

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.

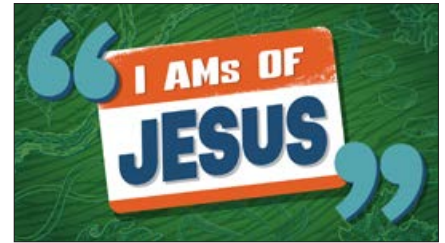
WORD OF WONDER: Jesus is the light of the world. —from John 8:12

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Play Stations:
 - Fruit Matching
 - Plants and Vines
 - I Am the True Vine Coloring Sheet
- Word of Wonder: From John 8:12
- God's Big Story / Snack
- Circle Time: Looped-Fruit Questions
- LARGE GROUP
- Responding in Worship: Thumbprint Grapes
- Closing Game: Connected!



[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
WORD OF WONDER: From John 8:12

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: buckets or bowls (10), tape, bunch of grapes (real or fake), scissors (prep only), fake vines (optional), stopwatch (optional)scissors (prep only), leaves, plants, coloring utensils

RESOURCES: Leaves and Fruit Sheet(3-4/SG), I Am the True Vine Coloring Sheet (1 per kid)

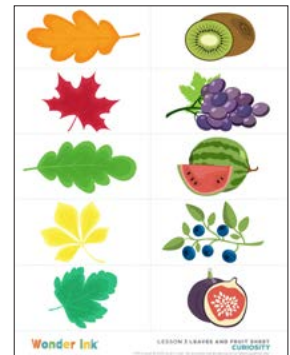
Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

"Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?"

Play Station: Fruit Matching

Set-up: Before kids arrive, print and cut out the pictures from the Leaves and Fruit Sheet. Tape one picture to the front of each bucket or bowl. You can also decorate the buckets with fake vines. Place the buckets in the center of the room. Scatter the remaining pictures along the floor, taping some to the walls or other objects. Set out a bunch of grapes that are still attached to one another on their vine.

Play: Allow kids to run around the room, grab the pictures, and drop them in the corresponding vine buckets. You can use a stopwatch to record how quickly the kids sort all the pictures of fruits and leaves. Once they are done, invite kids to sit down in front of the vine buckets.



"Hello, everyone! Before we start today, I need your help. I have 10 vines (reference the buckets). As you can see, each vine should have a different kind of fruit or leaf, but there's nothing on the vines! Instead, all of the fruit and leaves are scattered around the room. I need your help to collect all the fruit that belongs on each vine. When I say, "Go," let's see how quickly you can collect the fruits and leaves and sort them into their vines' buckets. Are you ready? Go!"

Thank you so much for helping me collect all these fruits and leaves! Did you see your favorite fruit today? Allow answers. **Those fruits are pretty tasty. I am so glad God created fruit for us to eat!** Hold up the grapes. **What are these?** Allow answers. **Right! Grapes! What is this part called?** Point out what the grapes are attached to and allow answers. **It's from a vine. Grapes grow on vines! If you pluck a grape from its vine before it is ripe, the grape withers and becomes gross and mushy. It needs to stay connected to its vine to remain a good, tasty grape.**

Jesus used vines and their branches and fruit as a picture to show how important it is for us to remain connected to Him. We'll learn more about that in our story today.

Play Station: Plants and Vines

Set-up: Set out fake or real leaves, plants, and green and brown pipe cleaners.

Play: Let the kids twist the pipe cleaners to make vines and branches. Allow them to play with the branches and vines and set them up in various formations as they pretend to work in their garden.

Play Station: I Am the True Vine Coloring Sheet

Set-up: Print one copy per kid of the I Am the True Vine Coloring Sheet. Set out the Coloring Sheets and coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw some types of imaginary fruit—stinky feet fruit, ice cream fruit, etc.

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, oranges (2–3)

Allergy Caution: Be aware of any food allergies or sensitivities among your kids and volunteers before doing this activity!

WORD OF WONDER

Jesus is the light of the world.

—from John 8:12

"Jesus said, "I am the vine." He also said, "You are the branches." What did He say branches will make? Allow answers. **Fruit!** Hold up an orange. **We're going to use fruit to keep learning our Word of Wonder today! Our Word of Wonder for this series is from John 8:12. Jesus is the light of the world. When we are close to Jesus, His light is in us and He grows good fruit in our lives, like love and joy. We can use a piece of real fruit to help us remember how Jesus grows fruit in our lives as we learn our verse!**

Invite kids to sit in a circle. **I will hand this orange to one of you. If you get the orange, you can roll it to a friend across the circle. Every time someone rolls the orange, we all will say one word of the Word of Wonder. For example, someone will roll the orange, and we'll all say, "Jesus." Whoever catches the orange will roll it again, and we'll all say, "is." Got it? Let's play!**

Start the activity by rolling the orange to someone.

Leader Tip: To continue playing, you can introduce up to three oranges into the circle. This way, multiple kids will be catching and rolling oranges while saying the Word of Wonder.

Who knew rolling oranges could be so fun? Let's practice the Word of Wonder with our motions next.

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

- **JESUS IS**—Open arms out to sides, one at a time.
- **THE LIGHT**—Place all fingers in one hand together and open them quickly.
- **OF THE WORLD.**—Draw a large circle in the air.
- **FROM JOHN 8:12**—Hold your hands together in front, palms together, as if opening a book.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **Our Word of Wonder says that Jesus is the Light of the World. Was there a time in your life when Jesus brought light, even though your situation felt dark?**
- **Jesus is the light, not just for us but the whole world! What are some ways to share the light of Jesus with others?**

God's Big Story / Snack

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

Read John 15:1–12 in an NIV Bible.

Circle Time: Looped–Fruit Questions

SUPPLIES: long rope, scissors (optional, prep only), pen or marker

RESOURCES: [Leaves and Fruit Sheet \(from the Curiosity section\)](#), songs from the [I AMs of Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

If you haven't already, print the Fruit and Leaves Sheet and cut apart the pictures. You will need one image (fruit or leaf) per kid. Write a number (1–8) on each fruit or leaf to correspond with the numbers on the questions. Arrange the pictures in a large circle for kids to stand on. Cue music from the [I AMs of Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#).

Invite kids to stand on a picture in the circle. Offer them the rope to hold as well. **"Let's practice being branches. What do branches connect to? Allow answers. Yes. The vine! And what grows on branches? Allow answers. Right. Fruit! Excellent! All of you, branches, are holding onto the vine—the rope—and are standing on fruit. I am going to play some music. While the music's playing, you'll step from one picture to another. When the music stops, take a seat behind the fruit or leaf you landed on. I'll then ask you a question based on your fruit or leaf!"**

Begin the music and encourage kids to hold the vine while they step from fruit to fruit. When music ends, make sure each kid has a picture. Ask the question that corresponds with each fruit or leaf's number.

Make It Inclusive!

Instead of marching, have kids stand or sit on the vine circle and pass the fruit pictures left to right until the music stops.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **The places where vines grow and produce fruit are called what?** (*vineyards*)
2. **Branches that stay connected to their vines grow good fruit. For us to grow good fruit, who do we stay connected to?** (*Jesus*)
3. **What leads to full joy?** (*loving one another like Jesus*)
4. **When people aren't connected to Jesus, what are some "fruits" that they grow?** (*being mean, jealous, hating other people, etc.*)
5. **What are some examples of good fruit we could grow?** (*kindness, love, becoming like God and showing His love, etc.*)
6. **How do we grow this good fruit?** (*by staying connected to Jesus*)
7. **What can you do to stay connected to Jesus?**
8. **How do we know when we are disconnected from Jesus?**

Jesus knows that we can't grow good fruit, like loving others, without Him. He knows we depend on Him. This is why staying connected to Jesus is the best way to live. Let's talk to God now in prayer!"

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and to thank God for inviting us to be connected to Him.

Head to Large Group!

Return and finish the rest of this guide before parents arrive.

Responding in Worship: Thumbprint Grapes

SUPPLIES: purple ink pads (2–3), wet wipes, butcher paper (optional, 5'), markers (optional), painter's tape (optional)

RESOURCES: music from the [I AMs of Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Use the vine on butcher paper from the Fruit Balloons game. If you didn't play the game, draw a large vine on a five-foot length of butcher paper and tape it to the wall.

"What a blessing it is to know that Jesus, the true vine, invites us to be connected to Him. Let's take some time to give thanks to Jesus in a special way!"

Jesus said He is the vine, and we are the ... what? Allow answers. Yes. Branches! And when the branches (that's us!) remain close to our vine, what grows in our lives? Allow answers. Fruit! Exactly! Point to the vine on the wall. **In just a minute, you'll each get a chance to add your branch and fruit to our vine picture. You will press your thumb into ink. Then, you'll stamp your thumbprint grape onto the butcher paper on the vine. Next, take a marker and draw a branch connecting your thumbprint grape to the vine. When you do, you can whisper a prayer of thanks to Jesus. An example of a prayer might be, "Thank You, Jesus, for inviting me to be connected with You when I'm at school" or "Thank You, Jesus, for giving me joy and life."**

When you're done, use a wet wipe to clean your thumb. Let's add our branches and fruit to this vine.

Allow kids to add their thumbprints to the butcher paper. Invite kids to say a prayer either out loud or silently. You can play soft music from the [I AMs of Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#) as kids respond.

Gesture to butcher paper on the wall. **Over here is our vine.** Point out the fruit balloons on the floor. **Scattered all over the floor is our fruit. When I say, "Go," each of you will find a fallen fruit and pick it up. When you pick it up, show me how someone might feel when they are disconnected from Jesus—sad, scared, mad, etc. I will give you a loop of tape to put on your fruit and tape it to the vine. When you tape your fruit to the vine, shout out something you might feel when you are connected to Jesus—happy, excited, peaceful, joyful. Ready, set, GO!**

Allow kids to play, picking up balloons and mimicking various emotions. Encourage them to tape the balloons onto the vine picture on the paper. Invite kids to come back together once all balloons are used.

Closing Game: Connected!

SUPPLIES: tape, buckets or bowls (1 per every 2 kids), scissors (optional, prep only), stopwatch (optional)

RESOURCES: [Leaves and Fruit Sheet \(from the Play Stations\)](#)

Use the pictures from the Leaves and Fruit Sheet (used in the Curiosity and Circle Time sections) or print and cut out new pictures. Scatter the pictures around the room and tape them to various items. Place the buckets in the center of the room.

"Today we've learned how important it is to stay connected to Jesus, the true vine. In this game, you will need to stay connected with your partner! Each pair will have a bucket in the center of the room. When I say, "Go," you must link arms with your partner and race to pick up as many pictures as you can before I call, "Time's up!"

Help the kids pick partners. Assign each pair a bucket in the center of the room.

You can only hold one picture at a time per pair. And you must drop your picture into your bucket before you can pick up another one. If you and your partner un-link arms, you must re-link and count to 10 before playing. Ready? On your mark, get set, go!"

Allow kids to play. You can use the stopwatch to create a different length of time for each round. Play the game again with new partners and/or a new amount of time.