

Children's Resource



Living Fruitfully

Key Passage: John 15:1-17

Key Aims:

- To help the children understand what living fruitfully for God might look like for them
- To help the children explore how they can demonstrate God's love to those around them
- To encourage the children to explore how in our Christian lives we are renewed to help others

PREPARATION

- 9 purple, red or green balloons and 1 printout of the passage (Appendix 1) cut into 9 strips to place inside the balloons
- Pens or pencils and paper
- Laptop with time-lapse seed video - www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BtKakP5xOk
- Wooden block or small branch and watering can or jug of water
- Old or charity shop clothing
- Connections Worksheet (Appendix 2)
- Food to share with the group (carrot sticks, apples and grapes, sausage rolls, crisps and mini-muffins)
- A pencilled-in A3 shape of a tree with branches and cut-outs of leaf shapes (Appendix 3)
- Images of places children are during the week (Appendix 4), an inkpad and wipes



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BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Last year's theme of Discipleship allowed children to explore how they could grow as followers of Jesus. This year we will be helping the children to understand how they can be effective and live fruitfully for Jesus.

Read John 15:1-17 and John 13:34 (*International Children's Bible*).

In John 15 Jesus is telling his disciples that they must remain in him, by continuing to follow his teachings so that they may bear fruit. In the same way, we need to stay connected to Jesus so that we can lead fruitful lives!

Jesus uses imagery which would have been very familiar to his disciples (the vine) and it is from this that we see that each of us has a crucial part to play in the building of God's Kingdom on earth (vv4-5). Later in the passage, Jesus also emphasises that showing love to others is crucial to making sure that we bear fruit (vv12-13,17).

It is our duty and privilege to reflect Jesus in our hurting and mixed-up world. But the easiest way to do this is to foster a deep connection to Jesus and follow his teachings in all we do, so that we can be effective in our ministry.

Ensuring we are effective in our everyday lives can sometimes be difficult, but remaining in Jesus' love is the key to living a fruitful life (vv9-10). Similarly, if we view everything we do as an opportunity to show love, then there can be no other outcome but to bear fruit.

To reach our full effectiveness and ensure that we are living fruitfully, we must consistently re-align ourselves with Jesus and his teachings, and above all remain connected to him.

WARM-UPS

- **Live Fruitfully: Pop the Grapes**

This is a group game where the children have to put Bible verses in order. Blow up each of the nine red or purple balloons. Just before you tie each balloon, place the



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cut-out Bible verses (Appendix 1) inside by rolling each into a scroll. Attach the balloons in any order to your string.

You will need to allocate some children to help work out the order of the verses. Some of the other children should be in pairs if there are more than nine. One by one each child (or one from each pair) goes to pop the balloon by jumping on it, and then takes the slip of paper back to the group that is working out the order of the verses. Gather the children as you read out the passage (you may want to do this together). Keep the verses for later on!

- **Live Fruitfully: Creative Challenge**

This can be done individually or in small teams. Give each team a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Explain that they have five minutes to create an invention that would help them to show love to others. They can draw their invention on their paper.

Afterwards ask the children to share one thing that their invention does and think about all of the ways we can show love to others.

- **Live Fruitfully: Icebreaker Question**

Gather the children in a circle. Ask them, if they can, to name one way that they stay close to Jesus.

Ensure that you yourself have an answer to this, so that you can show the children how to answer. Let the children put their hands up when they are ready to answer. If they seem to be struggling, suggest they think about how and when they talk to Jesus, or how they show Jesus' love to others at home, at school, or in church.

LESSON

Sit the children in a circle. Start by talking about fruit: ask what their favourite fruit is, and which fruits they know about that might grow on vines. Ask them: What might a plant need to grow? Allow for a variety of answers.

Show the children the time-lapse video of the acorn growing into an oak tree (available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BtKakP5xOk)



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Afterwards, ask them: *Was there anything else that the plant needed to grow? What would you do if the tree (or vine) grew and grew, but never had any fruit?* Let them discuss this in pairs if they need to and encourage them to come to a solution together.

Tell the children that in the Bible, Jesus tells his followers a wonderful story about fruit, and he explains how we as his friends might live fruitfully.

- Illustration

Take your wooden block or dead branch (in its bucket or bowl) and say that you have heard that lots of fruits grow on trees and that you would like to see what kind of fruit this wood grows, so you have decided to water it.

Take the watering can or jug and pour the water on to the wood. Comment on the fact that it doesn't seem to be growing and ask the children why this might be. Allow for a variety of answers.

Ask - *I wonder if something is missing from this piece of wood to make it grow?* Allow some time for the children to think about this and come up with a variety of answers.

Tell the children that for us to grow as disciples and bear fruit, we need to remain connected to Jesus, just as a plant (or vine) needs to be connected to the earth.

Ask the children: *I wonder how you connect with Jesus?* Allow time for discussion and a variety of answers.

- Bible Reading

Read John 15:1-17. This can sometimes be a difficult passage for children to understand but the International Children's Bible (ICB) is a good option to help them. You may like to give each child a copy of the text so that they can follow it as you read, or so the children themselves can read (available from biblegateway.com).



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- Wondering

Following the Bible reading, ask the following questions. Allow thinking time and the opportunity for a variety of answers:

- I wonder where you are in the story?
- I wonder how we can love each other?
- I wonder how we can remain in Jesus' love?
- I wonder what the fruit could really be?

ACTIVITIES

- Dressing-up Activity

Gather a selection of old, unloved, charity shop clothing which can be given to the group. These clothes are going to represent two separate points:

- Separate the group into two teams and place the clothes at the far end of the room. Each member of a team takes it in turn to collect an item of clothing and put it on a chosen 'Trunk' (a person who will have to put on each item of clothing as their teammates bring the clothes back to them). When all items have gone, the winning team is the one that has the most items of clothing on their 'Trunk'.

Interview the people wearing all the clothes, asking them how they feel. Do they feel silly? Are they hot in all the clothes? Are they struggling to keep each of the items on?

Explain that each item of clothing represents a person, and that we can come to Jesus and he will hold us. He does not struggle to keep up each of the 'items' we give him, but holds each one of us in his hands. Perhaps each one of the clothes should actually be a piece of gold cloth, for this represents how much we mean to him. But even when we are weary and tired, like these clothes may be, he doesn't stop loving us.



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- Have the clothes taken off the 'Trunk'. You may want to give an item to each person to get them to think further about a piece of clothing. Explore with one another the different forms these clothes have taken. Think about how they were formed - created from wool, for example, or woven together. Then they were placed on a shelf and sold, and are now in a state where they have had better days!

Think about what will happen next: the clothes may be given new life. They could either be with someone new, who will wear the item with pride, or they may be recycled, potentially being turned into more useful or even expensive clothes, having a new life.

Relate this to the growth of a tree, which starts off as a seed and grows during the spring. In the winter it may seem to wither as it loses its leaves, but with springtime the tree will come back with renewed strength, bigger than it was before. If you are being adventurous, you could get the group to try and turn their item(s) of clothing into something new.

Explain that that as Christians it is important that we remove from ourselves the items that are no longer of worth to us in our spiritual journey. Instead, we need to look at replacing these with greater and better things, in the same way that Jesus speaks of pruning and trimming the branches.

- Connections Worksheet

Give each person a copy of Appendix 2 entitled 'What's the connection?' Ask the young people to work out what the connections are for each image on the page. For example, the windsurfer and the kite are connected by the strings, and the train and the rails are connected by the wheels.



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Focus in on the tree, and the branches and the leaves. Ask what the connection is and remind the children of the Bible reading. What is Jesus asking us to be in his Kingdom? How are we able to be the connections?

You may also want to think about what our connection with God looks like, and how we allow this to grow (through prayer, Scripture, worship and so forth).

- Sharing Food

Gather the group together and prepare a very simple meal. A couple of carrot sticks, sliced apples and grapes to start, with a sausage roll and crisps as the main and then a mini-muffin as afters - this would be plenty.

As you share, ask the children to think about the value of the food, and why it is important. Ask them to think about what it does for our body, and how we gain strength from eating. Talk about all the positive aspects of what having food can look like. Explain that the same is true for a tree when it grows and receives the right conditions, and this is also true for us in our Christian lives.

Explain how some food can be good and healthy, while other foods are not. We have to make sure that what we eat is balanced and appropriate. Encourage the children to think how this relates to our relationship with God. Explore what are some things that he would want us to 'cut back on' because they are not valuable to us or may even be harmful to us, so that instead we can invest in things that are good, fruitful and that will build his Church. Refer back to the pruning process of the story, and how this is important in our lives.

WORSHIP

- 'Shine from the inside out' by Nick Jackson
- 'How wide can your smile be?' by Doug Horley (*Flabbergasted* CD)
- 'Every move I make' by Doug Horley
- 'God suit on' by Cheeky Pandas - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4dTFJxNM28>
- 'Oceans' by by Matt Crocker, Joel Houston & Salomon Lightelm (Hillsong United)
- 'These are the days of Elijah' by Robin Mark (*SoF* 1047)



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PRAYER

Create a space where children can consider what it means to live a life that God asks of us, where we show the fruits of the Spirit in our life and what this looks like in our everyday life.

On a piece of A3 or larger paper, draw lightly (in pencil) a sketch of a tree, with trunk and branches. Make sure that the pencil can be rubbed out afterwards. Cut out the leaves in Appendix 3 or create your own. These can be used for the children to write on the names of their friends. You will need approximately 3-4 leaves per child.

In the trunk of the tree write the word 'Jesus'. This should be the largest part of the tree, so make sure that the writing is as big as possible. Explain to the children that we have been thinking about Jesus as the vine, the centre.

Ask each of the children to put their own names on to the tree as the branches. These should be fairly big still, but smaller than the trunk. Let them know that we are connected to God, in the same way a branch is connected to the trunk.

Finally ask them to write or draw on the leaves names of people they know who are not Christians. Ask them to stick their leaves around the branch with their own name on. Explore how we can show to others Jesus' love which he gives to us, and that this love is available for them as well.

Pray as a group focusing on the trunk, the branches and the leaves. You could ask a person to pray for each part - thanking Jesus for his love, asking that we stay connected to Jesus, and finally that we will be able to share our faith with those whose names are on the leaves.

RESPONSE

Ask the children to get into pairs and share with each other what they have picked up during the session. Following this, ask everyone to find a new partner and share what their original partner said. When with their new partner, ask if there is



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anything they are confused about, and if there is, see if their partner is able to answer it.

Bring the group back together and ask if they are ready for the challenge. Explain that it will not be easy, but together there is the opportunity to do far more than could happen alone, much like in God's strength. Ask the group to reflect on where they are now and how life may look a bit different as a result.

Place a number of images around the room (Appendix 4) and ask each person to find their own space. Play some reflective Christian music in the background. Next to each image place an ink pad, and ask the children to look at all the images they see. Get them to think about where they are able to share God's love, and get them to add their thumbprint to the picture, to symbolically recognise their intention. Let them add their thumbprint to as many pictures as they wish, but highlight the commitment they are making.



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APPENDIX 1 - Bible passage *Jesus is like a vine*

'I am the true vine; my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit. And he trims and cleans every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit.'

'Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can produce fruit alone. It must remain in the vine. It is the same with you. You cannot produce fruit alone. You must remain in me.'

'I am the vine, and you are the branches. If a person remains in me and I remain in him, then he produces much fruit. But without me he can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, then he is like a branch that is thrown away. That branch dies.'

'Remain in me and follow my teachings. If you do this, then you can ask for anything you want, and it will be given to you. You should produce much fruit and show that you are my followers. This brings glory to my Father.'

'I loved you as the Father loved me. Now remain in my love. I have obeyed my Father's commands, and I remain in his love. In the same way, if you obey my commands, you will remain in my love.'

'I have told you these things so that you can have the same joy I have. I want your joy to be the fullest joy.'

'This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you. The greatest love a person can show is to die for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.'

'I don't call you servants now. But now I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I heard from my Father. You did not choose me; I chose you. And I gave you this work, to go and produce fruit. I want you to produce fruit that will last.'

'This is my command: Love each other.'



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APPENDIX 2 - Connection Worksheet

In each photograph, work out what connects the items



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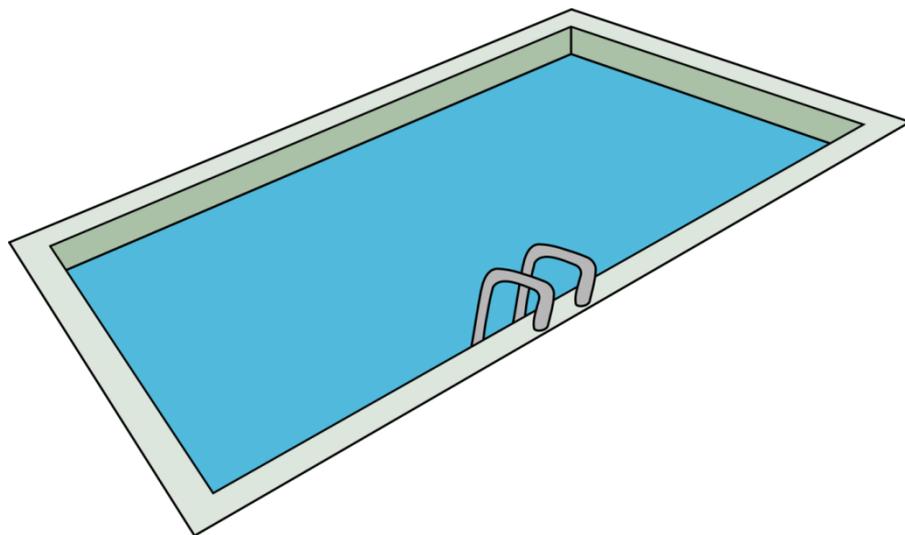
APPENDIX 3



APPENDIX 4



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