

Small Group Resource



True Fruit

Key Passages: John 15:1-17 and Galatians 5:22-23 / 1 Corinthians 13

INTRODUCTION

- What are some of the ways in which you remain connected to friends, family members, colleagues etc?
- What are the benefits of these forms of communication?
- What are the potential downsides?

REFLECTION

Read John 15:1-17.

In spite of all God's care and attention, in the Old Testament Israel had not been the 'vine' he meant it to be (Isaiah 5:1-7). In this passage Jesus proclaims to the disciples that he is now the true Israel (vine) and that the purposes of God for humankind were being fulfilled in him (v1).

Not only that, but he also calls his disciples the 'branches' (v5), inviting them to share in his ministry, to be part of him. He is the source of life for them, and to be effective - to 'bear much fruit' - they must be completely dependent on him, because without him they can do nothing.

In mentioning 'fruit', Jesus is referring to the fruit (*karpos*) of the Spirit, which is love (*agape*). This means that the rest of the list of fruits of the Spirit, found in Galatians 5:22-23, are made up of words describing true love.

It is *in* this love that Christ calls us to remain (v9), and commands us to love others with this same love (v12). That is how people will know we are his disciples, by *this* fruit that we bear.



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While Jesus prunes every branch that does bear fruit ‘so that it will be even more fruitful’ (v2), he also warns of the dangers of not being connected to him. ‘He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit...’ (v2).

This process of pruning and cutting can be painful, but it is a reminder that the fruit is not produced by us and our own efforts. When it is, things can go horribly wrong. We are not capable of producing ‘fruit that will last (v16). Jesus says that this lasting fruit is borne from abiding in Christ, loving him and others and being empowered by his Holy Spirit with the aim of bringing fullness and joy of life to us (v11) and glory to God (v8).

DISCUSSION

- Compare the list in Galatians 5:22-23 with the one Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13 to describe this *agape* love which John talks about. In what ways do we love others with the same love that Christ gives?
- What do the qualities from this list tell us about the fruit we should bear? How did Jesus demonstrate this fruit through his life?
- How is Jesus preparing his disciples in verse 2? What is he telling them about God’s love?
- What is God revealing to you about the areas of your life that need to be pruned? In what ways can we try and stay connected to Jesus as our source of life?
- What ‘artificial fertilisers’ do we rely on to nourish us? What effect does this have on the fruit that we bear?
- How is fruit produced in your life? Read the passage again and identify some of the other reasons why bearing fruit is so important.

ACTION

Share ways you find helpful to connect to Jesus, and then determine to try at least one new way of doing so for the next season in your life. Spend time praying for each other. Next time you meet, share how you got on and the difference that made, not only to you, but also to your relationship with others.

