



**Sermon Discussion Guide:** Keep Your Cookie Jar Full

**Series:** *If You Give a Neighbor a Cookie*

**Date:** 09/28/2025

**Scripture:** John 15:1–7 (NRSVUE)

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## Opening Prayer

Jesus, You are the Vine and we are the branches. Draw us close to Your life and love. Prune what keeps us from bearing good fruit, and fill us so we can love our neighbors from overflow, not exhaustion. Amen.

## Introduction & Context

We've moved from **hello**, to **curiosity**, to **hospitality**. This final week asks: *How do we keep loving when we feel empty?* In John 15, Jesus invites us to **abide**—to remain with Him so that love for neighbors becomes **fruit**, not just effort. Abiding includes *pruning* (God removing what hinders growth), *growing*, and *bearing fruit* over a lifetime.

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## Discussion Questions

### 1) Abide vs. Achieve

- In your own words, what does it mean to “abide” in Jesus?
- How is abiding different from just trying harder to be a good neighbor?

### 2) “Apart from Me, You Can Do Nothing”

- When have you tried to love or serve while running on empty? What happened?
- What practices help you notice when your “cookie jar” is getting low?

### 3) Fruit that Flows to Neighbors

- If neighboring is *fruit*, what kind of fruit have you seen (or do you hope to see) grow from abiding in Jesus? (cf. love, patience, kindness, etc.)
- How might abiding change the way you greet, listen, or offer help?



#### 4) Welcoming Pruning

- Pruning isn't punishment; it's preparation for more fruit. Where might God be pruning distractions, habits, or expectations in you right now?
- What could grow if that pruning is received?

#### 5) Asking from the Abiding Place

- Jesus says, "Ask whatever you wish." How does abiding shape what and how you ask?
- What is one "abiding-shaped" prayer you can pray for your neighborhood this week?

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### Application & Challenge

#### Choose One Practice to Refill the Jar (this week):

- **Prayer:** Start each day with, "*Jesus, help me stay close to You today.*"
- **Scripture:** Slowly re-read John 15:1–7 (try lectio divina).
- **Sabbath:** Set aside a block of time to rest, unplug, and remember you are loved.

#### Neighboring P.A.R.

- **Pray:** Tell Jesus where you feel tired; ask Him to fill you.
- **Act:** Put your chosen practice on the calendar and keep it.
- **Reflect:** At week's end, how did abiding affect your posture toward neighbors?

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### Closing Prayer

Vinegrower God, thank You for tending our lives. Help us remain in Christ, receive Your pruning, and bear fruit that blesses our neighbors. Keep us rooted in Your love so our care flows freely and faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### Key Takeaway

We're not the Vine—Jesus is. Sustainable neighboring grows from staying connected to Him. Abide, and the fruit will follow.

*This guide was developed from original content with the assistance of ChatGPT.*