

Discussion Questions



Overview

This week's sermon explored what it means to be a serious disciple of Jesus Christ. Using the imagery of the vine and branches from John 15, the message challenged us to examine whether we are truly abiding in Christ and whether the next generation can see a faith in us that is worth following.

Key Takeaways

- What we take seriously in life, those around us -- especially the next generation -- will notice and follow.
- Abiding in Christ is not a one-time decision but a lifelong progression of being with Jesus, becoming like him, and doing what he did.
- There is a difference between praying "Lord, help me live my life for you" and praying "Lord, live your life through me."
- Three gauges help us measure the health of our abiding: patience, depth, and community.
- Every believer will experience pruning. God prunes us not out of anger but out of love, because he loves us too much to leave us where we are.
- The fruit we produce through abiding in Christ is not seasonal -- it is lifelong and life-giving.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Think about something you are passionate about -- a hobby, a sports team, a cause. Have you ever noticed someone in your life pick up on that passion simply by being around you? What does that tell you about the power of what we model to others?
2. The sermon opened with this question: Does the next generation know that we are serious about our faith? Before diving deeper, take a moment to answer that honestly. What evidence would they point to?

The Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-4)

3. The sermon described abiding as remaining in Jesus the way a branch remains in a vine -- drawing all life and nourishment from it. In practical terms, what does abiding look like in your daily life right now?
4. The pastor drew a distinction between two prayers:
 - "Lord, help me live my life for you."
 - "Lord, live your life through me."

What is the difference between these two postures? Which one more accurately reflects how you typically approach your relationship with God?
5. The sermon described three gauges for measuring the health of our abiding in Christ. Reflect on each one:
 - **Patience:** Are you trying to fast-track your spiritual growth, or are you allowing God to work through the seasons of your life?
 - **Depth:** Are you rooted deeply in Christ, or are you picking and choosing what is convenient to follow?
 - **Community:** How is your connection to other believers supporting or hindering your growth right now?

Planted in His Presence (Psalm 92:12-15)

6. The psalmist describes the righteous as trees planted in the courts of God, with direct access to living water. The sermon asked: What if God has you right where he wants you, and this is the exact environment for your roots to grow deep?
How does that idea challenge or encourage you in your current season of life?

7. The sermon noted that a tree in the wild faces threats that a tree planted in the care of a royal gardener does not. What are some of the "threats" in your life that God's presence protects you from, even when you do not always recognize it?

Bearing Fruit (John 15:5-8)

8. The sermon identified two clear evidences of abiding in Christ: the Father's pruning and the fruit we produce. Which of these two have you experienced most recently? What did that look and feel like?
9. Pastor Jonathan said: "God doesn't prune us because he's angry. He prunes us because he loves us enough to not leave us where we are." Has there been a season in your life when God removed something -- even something that seemed good -- and it later became clear why? What did you learn from that experience?
10. The dead watch illustration was used to describe how we can carry dead things in our lives and grow comfortable with them. Is there anything in your life right now that you have been carrying out of habit or comfort that God may be calling you to let go of?
11. The sermon listed several forms of fruit: leading others to Christ, growing in holiness, giving, serving, prayer, and praise. Which of these areas feels most alive in your life right now? Which feels most neglected?

Closing Reflection

12. The sermon closed with this challenge: Are we displaying a faith that is worth following? As you think about the people in your life who are watching you -- whether children, younger believers, coworkers, or friends -- what is one specific change you want to make so that your faith is more visible and more genuine?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice before your group meets again:

- **Pray differently.** Replace your usual prayer of "Lord, help me live my life for you" with "Lord, live your life through me." Do this intentionally each morning for one week and note how it shifts your perspective throughout the day.
- **Check your gauges.** Take a few quiet minutes this week to honestly assess the three gauges -- patience, depth, and community. Write down one honest observation about each and one step you can take to strengthen the weakest area.
- **Identify what needs pruning.** Ask God in prayer to reveal one thing in your life that is keeping you from bearing more fruit. It may be a habit, a relationship, a distraction, or a mindset. Write it down and bring it before God with an open hand.
- **Read and reflect.** Spend time in John 15:1-8 and Psalm 92:12-15 on your own this week. Read slowly and ask: What is God saying to me specifically through these passages right now?
- **Invest in the next generation.** Identify one young person in your life -- a child, a student, a younger believer -- and make a deliberate effort this week to let them see your faith in action. This could be as simple as praying together, inviting them to church, or having an honest conversation about what following Jesus looks like.

Closing Prayer Prompt

Before your group closes in prayer, invite each member to share one word or short phrase that describes what they want God to do in their life through this message. Then close by praying together, asking God to soften hearts, to do the work of pruning, and to produce fruit in each person's life that points the next generation toward Christ.