

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?...

A Video Bible Study Series

(John 6:68, NIV)

EPISODE 2 – GROWING IN COMMUNITY

REIMAGINE COMMUNITY SERIES (JOHN 15:1-17)

- Have you ever seen a garden with fresh tomatoes, or a tree filled with apples? It's amazing to think how tomato plants and fruit trees start from a seed that was planted in the ground. With water, good soil, and lots of sunshine, those tiny seeds were able to grow into the delicious foods we enjoy.
- What would happen to the branch of an apple tree if the branch was cut off the larger trunk of the tree? Would the branch produce any apples? Would tomatoes grow on a branch that was cut away from the tomato plant?
- As Christians it's important that we also grow, not just physically but in our faith. Our spiritual food and water come from our connection with Jesus Christ, and each other.
- Our spiritual growth depends on remaining in community, where we study God's Word together, pray together, hold each other accountable, and fellowship together. It is in community where we stay connected to God.
- Jesus talked to His disciples about the importance of staying connected to Him and to each other in **John 15:1-17**. It was right before Jesus was going to be arrested and crucified.



(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

- ***Jesus told His disciples, “I am the true vine. My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch joined to me that does not bear fruit. He trims every branch that does bear fruit. Then it will bear even more fruit.”***
- ***“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain joined to me, just as I also remain joined to you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain joined to the vine. In the same way, you can’t bear fruit unless you remain joined to me.”***
- You might be wondering why Jesus is talking about vines and branches. Many times, Jesus taught by using **parables**. A parable is a story with a special meaning.
- Remember earlier when we talked about tomatoes and apples? What happens when a branch or vine is cut off from the larger trunk that it grows on? Could it grow any tomatoes or apples? No! Vines and branches need to be connected to the larger trunk of an apple tree or a tomato plant to grow these fruits. This is because the large trunk supplies the branches with water and nutrients, which are needed to grow fruit. Without these things, they will wither and die.
- In this parable, Jesus is telling His disciples that He is the true vine and God the Father is the gardener. God cuts off any branches that do not produce fruit. He trims branches that do bear fruit so that they will make even more fruit.
- We are like the branches connected to Jesus, the true vine. When we read the Bible, pray daily, and live in Christian community God “trims” us, or grows us in our faith, so that we can bear fruit by telling others about Him.
- But when we are not connected to Jesus, we don’t grow in our faith. God did not create human beings to be alone. A Christian without community suffers.
- This is why it is so important to be in community and grow in our faith together. This is also why it’s important to invite others into our community, so they can become connected to Jesus and grow, as well.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

- ***Jesus went on to say this; “I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain joined to me, and I to you, you will bear a lot of fruit. You can’t do anything without me. If you don’t remain joined to me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and dries up.”***
- ***“If you remain joined to me, and my words remain in you, ask for anything you wish. And it will be done for you. When you bear a lot of fruit, it brings glory to my Father. It shows that you are my disciples.”***
- ***“Just as the Father has loved me, I have loved you. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. In the same way, I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that you will have the same joy that I have. I also want your joy to be complete.”***
- It is only through Jesus’ love for us and for the Father that we can have that same relationship with God. Before Jesus came, we were separated from God by sin. But through Jesus’ death and resurrection, He took on our sins upon Himself and restored us back to God. Our joy in God is made complete by Jesus!
- ***Jesus then told His disciples; “Here is my command. Love one another, just as I have loved you. No one has greater love than the one who gives their life for their friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I have told you everything I learned from my Father.”***
- ***“You did not choose me. Instead, I chose you. I appointed you so that the Father will give you what you ask for. He will give you whatever you ask for in my name. Here is my command. Love one another.”***
- In **1 Corinthians chapter 12**, the image of the Body is used to describe the Church with Jesus Christ as the head. As parts of Christ’s Body, God gives each of us different spiritual gifts.
- Like Jesus explained in the parable of the vine and the branches, by ourselves we can do nothing. A hand by itself can’t do anything. But a hand that is connected to an arm, that is connected to a shoulder, and is connected to a head, which is Jesus, can do many things!

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

- When we are connected in community as parts of the Body with Jesus Christ as the head, God can do wonderful things through us! It is through our relationships with each other and with Jesus Christ as our head that we grow in faith and produce fruit for God.
- Jesus went on to tell His disciples that for them to stay connected to Him they needed to obey His commands. His command is that we love each other in the same way Jesus loves us. Jesus' love for us and our love for each other is what keeps us connected with Jesus, as well as growing and living fruitful lives.
- In **1 John 4:19** it says, *"We love because He [God] first loved us."* Just like a tomato plant or an apple tree needs to stay connected to the larger trunk to grow, we need to remain spiritually connected to Jesus to grow in our faith and bear fruit. It is only through God's love and power given to us through His Holy Spirit that we can love others as Jesus loves us.
- Our spiritual growth depends on remaining in community, where we study God's Word, pray together, and fellowship together. It is in community where we stay connected to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What happens to the branch of a fruit tree that is cut away from the larger trunk? Why?

- The branch dies and will no longer bear fruit. It dies because it is no longer connected to the trunk which is its source of nutrients and water.

2. Why is it important that Christians continue to grow spiritually?

- We are supposed to grow closer to God and to each other so that we can bear more fruit. This means that God can bring others to Him through us. When we obey His commands by loving each other, we stay connected with Jesus and grow in our faith.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

3. Why is it important to be in community with other believers?

- When we are connected in community as parts of the Body of Christ, God can do wonderful things through us!

4. Where do we get the ability to love others in the same way Jesus loves us?

- It is through God's love and power given to us through His Holy Spirit that we can love others as Jesus loves us.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. What are ways you can remain connected to Jesus?

- Spend time reading the Bible which is His Word. You can watch video Bible lessons, and you can be part of a Friendship group. Be part of a group of believers.

2. How can you bear fruit for God in your everyday life?