

The Follower's Trail Guide

NAVIGATING THE PATH OF JESUS

OPENING UP

Did you ever have a coach, teacher, or leader who didn't believe in you? What was that experience like—and how did it compare to times when you were believed in and supported?

TEXT**The Follower's Trail Guide | John 15:1–11 (ESV)**

1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. **2** 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. **3** Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **4** 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. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. **11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

MESSAGE OUTLINE**Big Idea: Disciples of Jesus Produce Fruitful Lives**

1. Recognize your purpose (vss. 1–3)
2. Remain in Jesus (vss. 4–11)
 - a. Through the Word and through prayer (vss. 7–8)
 - b. Through love and obedience (vss. 9–11)

DISCUSSION



- In vs. 1–5, Jesus introduces a metaphor for his relationship with God the Father and our relationship with both the Son and the Father. Identify who is who... and then, walking alongside vs. 1–5, step through what happens within these relationships.
- In vs. 2, Jesus proclaims something amazing—“You are clean!” Spoken in the midst of our relationship with God the Father and God the Son, why does it matter that we are “clean” and how does this impact our ability to be Branches?
- In vs. 8, God’s heart towards Jesus’ disciples—the “Branches”—is revealed. With your own words, summarize God’s Vinedresser heart toward all of us, the Branches.
- In vs. 2 and 6–7, we see two different types of Branches that do not bear fruit. What are the differences between the two? And how can you know which type of Branch you are?
- In vs. 11, Jesus proclaims where he wants us to land with all this wonderful fruit-bearing talk: joy! When you read these passages, do you feel further burdened—or do you feel the burden lift in joy? How can we land where Jesus wants us to land, in joy?

LIFE CHALLENGE



Abiding in Christ will result in bearing fruit. That’s the natural response for fruit-bearing trees: when rooted in good soil (Christ is certainly good soil!), they bear fruit. It’s the natural *next thing*. We are *so loved* by God—so that the Father is committed to making us the kind of plants that bear his fruit. So, the call of this text is to focus *not on the fruit*—but on *abiding in Jesus*. Ask yourself, now: “Does my heart abide in Jesus—or am I trying to bear fruit another way?” If you find that you’re gaining your identity from something other than Jesus, repent and move back toward Jesus to abide in him.

There’s another aspect to this passage; vs. 2 shows us that there might be seasons of *not* bearing fruit because the Father is at work pruning us to make us healthier Branches. Are you in such a season where you’re being pruned? How does God’s attentive care for you encourage your heart in hope?

CLOSING PRAYER



Lord, we wish to bear fruit! But we know that any Branch that remains connected to you *does* bear fruit. So keep us connected—abiding—in you. We want only to be Branches who bear fruit, so help us to be Branches who behave like branches... abiding in your love, just as you would abide in the Father’s love. Keep us in your heart. Thank you, Oh Father, for your attention to the fine details of our lives—that you joyfully work toward our good and prune where necessary so that we might bear fruit in good time. Amen!