

Youth Resource



Living Fruitfully

Key Passage: John 15:1-17

Key Message: To help the young people reflect and be challenged to remain in Jesus, think long term and love one another as effective disciples.

RESOURCES

- Dessert bowl, flour, plate or tray, Smarties, knife, towel
- Dice, sticky labels
- Sheets of paper, pens
- Worship songs of choice for response time

BACKGROUND

Based on the analogy of the vine found in John 15:1-17, this year's Vision and Commitment focus explores how effectiveness can be seen as 'fruitfulness', encouraging people to 'Live Fruitfully' as followers of Jesus.

Jesus describes himself as the 'true vine', and the disciples as 'branches' are 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. Without him they can do nothing and will simply 'wither on the vine'.

At the start of the year there is the opportunity to stop and reflect on what fruitful discipleship might look like in the next year.

WELCOME

If this is your first time together as a group since Christmas and New Year, allow time to share stories, New Year's resolutions or funny Christmas anecdotes. Start off by playing either or both of these games:



Vision and Commitment 2019
A year to focus on effectiveness

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- **Flour/Smartie Cutting**

Preparation: Take a dessert bowl and fill it with flour, compacting it as much as you can. Turn it out on to a large plate or tray as a dome in one piece. Tip: Refrigerate it for a few hours before turning it out, and have a couple in reserve just in case.

Place a single Smartie in the centre of the dome. Explain to the players that they will take it in turns to come up and cut away a portion of the flour dome. They can cut away as much or as little as they can separate with a single straight knife cut.

However, if they dislodge the pile so that the Smartie falls into the flour, they lose. Their forfeit is that they have to eat the Smartie, without using their hands. In other words they have to put their face into the flour and try to get the Smartie without coughing or spluttering too much.

Play this as one big group or smaller groups; you could just do one and have everyone take turns, or you could have a number in play simultaneously - about half a dozen players per plate is optimal.

- **Body Dice / Human Twister**

This game is like Twister. You will need two dice and Post-it Notes to write numbers on.

Separate into teams of up to six people and label each person in the group with a number from 1 to 6 (if one group has fewer than six people, give some people two numbers).

The leader will role the dice. The first one will represent a person and the second will represent a body part (1=foot, 2=knee, 3=hip, 4=elbow, 5=hand, 6=nose).

You will role the two dice twice. After the first roll you call out what they represent - for example, 'Number 5's nose'. Roll again and call again - 'Number 2's knee'. Whatever combination of person and body part is called must then be connected with the two body parts. Each team keeps going until they cannot connect the two parts. The last team standing wins.



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The participants then have to hold this position, as well as obeying any further instructions they receive whenever their number is rolled again. Keep on going, identifying pairs of players and which body parts they need to connect, so that each team ends up with a mixture of bizarre and tangled interconnections. It goes without saying that you will need to be careful to keep this appropriate and possibly consider if it is best to have a team of girls and a team of boys.

WORD

Read John 15:1-17 (*NIV*).

This can be quite a confusing passage, full of metaphor and imagery. Ask the group what they think the passage might be talking about, letting them know there are no right or wrong answers. Explain that this year the territorial focus is 'effectiveness' or 'fruitfulness', as Jesus describes here, in the language of 'bearing fruit'.

Explain that we believe that, as disciples of Jesus, our calling is not just for ourselves, but also for those we meet and the world around us. In our actions and interactions, we are called to 'bear fruit', to bring Jesus, in many shapes and forms, to our towns and cities, schools and workplaces. How do we become fruitful disciples? There are three clues in this passage to explore.

- **'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing' (v5).**

Like the branches connected to the central vine, Jesus is saying here that our fruitfulness comes from remaining connected to Christ, remaining 'in' Christ. Being 'in Christ' was the apostle Paul's favourite way to describe being a disciple. Time and time again the phrase appears in his writing, perhaps most famously in Romans 8:1: 'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'

Paul understood that following Jesus wasn't something we did from a distance, but that some kind of 'mystic union' enabled you to be 'in' rather than 'behind' Christ, just following along. Clearly, central to being fruitful is maintaining a close relationship to Jesus.



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- **‘I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit - fruit that will last’ (v16).**

It's easy to do things which look and sound impressive in the short term. But Jesus doesn't call us to bear disposable fruit. He's looking for fruit that will last, not fruit which will wither and die. Look at the impact Jesus made; the disciples, those who followed him closely, didn't stop following him once he left them, but went off and changed the world. Now *that* is fruit which lasts.

- **‘This is my command: love each other’ (v17).**

Jesus ends this section of the teaching with the part that's easiest to understand, but hardest to do: love each other. *Genuinely* love each other. This is the vine's command to the branches: love each other. As branches, we're not just connected to the vine, but to each other as well. We're a church. We're a community. We're not in this alone. And so we need to love each other, to have one another's back. Earlier on in John 13:35, Jesus says: 'By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.' So we don't just love each other to support each other, but to show the world a glimpse of who Jesus is and what is it that we're trying to follow.

So that's it - Jesus' three simple commands for effective living are to stay close to him, to think long term, to love one another. But what does that actually mean?

ACTIVITIES

Split the group into three smaller groups and give each group one of the commands talked about above, printed out on paper.

Command 1: Stay close to Jesus

- **‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing’ (v5).**

Command 2: Think long term

- **‘I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit - fruit that will last’ (v16).**

Command 3: Love one another

- **‘This is my command: love each other’ (v17).**



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While Jesus' three simple rules for effectiveness *sound* simple, in reality they are anything but. Ask the groups to think about the command they have been given and answer the five questions below. Explain that they'll share with the wider group what they've come up with. You could offer them a number of different ways to express and present their thoughts and conversations - through role plays, art, poetry, music or simply feeding back conversations.

1. What does this command really mean?
2. Can you think of any examples of this command being lived out in the Bible?
3. What makes living out this command tricky?
4. What three things can we do as individuals to live out this command this year?
5. What three things can we do as a group to live out this command this year?

WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Once each group has fed back, collate all the ideas from question 5 - to live out these commands this year as a group. Write them on a big sheet of paper and ask the group, if they're willing, to sign the bottom of the paper, indicating that they want to be committed fruitful disciples this year. While individual commitments can be made, doing it collectively allows support for each other over the coming year.

(Be careful that the ideas are achievable and appropriate. Ensure that a culture of shame or guilt isn't built up around them; these are the ideals but we all make mistakes!)

Once you've explained the idea of signing the sheet to show our commitment, give the young people a few moments to consider whether this is something they want to do.

- Play a worship song in the background and invite them to sign the paper. Allow time and space for this to happen and conclude this time by singing a song familiar to the group, firming their commitment.



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Challenge the group that in order to be effective, we have to know what we're trying to achieve - how will we know how effective we are if we don't know what we're aiming for?

Hand out pens and paper, and invite the group to write down three or four things they want to achieve, as fruitful disciples, this year. This could be anything from being a role model to someone by what they say and do, to being confident in telling friends about Jesus etc.

Finish by inviting them to pray for one another in small groups for the coming year - that God will sustain them, keeping them close to Jesus and being fruitful in all they do. They can share and pray specifically for the aims they've written down for themselves and share things they are worried about, or things which could be a barrier.

Read this blessing over the group as a way to commission them into 2019:

*May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
Wherever he may send you.
May he guide you through the wilderness,
Protect you through the storms.
May he bring you home rejoicing
At the wonders he has shown you.
May he bring you home rejoicing,
Once again, into our doors.
(Northumbrian Blessing)*

It may be helpful to keep the sheet of paper in your meeting space for the whole year, allowing opportunities for those who were not there for this session to decide if they want to commit to it as well.

