

ABIDING IN CHRIST

Bible Study • Leader Guide

[Please provide Bibles and copies of the Bible study for attendees.]

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me (John 15:1–4).

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, we have been grafted into You, the eternal life-giving vine. We find our life in You, our hope in You, and our lives in You. Today as we look at what it means to be grafted into You, open our eyes to what You gave so that we may be united with You. Open our hearts to know what it means that all we will ever need we will find in being united with You. In Your most holy name, Jesus. Amen.

Read Romans 11:11–24.

Have you ever seen a lemon-lime tree or a lemon-orange tree? Grafting is where a branch from one tree is implanted into the trunk of another tree. Grafting was used widely in Jesus’ day, and still is today. Paul refers to the Gentiles (us) being grafted into the tree of God’s people (Romans 11). Grafting is an excellent illustration of what Christ means when He tells us to *abide in me* (John 15:4a). In this lesson we will look at how grafting can teach us how we are connected to Christ.

In order to successfully graft, the vine receiving the graft must be wounded.

In order to graft a new branch to the original vine, the vine must be cut. It must be pierced and notched, and the sap must be able to flow out.

Read Isaiah 53.

In verse 2, to what is Jesus compared?

He is compared to a young plant and a root out of dry ground.

How was this plant wounded for us?

Verse 3

He was despised and rejected by men.

Verse 4

He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; we considered Him stricken and afflicted by God.

Verse 5

He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquity, chastised for our peace, wounded for our healing.

Verse 8

He was cut off from the land of the living.

“Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave.”
Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted (LSB 451:2)

Take time to discuss the ways that Jesus was wounded for you.

Jesus was beaten, pierced by nails, spit upon, and mocked to name just a few.

Often it is only during Lent that we contemplate what Jesus did for us. As you talk about the wounds of Jesus, how do you feel toward Him who gave all of that for you?

Why did Jesus have to be wounded for you?

He was wounded for us because it was the only way to pay the price of our many sins.

In order to be grafted, the branch must be cut to fit into the vine.

The second thing we know about grafting is that the branch that is to be grafted into the vine must also be cut, and the closer the cut of the branch is to the cut of the vine, the better the fit and the better the graft. Let us look at this closer.

In order for the branch to be grafted, it must be torn away from the tree from which it naturally grows. We also need to be torn away from the branch from which we naturally grow.

What is our natural state?

Psalm 51:5

From the moment we were conceived, we were sinful and unclean in the eyes of God.
We were shaped in sin in our very body and corrupted by sin down to our DNA.

Ephesians 2:1–5

We were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were under the power of Satan and lived by our flesh. By our very nature, we were objects of wrath.

1 Corinthians 2:14

We cannot even begin to understand God. Without the Spirit, we are truly blind, dead, and an enemy of God.

These are not just words, but the reality of our lives.

Discuss how you truly see your sin.

It is important that we truly see our sin for what it is — ugly and disgusting to God. For until we see our sin in its ugliness, we will never really understand the grace of God.

If looking at our sin does not make us sick to our stomach, and ready to retch, it is probably because we do not really see the sin in our lives.

Do you agree with this statement or not? Why?

When Isaiah saw God (Isaiah 6) he knew that he was deserving of death because he was a sinner and a sinful man cannot live in the presence of God. David calls himself a worm in Psalm 22. It is only as we see ourselves for who we truly are that we will be ready to rejoice in our salvation.

Note: Is it not rather noteworthy: that from which we must be cut away started with a plant? (Genesis 3:1–6)

The graft must be shaped to fit into the wound in the vine.

In order for the graft to be fitted to the vine, it must be shaped.

How does God put us into shape to fit into the wounds of Christ?

John 3:3–8

What must we be?

We must be born again.

What must we be born of in order to be born again?

We must be born of water and the Spirit.

How are we born again?

Acts 2:38

Repent, be baptized, and you will receive the Holy Spirit.

How does God shape us in Baptism?

Acts 22:16

He washes away our sins.

Romans 6:4–11

In baptism, we overcome sin and death to walk in newness of life.

1 Peter 3:21

In Baptism, we are saved through the power of the resurrection.

In order to be grafted to the branch, it must be united to the vine.

Baptism does not only cleanse us from our sin, overcome sin and death, and give us eternal life; it also unites us with Jesus. We literally are in Jesus.

In Romans 6:4–6, with what are we united?

We are united in His death — our old nature was nailed to the cross.

We are united in His life — that we might walk in a new life.

Because we are united with Christ, we can say with Martin Luther:

“That is the mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinners: wherein by a *wonderful exchange* our sins are no longer ours but Christ’s and the righteousness of Christ not Christ’s but ours. He has emptied Himself of His righteousness that He might clothe us with it, and fill us with it. And He has taken our evils upon Himself that He might deliver us from them... in the same manner as He grieved and suffered in our sins, and was confounded, in the same manner we rejoice and glory in His righteousness.” –Martin Luther, *Werke* (Weimar, 1883), 5: 608.

Since we are united with Christ, all that we have is Christ’s, and all that is Christ’s is ours. All that the vine offers — the branch receives.

In order to be grafted, the branch must be bound to the vine.

For the graft to take place it must be bound tightly to the vine.

What does God use to bind us tightly to Him?

Romans 10:17

The Word of Christ brings faith.

John 15:7

It is through the Word that we remain in Jesus.

Colossians 3:16

We are to have the Word dwell (live) inside of us constantly.

How does God's Word keep you bound close to Jesus? Which of the following ways do you use the Word in your life? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Study it.
- ☐ Sing it.
- ☐ Pray it.
- ☐ Memorize it.
- ☐ Quote it to yourself.
- ☐ Use it when you are upset.
- ☐ Turn to it when you are sad.
- ☐ Find comfort when you are hurting.
- ☐ Find strength when you are weak.
- ☐ Find hope when you are at the end of your rope.

Share a Bible verse that means something special to you and why, a time that you remembered a Bible verse right when you needed it, or a time you opened the Bible and God spoke to you through that Word.

In order to grow strong, the branch must be pruned.

The grafted branch will thrive as it gets its life from the vine (abides in Jesus). However, the branch often sends out shoots that make it weaker. These shoots are often called suckers and should be removed as soon as they appear.

What "suckers" have grown in your life that take away your focus on abiding in Jesus?

Here you can list all the things that Satan brings into your life to distract you from Jesus.

According to Hebrews 12:1–2, how do we throw off the "suckers" in our lives?

We have to fix our eyes on Jesus and focus on what He has done for us, what He has called us from, and what He has called us to. We can give thanks for God's protection in all things.

Read John 15:1–2.

When we are abiding in Jesus, what will the Father do?

The Father will prune us. If you have time, you can read Hebrews 12:5–13.

How has God pruned you in your life? Share examples.

This is a time to share personal hurts, struggles, and losses in our lives that have brought us closer to Christ.

How has that pruning helped you be more fruitful for Jesus?

Share times that God worked in your life that resulted in your growing closer to Him.

Conclusion

Like a branch, we were grafted into Jesus' suffering and death, being united to Him. He alone became our source of love, life, and everything that is in life. And as we grow in the Word of God, He feeds us, strengthens us, and helps us bear fruit. We live a new life knowing that because we have been grafted into Christ Himself, *in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 8:37–39).

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You that You were wounded so that I could be grafted into You and Your love. Help me to see that all my strength, my life, and my love comes from You. As the vine You feed me, grow me, and support me, so that I may live in You all the days of my life. Amen.

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