

How to Use Sermon Resources

- **READ AHEAD TOGETHER** - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- **SIT UNDER THE WORD** - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- **APPLY TRUTH** - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer [2 mins]

Use the Overview [5 mins]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

Scripture Deep Dive [30-40 mins]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

Close in Prayer

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

Split Time (if applicable)

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

SERMON OVERVIEW

"Abide In Christ" - John 15:1-11

Sermon Summary: This sermon launches a new series called "Follower" focused on the church's vision statement: "to be followers who make followers where we live and where he leads." Pastor Matt emphasizes that being a follower of Jesus means three things: being in a growing relationship with Jesus, being engaged in biblical community, and actively seeking to disciple others. Using the metaphor of the vine and branches from John 15, the message stresses that spiritual fruit can only be produced through remaining connected to Christ.

Key Points:

- A follower of Jesus is someone in a growing relationship with Jesus, engaged in biblical community, and actively seeking to disciple others
- Remaining or abiding in Christ means maintaining constant close communion with Him in every area of life
- Being "in Christ" is a consistent theme throughout the New Testament, mentioned 73 times by Paul alone
- Markers of abiding in Christ include: living the Word, praying in faith, building godly relationships, owning the mission, and serving others

Scripture Reference:

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|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| - John 15:1-11 (primary passage) | - 2 Corinthians 2 |
| - Matthew 4 | - Philippians 4 |
| - Romans 3:24, 6:11, 8:1, 12:5 | - Colossians 1 |
| - 1 Corinthians 1 | - 2 Timothy 1:9 |
| - Galatians 2 | - 1 Thessalonians 5:18 |

Stories:

- The tennis tournament story: The pastor's doctor warning him about playing tennis after 25 years illustrates how skills decay without intentional practice
- Sitcom theme: Multiple TV shows (Andy Griffith Show, Family Matters, Saved by the Bell) feature episodes where one character saves another's life, and the saved person shows immense gratitude - paralleling how believers should respond to Jesus saving them
- The fake fruit illustration: The pastor's grandmother had fake wooden fruit on her table that looked real but wasn't - representing manufactured spirituality versus authentic fruit from abiding in Christ

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question:

Reflect on Hebrews 2:1: "We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." How does this idea resonate with your personal journey of faith, especially in terms of remaining intentional in your relationship with Christ?

I. Remaining in Christ (John 15:1-11):

2. [John 15:4-5] What does Jesus mean when He says that apart from Him, you can do nothing? How does this compare to Philippians 4:13, which states, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength"?
3. [1 John 2:6] According to this verse, those who claim to live in Him must live as Jesus did. How does this correlate with the idea of remaining in Christ mentioned in John 15? Discuss practical steps to live this out daily.

II. Evidence of Growth - Obedience and Love (John 15:9-12):

4. [John 15:10] Jesus links remaining in His love with keeping His commandments. How does this command relate to Galatians 5:22-23, which describes the fruit of the Spirit? Discuss how these fruits are evident (or not) in your life.
5. [John 13:34-35] Jesus calls us to love one another. How is this command an essential aspect of bearing fruit according to John 15:12? Consider how this love might manifest in real-world scenarios, both inside and outside the church.

III. Conclusion:

6. [Romans 8:9-11] Reflect on how the Spirit of God gives life because of righteousness and articulate the challenges and joys of living according to the Spirit. How does being "in Christ" empower you to overcome these challenges?
7. [James 1:22-25] What are the consequences of merely listening to the word and not doing it, especially in the context of bearing fruit as Jesus' disciples? Discuss ways to become more doers of the word in your community.

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: The Vine and the Branches

Reading: John 15:1-2, Proverbs 3:11-12

Devotional: In our relationship with Christ, God lovingly prunes us, refining our character and faith to bear more fruit. This pruning can be challenging, as it often involves letting go of things that hinder our spiritual growth. Trust in God's process of sanctification, and embrace His discipline as a sign of His love.

Reflection Question: Consider a time when you experienced spiritual pruning. How did it lead to growth or new fruit in your life?

Day 2: Remaining in Christ

Reading: John 15:3-5, Philippians 4:13

Devotional: Remaining in Christ is essential for spiritual vitality; it involves a constant, personal communion with Him. Just as a branch draws its life from the vine, our strength and ability to bear fruit comes from our connection with Jesus. Lean on Christ daily, trusting that through Him, you can accomplish much.

Prayer Suggestion:

Ask God to help you remain connected to Jesus today and recognize the areas in your life that rely on His strength alone.

Day 3: The Dangers of Disconnection

Reading: John 15:6-7, James 4:7-8

Devotional: Disconnection from Christ not only leads to spiritual barrenness but increases vulnerability to temptation. However, when His words dwell richly in us, our desires align with His, making our prayers powerful and effective. Encourage yourself to draw near to God, nourished and guided by His word.

Reflection Question: What steps can you take to ensure that Jesus' words dwell in you richly, influencing your desires and choices?

Day 4: Glorifying God through Fruitfulness

Reading: John 15:8-9, Matthew 5:16

Devotional: Bearing fruit is an act of worship and a testimony to being a true disciple of Jesus. When we produce spiritual fruit, it brings glory to God, illuminating His love and truth to the world. Reflect on how your actions today can shine His light and draw others closer to Him.

Reflection Question:

How can you intentionally demonstrate God's love and truth to those around you today?

Day 5: Obedience and Complete Joy

Reading: John 15:10-11, John 5:3

Devotional Message: True joy is found in obedience to God's commands, rooted in the security of His love. Jesus models this perfect obedience, inviting us to experience fullness of joy by walking in His ways. Seek to obey God not out of obligation but out of love, dwelling in His joy that transcends circumstances.

Prayer Suggestion: Pray for the desire and strength to obey God's commands joyfully, and ask Him to fill you with His complete joy as you follow Him.