



ELEMENTARY LARGE GROUP

LESSON 3

I AM THE TRUE VINE

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Invites Us to Abide in Him

SCRIPTURE: John 15

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine and branches to teach His disciples how important it is to stay connected to God. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, and Jesus invites us to abide in Him.

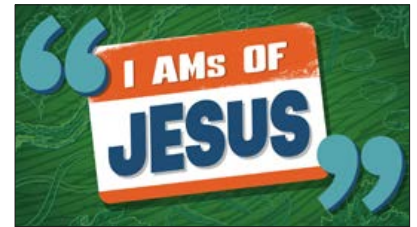
WORD OF WONDER: I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness. They will have that light. They will have life. —John 8:12

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- *****Interactive Game: Connected!**
- Welcome Question: What is the biggest or most beautiful plant you have ever seen? Describe it.
- SMALL GROUP
- Prayer of Invitation
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Worship: Take You At Your Word, What a Friend
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Responding in Worship: Holy Forever
- Blessing Your Kids



[I AMs of Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Invites Us to Abide in Him

SCRIPTURE: John 15

WORD OF WONDER: John 8:12

For the casual observer, soccer (aka football) can look like a bunch of players running around a field chasing a ball. If you watch young children play soccer, it looks like an adorable cluster with one or two kids chasing the ball while the rest follow in a clump.

However, as someone who played soccer, I can tell you that eventually you learn that each player on the field (pitch) has a specific job, and everyone relies on one another as a collective unit. No one can rely on their own skill and be successful in soccer. Like a vine with branches, our ability to bear fruit depends on each other's health and ability.

It is the coach's job to trim his team and cut off what isn't working to help the players bear more fruit together. The coach expects practice, and he will discipline players if it's necessary, requiring them to repeat (sometimes painful!) drills to break bad habits and develop correct technique.

Take a moment to read John 15:1–12. Jesus says to abide in Him as the vine. We are the branches, and much like soccer players, we need to trust and lean into our "coach's" leadership. How are you abiding in Jesus? In what areas are you learning to abide in Jesus?

If you and I are branches of Jesus, the vine, where have you seen Him trim you back to bring growth or fruit?

—Jeff Stone

Associate Pastor and Professional Counselor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

As the true vine, Jesus is the source of life and power for godly living. The Father is the gardener who removes dead branches from the vine and prunes others that produce fruit. Jesus tells His disciples they are fruit-bearing branches who abide, or remain joined, to Jesus.

WHAT?

Jesus tells His disciples to abide in Him as He abides in them. The disciples are dependent on Jesus. They can do nothing apart from Him. Abiding in Jesus entails obeying His commands, especially the command to love one another. This produces God-glorifying fruit.

WHERE?

The events of John 14–17 take place in Jerusalem. By John 15, Jesus and His disciples had finished their last meal and were en route to the Garden of Gethsemane, which is east of the temple mount and across the Kidron Valley.

WHEN?

This passage comes just before Jesus is betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. His suffering and death are soon to follow. John 14–17 is sometimes called Jesus' farewell discourse.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

All of Jesus' disciples have a part to play in God's big story: to bear the fruit of the kingdom and reveal God's glory to others. But this only happens through constant dependence on Jesus, the source of life who empowers us to love as He loves.

Large Group

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Invites Us to Abide in Him

SCRIPTURE: John 15

WORD OF WONDER: John 8:12

As kids arrive...

Around 20 minutes before service begins, display series theme loop. Play high-energy music in the background.

LG Leader walks around the room on mic and greets kids by name as they enter the room. Welcome kids by name and greet them with enthusiasm. Be extra intentional about hearing and responding

SLIDE: SERIES THEME LOOP

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN (2min OR 30sec) Start a countdown to begin game 10 minutes prior to service start)

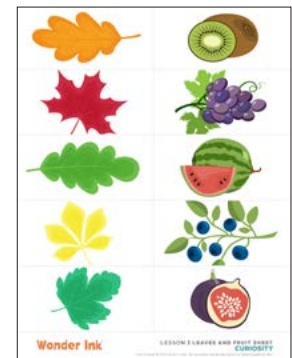
Interactive Game: Connected!

7-10 MINUTES PRE-SERVICE

SUPPLIES: scissors (prep only), masking tape (prep only), permanent marker (prep only), small baskets or tubs (1 per 3-4 kids), timer, cardstock (optional), table (optional)

RESOURCES: [Leaves and Fruit Sheet \(1 per 3-4 kids\)](#), [I AMs of Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) (optional)

Ahead of time, print one copy of the Leaves and Fruit Sheet for every 3-4 kids, on cardstock if possible. Cut out the leaves and fruit along the dotted lines. Use masking tape and a permanent marker to number the small baskets or tubs; there should be one tub for every team of 3-4 kids. Place the numbered baskets/tubs along one side of your space, on a table or on the floor. Just before this activity, scatter the leaf and fruit cutouts on the floor throughout your space, pictures facing up. You might also want to tape some to the wall where kids can reach them.



SLIDE: CONNECTED

Help kids form teams of 3-4. Assign each team a number that corresponds with the number on one of the baskets/tubs. Invite kids to stand up and link elbows with their team members—everyone on their team should be linked together in one line. Explain that when you say, “Go,” their team’s job is to pick up one leaf or fruit, carry it to their basket, and drop it in.



Only then can they go back for another leaf or fruit. Whichever team has the most leaves and fruit in their basket after two minutes wins! However, if anyone from their team becomes disconnected (their arms unlinked), they must dump the contents of their basket/tub on the floor and start again.

Set a timer for two minutes or cue an upbeat song from the [I AMs of Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) and explain to kids that the game ends when the music stops. When all the teams are ready, say: **Ready, set, go!** After two minutes, recruit kids to help count the items in their baskets, and congratulate the winning team!

Leader Tip: For Older Kids. The bigger the teams, the more challenging the game! Consider helping older kids form teams of about 10 kids each. Explain that a different person from the team must bend down and pick up the leaf or fruit each time while their arms remain linked to their teammates. (Yes, it will be a challenge!)

Make It Inclusive!

Competition can cause stress and anxiety for some kids. To remove the competitive element from the game, label the items you're scattering with a number corresponding to the number on the baskets. The game only ends when all teams have found all of their items, and teams that are finished can cheer the remaining teams on!

You all did a great job staying connected to your teammates as you collected leaves and vine fruit (fruit that grows on vines)! Today in God's big story, Jesus talks with His disciples about the importance of remaining connected to Him. He even compares Himself to a vine and His disciples to branches. Another word for staying connected is abiding.

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Our Wonder Truth today is **JESUS INVITES US TO ABIDE IN HIM.**"



Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, poster board OR whiteboard, dry-erase markers (if needed)

SLIDE: WELCOME QUESTION

At service start time, draw kids' attention to the Welcome Question:

"What is the biggest or most beautiful plant you have ever seen? Describe it. Invite kids to write answers on the poster board or whiteboard.



"Wow! You have seen some amazing plants! Today we are going to learn about a time when Jesus talked about plants as a way of teaching His disciples some very important truths. But first, it's time to be for small group."

Small Group

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"

Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You that You are with us through Your Holy Spirit. We invite You to show us more of Yourself today. Teach us what it means to stay connected to Your Son, Jesus, and help us abide in Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Declaring God's Wonder

SLIDE: DECLARATION

Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

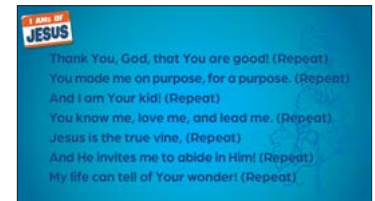
And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

Jesus is the true vine, (Kids repeat.)

And He invites me to abide in Him! (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Worship

****NEW SONGS!!** Consider sharing some about the songs you are going to sing. What they mean, why we sing them, why they are meaningful and important to you!

"We're going to stand and sing together! One way that we show love to God is to worship through song! So stand up, sing loud, and join in the motions with us. God loves to hear us sing praises to Him! Let's stand together and sing!"

WORSHIP VIDEOS: Take You At Your Word, What a Friend

God's Big Story

SLIDE TITLE:

Explain that John is one of the four Gospel books that tell about Jesus' ministry; it was written by John, one of Jesus' disciples.

"Let's start by reading part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we will watch and experience more of the story! "

VIDEO: GOD'S BIG STORY



LESSON 3 I AM THE TRUE VINE

EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: different kinds of fruit (2–3, such as an apple, a banana, and an orange); a large, healthy houseplant; pruning shears or scissors; long, thick rope

Ahead of time, set the fruit, houseplant, shears/scissors, and rope nearby but out of sight.

Gather kids together. **"Before Jesus went to the cross, He had some important words to tell His disciples. He told them there is a place for them in God's family, and that He is the way to God. He told them God would send the Holy Spirit as a forever friend to lead them and give them help. And He told them about vines and branches and how important it is to stay connected to God.**

There are vines planted in places called vineyards.

SLIDE: VINEYARD

The branches of vines are cared for by a gardener who makes sure they produce good, healthy fruit.

SLIDE: GRAPES

Yum! Before Jesus came to earth, God planted His people, Israel, like a vine in the world (Psalm 80:8–16; Isaiah 5:1–7). He wanted them to follow Him so their lives would produce good fruit.



Leader Tip: Explain to kids that Jesus often used word pictures of familiar things to help people understand important truths about Him. When He calls Himself the “vine” and His followers the “branches,” He isn’t saying we are actually those things. He is saying we have something in common with those things. This is called a metaphor.

I have some fruit right here. Hold up the different kinds of fruit you brought and ask the kids what each is. **What is your favorite kind of fruit?** Wait for responses. **Those are all delicious, but that's not the kind of fruit Jesus is talking about. God's people, Israel, were to show the world what God is like with the “fruit” of their lives—things like kindness, compassion, and love. But even though God loved and cared for Israel, Israel didn't always love God back. The people produced bad fruit—things like bitterness, jealousy, and hate. The world needed a better vine!**

Bring out your potted plant. **Look at this plant. If I want it to grow and be healthy, what do I have to do?** Wait for some answers. **That's right. I must water it and set it in the sunlight so it can get the nutrients it needs. I must keep it warm enough.** Point to the base/trunk of the plant. **This part is like the “vine”—it connects the branches to the soil and keeps the plant alive.** Point to a branch or stem. **This is a branch. It stays healthy because it is connected to the main part of the plant, or vine. Jesus is like this vine!**

Before Jesus died on the cross, He told His disciples, “I am the true vine. My Father is the gardener” (John 15:1). Jesus was letting them know that He is the source of life and that the power to live by God’s plan comes by staying connected to Him. God the Father is the gardener who cares for the vine and tends the branches. Jesus explained, “He cuts off every branch joined to me that does not bear fruit. He trims every branch that does bear fruit. Then it will bear even more fruit” (John 15:2).

But wait! If Jesus is the vine, then who are the branches? “I am the vine,” Jesus told His disciples again. “You are the branches” (John 15:5a). Followers of Jesus get to share in His work by bearing good fruit in the world. But no one can bear good fruit on their own. They need Jesus, the giver of life and our source of power. Jesus told His disciples to abide in Him. That means remaining connected to Jesus—staying as close to Him as possible and depending on Him for everything. Jesus said, “If you remain joined to me, and I to you, you will bear a lot of fruit. You can’t do anything without me” (John 15:5b).

Refer to the plant again. **As the gardener, sometimes I must cut back parts of this plant so other parts will grow.** Point to the branch/leaf of your plant again. **This branch looks healthy.** Bring out a pair of scissors or pruning shears. **But what would happen to the branch if I cut it off?** Wait for answers. **That’s right. It wouldn’t stay healthy for long if it wasn’t connected to the rest of the plant!**

Bring out a long, thick rope. **Jesus said that He is the vine, and we are the branches. What do we need to do to stay healthy and produce good fruit?** Wait for answers. **That’s right! Stay connected to the vine!** Invite a few kids to hold onto the rope. **Stand up straight and tall! Show me what healthy branches look like.** Let kids demonstrate. **Now show me what would happen to branches that aren’t attached to the vine!** Let them pretend to fall down—it’s OK for them to be dramatic and silly!

People who don’t remain connected to Jesus are like branches that get thrown away and dry up. Branches like that are only good for burning. Jesus doesn’t want His disciples to be like that. He wants them to always follow His words and stay connected to God by talking to Him and listening to Him.

So let’s grab the vine again and be healthy branches! Let the same kids return to the rope/vine and grab on, or if possible, invite all the kids to hold onto the rope and pretend to be strong branches. **When Jesus’ disciples stay connected to the vine, they’ll know what to ask God, and God will do it. People who bear fruit glorify God by showing others how amazing God is. They show that they are Jesus’ disciples.** Invite kids to return to their seats.

Leader Tip: Jesus’ teaching in John 15 can confuse kids (and adults!). God isn’t a genie. The reality is that God doesn’t always answer our prayers in the way we want or expect Him to. His good plans for us often look different from our own plans. But we can stay connected to Him through our prayers and trust Him.

Jesus told the disciples that He loved them just as the Father loved Him. Jesus obeyed the Father’s commands. The disciples could show their love for Jesus by obeying His commands. He said, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love” (John 15:10). Jesus wasn’t trying to burden them with silly rules. He knew God’s commands lead to joy because life works best when people follow God. Jesus wanted the disciples to have complete joy.

Jesus told His disciples: “Here is my command. Love one another, just as I have loved you” (verse 12). Loving one another like Jesus—giving of yourself for the good of others—leads to joy and helps you stay connected to Jesus. Staying connected to Jesus is the best way to live. Invite several more kids—or all of them—to come up quietly and hold onto the rope/vine. **Staying connected to Jesus is how we fit into God’s big story. Another word for staying connected is abiding. Jesus invites us to abide in Him.**

Connecting the Wonder Truth

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Pose the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God’s big story:

"Our Wonder Truth today is JESUS INVITES US TO ABIDE IN HIM. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in action in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.



As Jesus-followers, we get to play a part in God’s big story! God invites us to bear the good fruit of His kingdom and to show others how amazing He is! We don’t have to try to do these things on our own because Jesus is our source of life and love. And He invites us to stay connected to Him!"

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.

***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.



WORSHIP VIDEO: Holy Forever

Blessing Your Kids

Speak a blessing over your kids, as a group or as individuals. Use your own words. Here is an example:

Blessing: Jesus is the true vine and the source of life, and He invites you to abide in Him! May you be aware every day and in all places that God is with you. May you remain connected to Jesus and let His love and joy cover you all the days of your life!

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Connected Slide.png

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True Vine Welcome Question Slide.png

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9 Take You At Your Word - Motions.mp4

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10 What a Friend Motions.mp4

11
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12
True Vine Title Slide.png

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13 IAMS Elem Gods Big Story L3.mp4

14
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15
Vineyard Slide.png

16
Vine and Branches Slide.png

17
True Vine Wonder Truth Slide.png

18
Responding in Worship.png

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19 Holy Forever - Lyrics.mp4

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