

Youth Teaching Resources

April 29, 2018



Easter: Keeping Close (April 1-May 20)

Mark 16:1-8 – “Too Good to Be True?”

Psalm 133, Acts 4:32-35 – “Happy Together”

Luke 24:13-49 (RCL 24:36b-48) – “The Road to Hope”

John 10:1-18 – “The Good Shepherd”

John 15:1-8 – “The True Vine”

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YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

There will come a time when we need to “prune” our students. Our students will make mistakes and we will need to help them correct them. Sometimes they will know what caused their mistakes, while other times they won’t have a clue. Either way we are to help our students to prune the bad fruit out of their lives. It becomes delicate when deciding how much we need to prune off. Make sure that you help the bad fruit to be removed, but don’t cut too much or the good parts will be taken away as well.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

- 1) What is involved in the tomato harvest?
- 2) Are Turbo’s gifts being used well during the harvest?
- 3) How is Turbo cut down by the people around him?
- 4) How could Turbo have been encouraged to use his speed?
- 5) What happens when we are encouraged to use our gifts?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading John 15:1-8. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony’s commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What prophet is Jesus referencing in this passage? How does the Israelites understanding of that passage influence what Jesus is saying here?
- 2) Who is Jesus talking to in this passage? How does that influence what Jesus is talking about?
- 3) Who does Jesus say will need to do the pruning?
- 4) What does it mean to abide in Jesus? How are you supposed to live this out?
- 5) What promise does Jesus give to the hearers of this passage?

Information *continued*

- 6) How is bearing fruit a natural outgrowth of discipleship?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the “Digging Deeper” portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) What is the process of making wine from vines to bottle? How does this model our own journey of faith?
- 2) What are we supposed to do with passages of scripture that we believe to be added later?
- 3) Why do you think there is such a connection between grape vines and prophets?
- 4) How do the fruits of the spirit show up in your life?

You may also want your group to discuss “The Hardest Question” if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as “The Hardest Question”: Who are the other sheep in the fold?

Transformation

Conclude your session by prompting the group to think back to Lent and those things they may have given up during Lent. Through your discussion about Lent, engage your students with questions like the following:

- 1) How the things that you gave up during Lent like pruning your own limbs?
- 2) How did this self-pruning allow for new growth to form?
- 3) How might we continue to have new growth in our journey of faith?
- 4) How can relying on our giftedness allow for new growth?
- 5) How can you encourage others to have new growth?

Close with a prayer thanking God for the journey of faith that we are on and for the wisdom to know what to prune so that we might continue to grow.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Making wine—Today winemakers take special care to sanitize all of their equipment and add small amounts of chemicals to prevent bacterial growth in wine. After the grapes are crushed, a special variety of yeast is used to begin fermentation, which is carefully monitored. After fermentation, wine is aged in wooden barrels or large stainless-steel tanks.

Ancient wine makers weren’t nearly so careful. When grapes were harvested in late summer, they were typically crushed in treading floors cut into bedrock, though large



clay vessels were occasionally used if distance to the treading floor was an issue. As in classic photographs from old Italy, the grapes were trodden with bare feet to prevent crushing the seeds, which could give the wine a bitter taste.

As in the example from Jezreel pictured below, the juice would run into a large vat cut from bedrock, while a depression in the treading floor collected skins and pips. Natural yeast from the grape skins and the air sparked the fermentation process. After a week or so, the wine would be transferred to jugs or skins for secondary fermentation and storage, often in silos that were also cut into stone.

Extra discourse—John 13-17 is often described as Jesus’ farewell discourse. A careful reading suggests that the author has constructed this in two stages. John’s version of the Lord’s Supper begins in chapter 13 and ends with 14:31, where Jesus says “Arise, let us be on our way.” We expect the next verse to picture Jesus and the remaining 11 disciples on their way to or in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that is precisely what we find with the first verse of chapter 18: “After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.”

But, between Jesus’ instruction to leave and their actual departure, we find three more chapters of dialogue, as if Jesus paused at the door and kept talking. This suggests that at one stage of the Fourth Gospel’s construction, the narrative moved directly from what we now label as 14:31 to 18:1, but at a later stage chapters 15-17 were inserted (keep in mind that chapter and verse numbers were added hundreds of years later). Some writers suggest that chapters 15 and 16 are purposefully designed to introduce Jesus’ “high priestly prayer” in chapter 17.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Prophets and grapevines—Isaiah also used the vineyard metaphor in a positive way. He also looked forward to a time when Israel would return to God and fulfill its call to live as a delightful and productive vineyard, of which God could say “I, the LORD, am its keeper; every moment I water it. I guard it night and day so that no one can harm it; I have no wrath” (Isa. 27:3).

The prophet Ezekiel used the metaphor of a vineyard to describe the Hebrews’ defeat and exile in Babylon: he spoke of Israel as a fruitful vine that ruled its land, but was later stripped of its fruit and transplanted to another land, where it grew weak (Ezek. 19:10-14). Other references to Israel as a vine can be found in Ps. 80:8-16; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1-8, 17:5-10; and Hos. 10:1.

“I am”—The Fourth Gospel records Jesus as describing his life and ministry through a variety of “I am” statements. These include “I am the bread of life” (6:35); “I am the light of the world” (8:12); “I am the gate for the sheep” (10:7, 9); “I am the good shepherd” (10:11); “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25-26); “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6); and “I am the true vine” (15:1, 5).

Pruning and cleansing—The Greek word used for “pruning” (*kathairō*) can also be used for “cleansing,” especially in the sense of ritual purity: being cleansed of all that would come between us and God, rendering us free from shame or wrongdoing.

The word is from the same root as the adjective *katharos*, which Jesus used after washing the disciples’ feet in John 13, where Jesus told a recalcitrant Peter: “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you” (John 13:10). All were clean, that is, except for Judas.

In the current text, Jesus again said to the disciples, “You have already been cleansed by the word I have spoken to you” (15:3).

Chiastic abiding—J. Ramsey Michaels points to a chiastic structure in vv. 5-8. After the introductory “I am the vine, you are the branches” (v. 5a), the next four phrases follow an *a b b’ a’* pattern:

- a* If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit;
- b* apart from me you can do nothing (v. 5).
- b’* If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are . . . burned (v. 6).
- a’* If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (vv. 7-8).

Michaels elaborates: “The point of the sentence as a whole is that when branches remain with the vine they bear fruit, and when they do not they die. Clearly, *a* and *a’* are promises, while *b* and *b’* are warnings or threats. In *b* the negative point is made briefly; in *b’* it is developed at some length. Similarly, in *a*, the positive point is made briefly, and in *a’* more elaborately. A saying about answered prayer has been woven into *a’* as a specific

Digging Deeper *continued*

example of fruit-bearing (v. 7; cf. 14:13–14), and at the end Jesus' thought circles back to the Father, with the Father's glory as the ultimate reason for bearing much fruit and so becoming disciples (v. 8).

(*John*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011], 271-272.)

Bearing fruit and being disciples—On the subject of bearing fruit and becoming disciples (v. 8), Sarah J. Henrich has observed, “Bearing fruit does not create disciples; bearing fruit reveals disciples. Both of these activities are dependent on abiding in Jesus, the real vine” (*Feasting on the Word, Year B*, vol. 2 of Accordance electronic ed. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008], paragraph 10822).

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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How long do grape vines produce?

Teachers may find the following information helpful as background material. After planting, grape vines cultivated for wine-making are usually pruned so that they are not allowed to produce grapes until the third year. This encourages them to put their energy into building strong roots and healthy wood stock, which is bound to a trellis to shape the vines for easy cultivation and maximum productivity. After reaching maturity, when carefully pruned, vines can produce at a high level for 30-35 years before their production slows.

Older vines produce fewer grapes, but sweeter ones. Their deeper root system assures adequate water when the weather is dry, while also avoiding excess water from shallow roots that result in bloated grapes on younger vines in a wetter than average season. The sap in older vines runs slower and thicker but is more consistent, resulting in grapes that are smaller but more concentrated.

Because of the virtues of old vines, some vineyards maintain them for 60, 80, or even 100 years despite their reduced yield. Instead of mixing them with the younger grapes, they are processed and fermented separately to produce specialty (and higher priced) wines. Vines in Australia have been known to produce for as much as 150 years.

The life expectancy of grape vines is influenced by location. As a rule, typical wine grapes live longer in drier climates such as parts of California and Australia. Muscadine grapes, however, flourish in the heat and humidity of the deep South. In Manteo, NC, is a scuppernong vine (a variety of muscadine) that is known as the “Mothervine.” The massive vine has been consistently cultivated since about 1584 – more than 400 years – and continues to produce grapes. Cuttings from the “Mothervine” have been used to plant an entire vineyard for making “Mothervine” wines. A short video about the vine can be found at this link: <http://www.themothervine.com/about-the-mother-vine/history/>.

When we think of our lives as branches abiding in Christ the vine, are we in it for the long haul?

For further reading, see this article on the “Lifecycle of a Wine Grapevine” (<http://winefolly.com/review/lifecycle-of-a-wine-grapevine/>) and Beppi Crosariol’s article, “When It Comes to Grapes, Old is Gold,” at <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/food-and-wine/wine/when-it-comes-to-grape-vines-old-is-gold/article4097539/>.

For different approaches to pruning, consider these: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU2Ovh7wFJs>, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxDNGtoVjS0>. Others are easily found.

The Hardest Question *continued*

Helpful articles can also be found on Wikipedia, such as this one on the annual growth cycle of grape vines (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annual_growth_cycle_of_grapevines), and this one on old vines (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_vine).