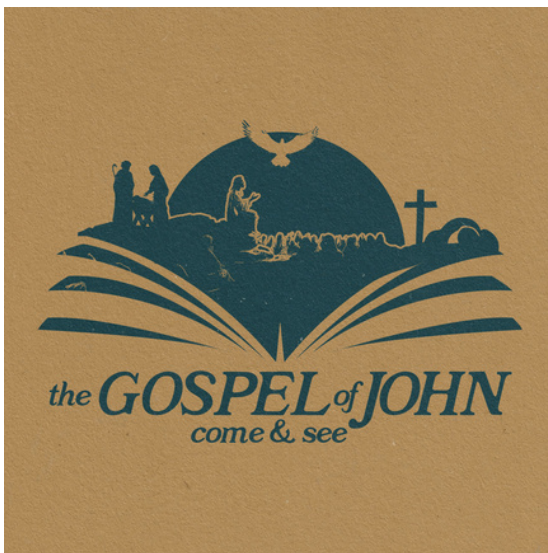


# SERMON STUDY GUIDE



03.17.24 // Week 11 // “Remain”



He is the most written-about figure in history.  
He is the most asked-about person on Google.  
Who is He? Jesus.

John’s Gospel account of Jesus certainly tells us about some of what Jesus did, but more than that, John wants us to see who Jesus is!

Here we will truly come and see who Jesus is and how He changes our lives!

## ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS

- What’s your favorite part of springtime? Do you get to experience it the same in San Diego?
- How well do you take care of plants? Do you have a green thumb?

# GOING DEEPER INTO THE MESSAGE

## Let's read John 15:1-11 (CSB)

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be[a] my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 "I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.*

### Point 1 – Recognize my need for Christ.

Imagine for a moment that you are standing in front of a grapevine. The purpose of the grapevine is to produce grapes, to produce good grapes that are useful for food or winemaking. That's it. Just to produce grapes. Now imagine that the main part of the grapevine is doing its job and soaking up the water and nutrients from the soil to give to the individual branches, so that the branches can produce good fruit. But then imagine that the branches disconnect themselves from the vine and tell the vine, "I can produce this fruit on my own. Watch me. I've got it. In fact, just for you, I will produce the best grapes ever!" How ridiculous would that be? Would those branches be able to produce any fruit, let alone good, sweet, refreshing fruit?

That's how it is for us when we try to live the Christian life alone without remaining in Christ. He wants us to produce good fruit. He knows the only way to accomplish this is to abide in Him. He is the Living Water. He is the Bread of Life. He has everything we need to bring good fruit out of us. In order to do that we need to daily be filled by Him. We need to get everything from Him. We are the opposite of independent. Maturing in Christ is growing in our dependence and reliance on him.

This is accomplished mainly by careful pruning. It is amazing that Jesus says that God is the Gardener (vs. 1). That means that it's His job to cut away all of the dead branches in us that are keeping us from producing the most high quality fruit. Our good God carefully examines and then takes away those things in our lives that will never produce good fruit. He does that to maximize those areas of our lives that will produce that good fruit.

It's easy sometimes to become sad over something that God may want to "prune" from our lives. I would encourage us to let God have the time to show us what can be gained in place of what was lost. The fruit Jesus produces in us is always better, is always the best quality, than anything we could produce on our own.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does remaining in Christ look like in this season of your life?
- What is something that you know God, the Gardener, wants to prune from your life? What do you think the good fruit could be that would replace it?
- Jesus says in verse 5 that "you can do nothing without Me." What are some ways or practices that help you develop greater reliance on Christ?

### **Point 2 – Remain connected to Christ.**

It's so important to recognize that we don't need to do more in order to produce more of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We just need to abide more in Jesus. Jesus invites each of us to "remain" in Him (John 15:4,9a). To "remain" is to maintain vital (life-giving) contact with the vine. Jesus wants to be in constant, life-giving communion with His people. Bruce Wilkinson puts it this way, "God didn't want me to do more for Him. He wanted me to be more with Him."

A natural byproduct of a branch remaining attached to the vine is the production of good fruit. In the same way, when we remain or abide in Jesus, we begin to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The more we remain in Him and He in us (vs. 4), the more we will naturally produce His fruit. When we remain, we become more loving and more joyful. We become more patient with the natural irritants of life and more gentle with those who have been treated harshly. When this fruit is produced in our lives people will be drawn to us and then we have the opportunity to share with them what only Christ has done in us. Jesus wants us to remain in Him so that He can transform our lives. He wants to transform our hearts and our minds. In doing this our actions are transformed.

When we prioritize living so close to Christ that we are abiding in Him we can rely on asking whatever we want and He will do it for us (vs. 7). This isn't because Jesus becomes our genie, answering any and all desires and whims we have. This is because time with Him, time abiding in Him, transforms what we want into what He wants, what He wants for us and from us. This is when radical change can happen in our prayer lives. When we begin to pray prayers that are coming from the heart of Jesus we see more prayers answered, more miracles happen, more lives changed, and more people made new. This all starts with daily choosing to remain in Him.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How much time are you spending trying to do things for God vs. time spent just being with God?
- In what ways has God transformed your thinking since you became a Christ follower? Has this led to behavior transformation?
- What radical prayers would you like to see God answer in your life and in the lives of the people around you? How can we support you in those prayers?