

Week Three: *Inspiring Connections*

John 15:1-8

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Are you the kind of person who prefers to work alone or do you like to collaborate? Explain your answer.
2. Read Genesis 1:26-27. How did God refer to Himself when He made man? How did He describe the way He made humans?
3. One of the hardest things to grasp about God is that He is One. Yet, He is also three distinct persons: Father, Son & Spirit, all in relationship within Himself – complete and full. Since man is created in His image, with the same inherent need for relationships, what is the benefit of being created male and female?
4. Read John 15:1-2. How does Jesus describe His own and His Father's role in this analogy?
5. What do these roles say about their relationship?
6. Before we even know where Jesus is heading with this analogy, we see a beautiful picture of the Father and the Son working together. The Son bringing life and the Father guiding its growth and productivity. Read Romans 8:28-29. What does it mean to you to know that this relationship is hard at work for your benefit?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for a humble, open spirit that is willing to look at relationships in a way that you may not ordinarily be comfortable.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. How do you deal with overwhelming responsibility: plow through, seek help, shut down? How would you describe your typical method of operation?
9. Read John 15:1-4. To whom does Jesus say we are to be rooted?
10. On Day One, we saw that Jesus began His analogy by defining His relationship with God. Now He has moved on to His relationship with us; He doesn't just ask us to do all the work. What are some of the things He promises us in verses 3 & 4?
11. What do these promises mean to you? Do they give you confidence, or solace? What else?

12. Read the following verses and summarize the promise or counsel that each one gives you:
- Deuteronomy 31:6
 - Joshua 1:5
 - Psalm 73:23
 - Matthew 18:20
13. Whatever God calls us to do in life, He gives us a very strong promise, that we won't have to do anything without Him. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask Him to help you learn to rely on His promise to be with you, no matter what your circumstances may be.

Spend FIFTEEN – DAY Three

14. Look again at John 15:1-4. Traditionally, the vine and branches have been depicted with a grapevine, a plant indigenous to the region and very common to the people of Jesus' day. Have you ever looked at a grapevine or even purchased grapes? How do grapes grow differently than other fruit?
15. Grapes aren't the only fruit that grow in bunches—many fruit, veggies, nuts and seeds grow in bunches. Just for fun, how many can you name? What do you suppose is the benefit of fruit and other foods growing in bunches?
16. It's not surprising that God also places people in "bunches." One example is families. Read 1 Timothy 5:4. How does Paul, the author of Timothy, describe how God feels about the value of family?
17. God clearly does not end our responsibility toward others with our own families. Read Galatians 6:10. Different versions use slight variations in translating word. How is the church described in the Bible you are using?
18. No matter how you say it, being a part of a family comes with responsibilities. What does this say about our responsibility toward others in the church?
19. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to give you a heart for the fellow family of believers in your church.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. There's no doubt we live in an achievement-driven society; success is revered and kindness can be greatly undervalued. Stop and think about people in your life that have had the greatest impact. Was it their success that affected you, or something else?
21. As you think about your relationship with the person in question 20, what kinds of practical things did they do? Did they help you during a difficult time? Were they a friend to you when you were lonely? Why do those types of influences have such long-lasting effects on us?

22. Read John 15:1-8. In this section of scripture, we repeatedly see the term *fruit* used to describe the results of being connected to the true vine, Jesus. What fruit have you experienced because of that connection?

23. On Day One, we looked at our inherent need for relationship as image bearers of God, on Day Two, we looked at the need to be connected to Jesus, the True Vine, and on Day Three, we looked at our need to be connected to each other. If these are some of the greatest needs humans have, what would it look like to intentionally help make connections with other people? Brainstorm ways to increase connections among the people in your sphere of influence.

24. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to have eyes to see ways you can help others make these connections and the courage to act when the opportunity arises.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

25. If helping people connect to Jesus and others is a personal responsibility of Christians, it makes sense that the church is called to do the same. Read Matthew 28:18-20 and summarize Jesus' final command to His people before He ascended to the Father.

26. Read Hebrews 10:23-25. How does this scripture say we can live this command out together?

27. What are some practical ways churches can help connect people to Jesus and each other? Brainstorm a list of ways. Do you participate in any of these things?

28. Look again at John 15:2. What happens when a branch does not fulfill this purpose? Does it seem too harsh to you? Why or why not?

29. If God takes away people because they are not fulfilling their purpose, and even prunes ones that are in order to make them more productive, do you think it's likely that God does the same to churches? If so, what might that look like?

30. As you finish your final FIFTEEN this week, pray for your church, that it would be strong in its resolve to reach people for Jesus and to help connect people to each other. Then ask God to show you how you can join Him in your church's work.