

## 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.

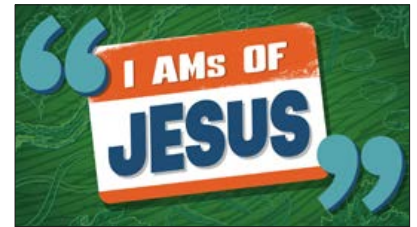
**WORD OF WONDER:** I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness. They will have that light. They will have life. —John 8:12

## CURIOSITY

## BELIEF

## FAITH

- Welcome Question: What is the biggest or most beautiful plant you have ever seen? Describe it.
- Curiosity Questions
- Discussion Questions for Younger and Older Kids
- Small Group Prayer Time
- Word of Wonder: John 8:12
- Word of Wonder Activity
- LARGE GROUP
- Responding in Worship: Leaf Art Breath Prayers



**Notes!** Use the Notes Pages on the back of the Coloring Sheet each week to help kids stay engaged and remember what they are learning. Encourage kids to make notes, draw pictures, and write questions throughout small group and large group. This also provides parents with resources to keep the conversation going throughout the week!



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

### INVITATION

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

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**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.

### Small Group

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

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

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### Pre-Service Connection (15-20 min)

**RESOURCES:** Coloring Page, whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have play stations with various board games, activities, or use games from the extra Games & Activities Guide to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them!

#### Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group. Allow quieter kids who don't engage with the board games to color. Involve them in the curiosity questions.

#### **As kids arrive..**

Invite them to write/draw the answer to the Welcome Question on the designated board/paper. Set out sheets of paper and colored pencils.



#### **While kids are playing in their opening activity groups..**

Pose the following "I'm curious" questions. Say "I'm curious..." before each question and give kids a chance to think about and answer each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

- **What are some important things plants need to grow? What happens if plants don't have these things?**
- **Have you ever planted seeds or grown a plant? Tell about it!**

### Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

## Small Group Discussion: Younger Kids 5–8 min

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles (1 per kid); Bible Story Picture (1/SG)

Help kids use the table of contents in their Bibles to find John chapter 15. As kids find the passage, explain that John is one of the four Gospel books that tell about Jesus' ministry; it was written by John, one of Jesus' disciples.

**Read read John 15:1–12 aloud. Then discuss the following:**

**Notes!** Have kids turn to the Notes Pages on the back of the Coloring Sheet and draw a picture of the story as you read.

- **In God's big story today, who did Jesus call the "true vine"? Who did He call the "branches"?** (*Jesus is the true vine, and His followers are the branches.*)
- **What happens to actual branches when they are cut off from the vine?**
- **Imagine the biggest, strongest tree you can picture.** Pause for kids to imagine; some may choose to close their eyes. **How is Jesus like that tree?**
- **Why do you think it's important for us to stay connected to Jesus?**
- **What happens in the lives of people who stay connected to Jesus? How can others tell they are connected to Him?**
- **What are some ways you can stay connected to Jesus?**

"When we are connected to Jesus and abide in Him, we follow His commands and love others just as He loves us! This leads to amazing joy and, in turn, helps us stay connected to Jesus! Let's spend time connecting to Jesus in prayer."

### Make It Inclusive!

Some kids may be new to church and not yet know Jesus personally. You have the privilege of introducing them to the love of Jesus as you lead today. Assure them that God loves them and is always near. They can talk with Him anywhere and at any time.

**Leader Tip:** If needed, remind kids that the word *abide* means to remain connected. Explain how abiding in Jesus can be similar to branches connecting to their vines.

## Prayer Time: Younger Kids

Open your prayer time by thanking Jesus for being the true vine and our source of life! Encourage kids to think about how they can stay connected with God no matter where they are. Invite kids to share any praises or prayer requests they may have. Pray for each child by name, and include her specific prayer if possible. Then open it up for any kids who would like to close your prayer time.

## Small Group Discussion: Older Kids 8–10 min

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles (1 per kid), Bible Story Picture (1/SG)

Help kids use the table of contents in their Bibles to find John chapter 15. As kids find the passage, explain that John is one of the four Gospel books that tell about Jesus' ministry; it was written by John, one of Jesus' disciples.

**Turn to Page 3 of this guide and help kids understand the context of this passage.**

Invite three volunteers to read from John 15 as everyone else follows along: 1–4, 5–8, and 9–12.

Then discuss the following:

**Notes!** Have kids turn to the Notes Pages on the back of the Coloring Sheet and write the Scripture and any words that stand out to them.

- **In God's big story today, who did Jesus call the "true vine"? Who did He call the "gardener"? Who are the "branches"?** (*Jesus is the true vine, God the Father is the gardener, and Jesus' followers are the branches.*)
- **What does it mean for Jesus to be the true vine? For God the Father to be the gardener? For us to be the branches?**
- **What happens to actual branches when they are cut off from the vine?**
- **Imagine the biggest, strongest tree you can picture.** Pause for kids to imagine; some may choose to close their eyes. **How is Jesus like that tree?**
- **Why do you think it's important for us to abide in (or stay connected to) Jesus?**
- **People who abide in Jesus produce good fruit—or good things. What are some of these good things? Do you know anyone whose life produces these good things? Tell us about this person.**
- **What are some ways you can abide in Jesus?**

**"When we abide in Jesus and remain connected to Him, we follow His commands and love others just as He loves us! This leads to amazing joy and, in turn, helps us remain connected to Jesus! Let's spend time connecting to Jesus in prayer."**

### Make It Inclusive!

Some kids may be new to church and not yet know Jesus personally. You have the privilege of introducing them to the love of Jesus as you lead today. Assure them that God loves them and is always near. They can talk with Him anywhere and at any time.

**Leader Tip:** If needed, remind kids that the word *abide* means to remain connected. Explain how abiding in Jesus can be similar to branches connecting to their vines.

## Prayer Time: Older Kids

Invite kids into a time of prayer. Encourage them to think about the ways they can stay connected to God this week—while they are in school, at home, and with their friends. Encourage kids to share any praises or prayer requests they may have. Then invite them to pray for each other. Close your prayer time by thanking Jesus for being the true vine and our source of life!

## 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 (NirV)

### Word of Wonder

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles (1 per kid), flashlight(optional)

"The Word of Wonder for the I AMs of Jesus series is John 8:12. Today we read that Jesus compares Himself to a vine and us to the branches. In our Word of Wonder verse, Jesus compares Himself to a light. Let's read the Word of Wonder all together!

Invite kids to open their Bibles to John 8:12. Designate an imaginary line that splits the group into two halves. Explain that you will take turns pointing to one side and then the other. When you point to the first side, the kids on that side will read the first part of the Word of Wonder. When you point to the second side, the first group of kids will stop, and the second group will say the verse starting where the first group left off. Go back and forth several times. If you have a flashlight, shine it toward one half or the other instead of pointing (be careful to avoid shining it directly into kids' eyes).

**Leader Tip:** For Younger Kids. Encourage older and younger kids to intersperse evenly throughout your space. That way, older kids can help the younger ones near them read the verse.

For an optional discussion, gather kids to talk about these questions:

- **What word or short phrase stands out to you most in this verse? Why that word or phrase?**
- **As Jesus-followers, what does it mean to walk in Jesus' light rather than in darkness?**

### Word of Wonder Activity

**SUPPLIES:** note cards (12–15 per small group); marker (prep only); binder clips or rubber bands (1 per small group); masking tape (1 roll per small group); whiteboard, posterboard, or blank wall; table (optional)

Ahead of time, write the Word of Wonder on note cards, dividing it into 12–15 short phrases, one per card. Be sure to include the reference on a note card as well. Use binder clips or rubber bands to keep each verse set together, one per small group. Designate a place where kids will hang up the cards, such as a whiteboard, posterboard, or blank section of wall. Prep pieces of tape for the kids to hang up the notes with by rolling small pieces of masking tape and placing them near your designated place for the activity.

Invite kids to gather on the opposite side of the room from the whiteboard, posterboard, or blank wall. Read the Word of Wonder two times together. Then shuffle a set of note cards and lay them out on the floor or a table in front of each group.

Explain that the kids will work together to find the first words of the verse on a note card. One kid will grab a piece of tape to place on the back of the card. Then one kid will run and stick the note to the designated spot. Kids will work together to find the second set of words, hand it to you to put tape on it, and someone different will run and stick it next to the first note card. This will continue until the entire verse is in order and all the kids have had a chance to carry a card to the other side of the room.

**Leader Tip:** For Older Kids. Consider making the activity a relay race with small groups competing against each other to see who can complete the verse first. For younger kids, read the note cards to them and help them find which card comes next.

**PAUSE for Large Group time, then continue...**

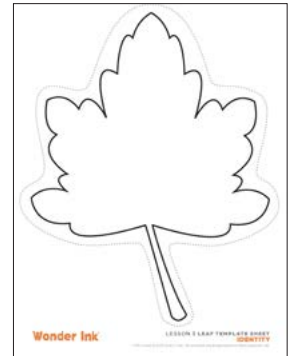
### Responding in Worship: Leaf Art Breath Prayers

**SUPPLIES:** cardstock, kid-safe scissors (1 per kid), tissue paper (multiple colors), glue (1 bottle per 2–3 kids), bowls, pencils (1 per kid), scissors (prep only, optional), green or brown butcher or kraft paper (optional), masking tape (optional)

**RESOURCES:** [Leaf Template Sheet \(1 per kid plus 1\)](#), [Breath Prayer Labels \(1 label/kid\)](#) | [AMs of Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, print the Leaf Template Sheet on cardstock and cut out, one copy per kid plus one to use as an example. Cut multiple colors of tissue paper into small squares, about 1" x 1" each. You will need enough for all the kids to cover their leaf templates. (See the sample Leaf Art picture.) Place the tissue paper squares into bowls. Consider creating a sample of a completed leaf covered in tissue paper to show kids.

**"In God's big story today, Jesus explained to His disciples that He is the true vine, and we are the branches. What an amazing picture to imagine—many, many branches attached to one long, healthy, life-giving vine, like the trunk of a giant tree! Jesus invites us to abide in—or remain connected to—Him. When we abide in Jesus, we become like healthy branches that produce good fruit. Our lives produce good things like kindness, compassion, and love. One way we can remain connected to Jesus is by being aware that He is with us and talking with Him in prayer throughout our day. Let's spend some time now connecting with Jesus, the true vine, by practicing something called breath prayers as we create leaf art.**





Hold up a Leaf Template Sheet and demonstrate how kids will glue tissue paper squares onto their leaves, or show them the completed sample leaf art. Give each kid a Leaf Template Sheet, a pencil, and kid-safe scissors or a pre-cut leaf. Set bowls of tissue paper squares and glue bottles throughout your space. Ask kids not to touch the supplies until you tell them to do so.

**A breath prayer is a word or phrase we repeat in a single breath. We say one part quietly as we breathe in.** Demonstrate saying the first part of the prayer as you inhale.

**Breathe in:** Jesus, You are the vine ...

**And we say the next part as we breathe out.** Demonstrate saying the second part of the prayer as you exhale.

**Breathe out:** I am the branch.

**Breath prayers help us focus on God and His presence with us. Each time you glue a tissue paper on your leaf, I invite you to say this breath prayer."**

Encourage kids to write their names on the back of their leaves and to begin gluing tissue paper squares to the front as they quietly repeat the breath prayer each time.

Consider playing music from the [I AMs of Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) softly in the background as kids work and pray.

The Breath Prayer Labels include three different breath prayers. Say each one aloud with the kids, then allow them to pick a label to tape/glue on their leaf. They can tape it to the back of their leaf if there is no room on the front.

**Breathe in:** Jesus, You are the vine ...

**Breathe out:** I am the branch.

**Breathe in:** Jesus, You are the vine ...

**Breathe out:** thank You for life.

**Breathe in:** Jesus, You are the vine ...

**Breathe out:** help me abide in You.

Explain that these leaves symbolize how they are like branches connected to Jesus, the true vine, and encourage them to repeat a breath prayer as they tape their leaves to the vine.

**Make It Inclusive!** Some kids may struggle to glue small tissue paper squares to their leaves or dislike the sticky texture of glue. Provide coloring utensils, such as jumbo crayons, so kids can color their leaves instead. Or print copies of the I Am the True Vine Coloring Sheet and encourage kids to say the breath prayer each time they pick up a crayon of a different color.