves don't make us okay with God, but when we are spending time with Jesus we should want to good things. How about you? What good things can you do today?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for telling us stories that help us understand more about You.

Activities

- Provide coloring pages and word puzzles that will enhance what you have taught today.
- If you are familiar with pruning and have a small plant in need of pruning that can be brought with you to class, a visual lesson in pruning will go a long way to understanding the need to cut back good branches. Take this opportunity with older students to discuss the need to “bear fruit.” A good branch, joined to the vine will bear fruit. A bad branch that is just dead wood will not bear fruit. (You might even want to leave this plant in your study area for further teaching opportunities.)
- You might want to do an extra activity that centers around the “I AM’s” of Jesus throughout the book of John. They include, Bread of Life (John 6:35), Light of the World (John 9:5), Door of the Sheep (John 10:7), Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25), the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6), and the Vine (John 15:1).
- Make edible grape clusters with gumdrops or purple bubble gum balls!
- Serve grape juice with snack.
- Bring purple clay dough for your students to play with.
- Make bunches of grapes from purple foam circles with green foam triangle leaves. Be sure to affix the memory verse.