

LESSON 3  
**I AM THE TRUE VINE**

LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** Jesus Invites Us to Be Connected to 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.

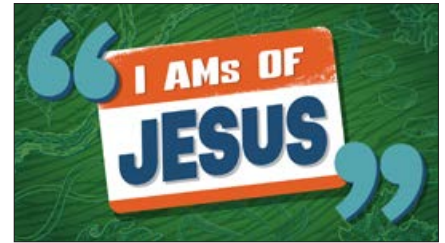
**WORD OF WONDER:** Jesus is the light of the world. —from John 8:12

**CURIOSITY**

**BELIEF**

**FAITH**

- Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: All I Wanna Do, What a Friend
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Prayer and Blessing



[I Ams of Jesus Preschool Spotify playlist](#)



## LESSON 3 FOR LEADERS

### INVITATION

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

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** Jesus Invites Us to Be Connected to Him

**SCRIPTURE:** John 15

**WORD OF WONDER:** From 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.



LESSON 3 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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

**LESSON AT A GLANCE**

**WONDER TRUTH:** Jesus Invites Us to Be Connected to Him

**SCRIPTURE:** John 15

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**Welcome**

**Slide: Series Welcome Loop**

**As kids arrive...**

Walk around the room and welcome as many kids as possible by showing excitement that they have joined you. Give high-fives, fist bumps, encourage them to sit on the floor in their spots, and ask questions about their week.

**Video: Countdown**

Welcome kids to worship time. Introduce yourself by name.

**Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions**

**SUPPLIES:** wilted flower, tape (optional)

Introduce the kids to Tac, the curious cat. Keep the wilted flower out of sight but close by. You can use a loop of tape to have Tac “hold” the wilted flower when the time comes.

**Leader:** I hope you remember our friend, Tac the Cat! He always has some good questions for us. Hey, Tac! How are you doing?

**Tac the Cat:** Hi! I am doing great! Last week, I went in my garden and picked my favorite flower. It’s so beautiful, and it smells really nice! I wanted to bring it today to share with all of you!

**Leader:** Aw, Tac, that is very sweet! Thank you for thinking of us. Can we see your flower?

**Tac the Cat:** Yeah! It’s right here!

*(Tac disappears and reappears with the wilted flower.)*

**Tac the Cat:** Oh! Oh no ...

**Leader:** What’s wrong, Tac?

**Tac the Cat:** My flower! It was so beautiful last week when I picked it. But look at it now. *(Tac gently shakes the wilted flower.)* What’s wrong with it?

**Leader:** You said you picked it last week?

**Tac the Cat:** Yeah.

**Leader:** Well, flowers don't live very long after we pick them.

**Tac the Cat:** But why?

**Leader:** Flowers do best when they stay connected to their plant. Some flowers grow on stems, some grow on vines, others grow on bushes. But no matter what kind of flower it is, every flower will wither once it's plucked and separated from the rest of its plant.

**Tac the Cat:** So that's why mine withered. It's been separated from its plant. *(Tac sighs.)* This makes me feel just like my flower—all dried up and sad.

**Leader:** I'm sorry you feel that way, Tac, but I have good news for you. Just like flowers feel best when they're connected to their plant, we can feel our best when we remain close to Jesus! In fact, Jesus even calls Himself the vine and His followers branches. You don't have to stay sad like this flower. We'll learn more about it in our story today.

**Tac the Cat:** That makes me feel better!

**Leader:** I'm glad you feel better, Tac.

**Tac the Cat:** Thank you! I will bring my whole plant—flowers and all—to show you later! But right now, I am going to pray and thank Jesus for inviting me to be connected to Him. Can I pray while watering my plant?

**Leader:** I think that's a great idea! See you soon, Tac!

**Tac the Cat:** Bye!

**"Have you ever been curious about something? Let's take a moment and think: what happens to flowers, fruit, or leaves that are separated from their plants? Allow the kids to respond. Have you ever felt sad, like you imagine what a shriveled, dried-up flower is like when it's not connected to its plant? Allow the kids to respond. We all see and hear things that make us curious. Did you ever stop to think about how we can be connected to God through Jesus?"**

### **SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH**

Today's Wonder Truth is **JESUS INVITES US TO BE CONNECTED TO HIM.** Today, we'll discover what it means to accept His invitation and live life connected to Jesus!"

## **Declaring God's Wonder**

### **SLIDE: DECLARATION**

Encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

**Thank You, God, that You made me!** *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Make prayer hands, then point up to God and to yourself.

**And I am Your kid!** *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

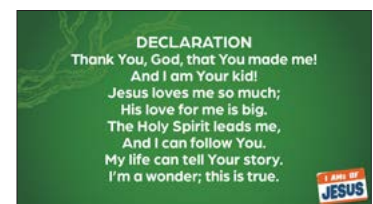
Put your hands on your hips.

**Jesus loves me so much;** *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

**His love for me is big.** *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.



**The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)**

Bring your arms down from the sky, making a path in front of you.

**And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)**

March in place like you're following the leader.

**My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)**

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

**I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)**

Put your hands up, shaking your fingers, celebrating ("praise hands").

## Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use your own words Here is an example:**Jesus, thank You for inviting us to be connected to You. Help us remain as close to You as flowers and fruits are to their vines. We believe You are the true vine! We love and trust You. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

## Worship

"Today, we'll learn about how Jesus invites us to be connected to Him. Let's sing about living close to Jesus, the true vine, together!"

**WORSHIP SONGS: All I Wanna Do, What a Friend**

## God's Big Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bible

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Tell them today's story comes from the book of John in the Bible. Open a Bible and show them where the story is found.

### Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

**I open my Bible and what do I see?** (Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)

**God's big story, waiting for me!** (Point to yourself.)

"Let's watch part of God's big story, which comes from the book of John in the Bible."

**VIDEO: GODS BIG STORY**

# GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, bunch of grapes (real or fake), long rope

**RESOURCES:** [Vineyard Sheet](#) (2-3 / campus)

Ahead of time, print the Vineyard Sheet. Place the grapes, the rope, and the Vineyard Sheet where you can access them easily.

**"Jesus did lots of amazing things when He was on earth doing God's work. Jesus also told His followers, the disciples, many important things before it was time for Him to die on the cross. He told them that there is a place for them in God's family and that He is the way to God. Jesus told them God would send the Holy Spirit as a forever friend to lead them and help them. And Jesus told them about vines and branches and how important it is to stay connected to God.**

Hold up the Vineyard Sheet. **There are vines that grow fruit in places called vineyards. Gardeners take care of the vines and make sure they grow good fruit. Yum! God said that He had planted His people like a vine in the world (Psalm 80:8–16; Isaiah 5:1–7). God wanted them to follow Him so their lives would show good fruit like kindness and love.**

**Jesus' followers were supposed to show the world what God is like. But even though God loved and cared for His people, they did not always love God back. The people produced bad fruit—things like being mean or jealous, or hating other people. They needed a better vine!**

**"I am the true vine," Jesus told His disciples. "My Father is the gardener" (John 15:1). Jesus was letting them know that life comes from Him. God helps people live His way. God the Father is the gardener who takes care of the vine and the branches. Jesus said, "He cuts off every branch 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 15:5). Let's take a look at a vine and its branches. Hold up the bunch of grapes. Point out the main vine and the branches that come off of it. The branches connect to the vine and make fruit. In this case, grapes!**

**Followers of Jesus get to be part of His work by growing good fruit and sharing it with the world. That good fruit is what happens in our lives when we become more like God and show His love. But no one can make good fruit on their own. They need Jesus! He gives life and power. Jesus told His disciples to stay connected to Him and depend 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 15:5).**

Bring out a long 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 kids to stand up and hold onto the rope. **Stand up straight and tall! Show me what healthy branches look like.** Let kids demonstrate. **But show me what would happen to branches that aren't attached to the vine!** Let them pretend to fall down—they may be dramatic and silly. That's OK.



People who don't stay connected to Jesus are like branches that get thrown away and dry up. Jesus doesn't want His disciples to be like that. He wants them to always be connected to Him and grow good fruit! They will show others how amazing God is. They show that they are Jesus' disciples.

**So let's grab the vine again and be healthy branches!** 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 for, 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 doesn't just grant every wish and desire like 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 in 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 make life hard for them with silly rules. He knows what is best. Jesus wanted the disciples to be full of joy.

"Here is my command," Jesus told them. "Love one another, just as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Loving one another like Jesus—thinking of others more than yourself and loving them with God's love—leads to full joy. Living that way helps you stay connected to Jesus. And staying connected to Jesus is the best way to live. It's how we fit into God's big story. Jesus invites us to be connected to Him."

## Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

### SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

"Our Wonder Truth today is **JESUS INVITES US TO BE CONNECTED TO HIM**. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen 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!"**



## Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, thanking God for being our vine and allowing us to be connected to Him.

**"God, thank You for inviting us to be connected to You. You bring true life and joy. We can do nothing without You! Show us how to stay connected to You in our everyday lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive a blessing as you speak it over them.

**Blessing:** May Jesus keep you and hold you close. May you grow good fruit as you live for Jesus.