

May Mission Month

- 2018 -

MAY MISSION MONTH COMPANION BIBLE STUDY “I am...”

May Mission Month 2018 focuses on the passage in John 15 where Jesus speaks of the intimate relationship between the Vine (Jesus), the Gardener (God) and the branches (us). Global Interaction has produced resources specifically related to this theme including notes for pastors' and leaders', young adults' Bible study, videos and children's resources.

This Bible study expands the May Mission Month theme to explore “I am...” titles Jesus gives Himself in John, finishing with “I am the True Vine...” Please use this five week Bible study during May Mission Month or later throughout the year.

For more May Mission Month resources, visit:
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Session One

I am the Bread of Life – John 6:22-35

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

CONNECT

What is your favourite food?

What sort of food would you want if you were really hungry?

CONTEXT

The overall purpose of John as explained in John, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:31

John’s seven miraculous signs:

1. Water into wine (2:1-11)
2. Healing of royal official’s son (4:46-54)
3. Healing at Pool of Bethesda (5:1-18)
4. Feeding the Five Thousand (6:1-15)
5. Walking on water (6:16-24)
6. Healing the blind man (9:1-7)
7. Raising of Lazarus (11:1-45)

John’s seven ‘I am’ statements of Jesus:

1. I am the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I am the Light of the World (8:12)
3. I am the Gate (10:9)
4. I am the Good Shepherd (10:11)
5. I am the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. I am the True Vine (15:1)

Old Testament/Passover festival parallels. Jesus is addressing the crowd who He has just fed the day before.

CONTENT

22 The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. 23 Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” 26 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

28 Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” 29 Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” 30 So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’[a]”

32 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34 “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.” 35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”
John 6:22-35

CONSIDER

I am: The formula *ego eimi* (‘I am’) was theologically important and carried strong connotations of God’s name. This went all the way back to God’s revelation before Moses in the burning bush and his subsequent sending of Moses to deliver His people:

Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”
Exodus 3:13-14

This is illustrated in John 8:53-58. In response to Jesus using the phrase ‘I am’, the Jews pick up stones to stone Him. In 10:33 they explain that their reason is blasphemy – “because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

How does this add to our understanding of Jesus’ claim, “I am the Bread of Life”?

Verse 26: Jesus implies that the crowds were drawn to him not because of who He was (ie. because they had believed the signs), but because of the things he had given them (food). Is that something we can do too? What are some of the benefits of following Jesus that we can find ourselves seeking ahead of Jesus himself?

Life in John: A distinction needs to be made between *bios* life (biological life) and *zoe* life. Here (verses 27, 33 and 35) as in most of John (eg. John 10:10), the noun *zoe* is used for life. *Zoe* has qualitative meaning, indicating deep contentment, satisfaction, life in God to the full! How might we, or the people around us confuse our need for ‘*zoe*’ life with a desire for ‘*bios*’ life?

Verse 29 and 35: Belief in John is much more than a cognitive or intellectual concept. Belief is relational and implies trust/dependence. Why is this distinction around belief important?

CONSEQUENCES

1. Where do you look for contentment? Do you sometimes try to satisfy yourself with ‘food that spoils’ (verse 27)? Where is it, other than a deep relationship with Jesus, that you can be tempted to look for satisfaction?
2. What do you pray for? Often what we pray for is not what we need most deeply. How often do we pray for a passion for God? A deeper walk with him? How often do we pray that sin and evil will not get a hold of us? How often do we pray for a better understanding of His character that we might be like him? How often do we pray like Paul that we might know him (Philippians 3:10)?
3. “We have almost forgotten that God is a person and, as such, can be cultivated as any person can. It is inherent in personality to be able to know other personalities, but full knowledge of one personality by another cannot be achieved in one encounter... To have found God and still to pursue him is the soul’s paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by children of a burning heart.” (Aiden Tozer ‘The Pursuit of God’).
4. What ‘work’ (verse 29) do you need to do to get closer to Jesus? What are you doing to cultivate your relationship with Jesus? (What time are you giving to just being with him?)
5. “I am the Bread of Life.” What practical difference does a deep understanding of this claim make to your life? What difference might it make to the people you are seeking to reach?
6. “Mission is one beggar helping another beggar to find bread.” What is your response to this statement?

Session Two

I am the Good Shepherd – John 10:1-18

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

CONNECT

If you had to really count on someone to watch your back in a time of vulnerability, who would you turn to?

CONTEXT

The location is Jerusalem and follows the healing of the man who was born blind in John 9 (sixth miraculous sign), and some intense questioning in chapter 8 and 9 from the Pharisees about Jesus' credentials.

For example...

‘Where is your father?’ (8:19)

‘Who are you?’ (8:25)

‘Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?’ (8:48)

‘Are you greater than our father Abraham?... Who do you think you are?’ (8:53)

‘This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.’ (9:16)

Speaking to the man born blind... ‘What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.’ (9:17)

Again to the man born blind... ‘Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner.’ (9:24).

Implied question: What do you think?

CONTENT

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” 6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

7 Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

John 10:1-18



CONSIDER

Shepherd and Sheep: This imagery is frequently used in the Old Testament in reference to the Israel's king and her people (Read Ezekiel 34). In this chapter, a future ideal shepherd is identified as both, God himself (verse 12), and as a future Davidic king (verse 23).

How does this add to our understanding of Jesus' claim, "I am the Good Shepherd"?

Verses 1-10: The picture here is of a sheepfold where shepherds would secure their sheep at night. Jesus may have been referring to two different kinds of sheepfold. A large public sheepfold in a town where more than one shepherd would secure their flocks at night under the care of a watchmen who would man the gate. Secondly, a more makeshift sheepfold in the country, made with rocks and branches with an opening which the shepherd himself would sleep in.

The contrast is drawn between the thief who, jumps the fence, can't be trusted, comes to steal, kill and destroy; and the shepherd who enters by/is the gate, is trusted, and comes to give life to the full.

Is Jesus' healing of the man born blind meant to be an illustration of Jesus as the Good Shepherd? Who are the thieves and the robbers Jesus is referring to? Previous kings? False messiahs? Pharisees?

Verses 11-15: The contrast is drawn between the good shepherd, who when danger looms, protects his sheep even with his own life; and a hired hand, who in the face of danger, abandons the sheep because they don't really mean anything to him.

What does this add to your understanding of Jesus as 'The Good Shepherd'?

Verse 16: Sheep not of this pen. A reference to the nations.

CONSEQUENCES

1. What things do you see around us that promise life to the full, but in reality only steal, kill and destroy?
2. The true test of a shepherd is what he does when faced with a threat to the welfare of his sheep. What practical difference does an understanding of Jesus and his claim, "I am the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep," mean to you (see also John 15:13)?
3. Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd, I know my sheep..."

Reflect on the idea that Jesus knows you, and knows your every need. What difference does that make to you?

4. Quote: God is good... A lack of confidence in the goodness of God is a major reason why people do not have inner strength and security. God may deny you something, but only because his love and goodness have a wiser and bigger purpose.

How can we know that God is good and trustworthy?

5. What difference might Jesus, the Good Shepherd, make to those around you?



Session Three

I am the Resurrection and the Life – John 11:1-46

“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.”

CONNECT

Of all the people you’ve known to have died, who would you most like to raise to life? Why?

CONTEXT

In the previous chapters, Jesus has been in Jerusalem amongst the Jewish leadership, laying claim convincingly (yet evasively) to His identity as the Jewish messiah. eg. I am the Good Shepherd.

During Hanukkah (festival of Dedication which commemorated Jewish liberation under Judas Maccabaeus and generally stirred messianic hopes) 10:22, the Jewish leaders are eager to bring Jesus’ claims to a head. They press Jesus on His identity claims. Jesus response, although typically evasive, has the Jewish leaders trying to arrest Him and have Him killed (10:39).

Jesus escapes to the other side of the Jordan (10:40) with his disciples where we find him at the beginning of chapter 11.

CONTENT

The Death of Lazarus

11 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

4 When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

8 “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?” 9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” 12 His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

14 So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus[a]) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles[b] from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”



24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.



CONSIDER

Jesus waits: On the two other occasions where Jesus raises the dead (widow's son in Nain – Luke 7, Jairus' daughter – Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:22-43, Luke 8:41-56) Jesus acts immediately, even seemingly impulsively. But on this occasion, Jesus apparently waits for Lazarus to die (verse 6).

What does this say about the intention of this miracle?

Verse 4: The word glory in John is all about revealing (see also verse 40). This fifth 'I am' saying in John is linked with John's seventh sign pointing to who Jesus is.

Do you think Lazarus' death and resurrection is a publicity stunt? Is that ok?

Resurrection (verses 23-25): Although some Jews (eg. Sadducees) didn't believe in a future resurrection, most Jews did. Standard Jewish teaching at the time, following Daniel 12:3 and other key passages, shared the vision of Isaiah 65 and 66: a vision of new heavens and new earth, a world like ours only with its beauty and power enhanced and its pain, ugliness and grief abolished. Within that new world, all God's people from ancient times to the present would be given new bodies, to share the life of the new creation.

Why might Martha have not been especially comforted by this in that moment?

Life in John: Zoe v bios life. The word used here is zoe, meaning deep contentment, satisfaction, life in God to the full!

Deeply moved (verses 33 and 38): The Greek word that is translated 'deeply moved' generally connotes anger and literally means 'to snort like a horse'.

Why might Jesus have been troubled to anger at the sight of Mary weeping here, and then later at the sight of Lazarus' tomb?

Other Gospels: The raising of Lazarus is mentioned only in John's gospel. For such a significant miracle, why do you think the other Gospel writers chose to omit it? (see John 12:9-11).

CONSEQUENCES

1. Jesus, when confronted by the death of his friend Lazarus, wept. What is it about death, and those close to you particularly, that might cause you to weep?

2. Lazarus is describe as 'the one Jesus loved' and his 'friend' (verse 3). Jesus' willingness to confront the tomb of Lazarus is a foretaste of what he would do for his disciples, for you, for me and for all humankind just weeks later in laying down his own life and rising again.

What does this say about Jesus' relational commitment to us? Is it easy for you to think of yourself as Jesus' friend?

3. Eight times within this passage we see the word believe (verses 15, 25, 26, 26, 27, 40, 42 and 45). Belief in John is more than cognitive and is an invitation to a trusting relationship.

To what degree are you able to trust Jesus with all aspects of your life and death (and the lives of those close to you)?

4. "I am the Resurrection and the Life." What practical difference does a deep understanding of this claim make to your life? What difference might it make to the people around you?



Session Four

I am the Way the Truth and the Life – John 14:1-11

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

CONNECT

Recall an experience of being lost. How did you find your way out of it?

CONTEXT

John

Book of Signs: John 1-12 (Jesus' public ministry)

Book of Glory: John 13-21 (Jesus' personal glorification)

Following the raising of Lazarus, Jesus has been anointed by Mary at Bethany, and has triumphantly entered Jerusalem. He starts to speak about his impending glorification (12:23) and departure (13:1).

Jesus washes the disciples feet (13:1-17)

Judas' betrayal predicted (13:18-30)

A new commandment (13:31-34)

Peter's denial predicted (13:36-38)

Farewell discourse (13:31-17:26). Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples on the night of His arrest.

CONTENT

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God[a]; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Jesus the Way to the Father

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know[b] my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

9 Jesus answered: “Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

CONSIDER

Way: Way is an important concept in Judaism. Torah literally meant ‘the way’ (see Exodus 18:20, Psalm 119:1). Torah is also frequently associated with truth (see Psalm 119:142), and life (see Proverbs 13:14).

What does this indicate about Jesus’ claim, “I am the way the truth and the life”?

Truth: Jesus was big on truth. The phrase, “I tell you the truth” appears over eighty times in the gospels. ‘True’ or ‘truth’ appears over fifty times in John. In John 8:31-32, Jesus says that if you hold to my teaching, “then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free,” and in John 18:37 he says that he came into the world “to testify to the truth.”

What does Jesus mean when he says “I am the truth”? (See also John 1:14)

Life in John (Zoe v bios): The word used here is zoe referring to life that comes from God. The distinction between zoe and bios is seen in the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, in which Nicodemus is told he must be ‘born again’ or ‘born from above’ (John 3).

CONSEQUENCES

1. How do you feel about the exclusivity of Jesus’ claims when he says, “I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”? How do you feel about it personally? How do you feel about it when interacting with those of different faiths?
2. Before they were known as Christians (Acts 11:26), the earliest believers were known as followers of The Way (Acts 9:2). How might those who know your faith describe you?
3. Considering the things which, when Jesus spoke these words, had just occurred (eg. John 13), and were about to occur (John 18-19), what do you think it means to follow the way of Jesus?
4. Consider the following quote by Tom Wright. What is your response?
“Only when the church recovers the nerve to follow Jesus in his own mission and vocation... will it be able to recover its nerve in making the claim of John 14:6. Unless it does, though, it loses also the vision of the father which this whole passage sets out before us. Don’t come with a set, fixed idea of who God is, and try to fit Jesus into that. Look at Jesus, the Jesus who wept at the tomb of his friend, the Jesus who washed his followers’ feet, and you’ll see who is the true God.”
(Tom Wright)
5. In your quest to know your creator, what practical difference does Jesus’ claim, “I am the way the truth and the life” mean to you? What is its promise for those around us?
6. This passage begins and ends with a call to trust (verse 1) and believe (verse 11) - same Greek word is used. What does it mean for you to trust in Jesus?



Session Five

I am the True Vine – John 15:1-8

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

CONNECT

Who is the teacher from school or university whose help you are most thankful for?

How did they help you?

CONTEXT

Farewell discourse (John 13:31-17:26) on the night of his arrest.

Following Jesus’ “I am the way, the truth and the life” statement, Jesus has spent time teaching His disciples about the Holy Spirit, who will be with them forever (14:16), who will be in them (14:17), who will teach them all things (14:26), and who will give them peace (14:27). He now continues to prepare His disciples for their future ministry.

These words are spoken somewhere between the upper room (14:31) and Jesus crossing the Kidron Valley with his disciples (18:1).

CONTENT

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:1-8

CONSIDER

True Vine: Within Jewish tradition, the vine was a picture of the nation of Israel (Psalm 80:8-19, Isaiah 5), planted to be a blessing. Often Israel is depicted in the Old Testament as a failed vine.

What might this add to our understanding of Jesus’ claim of being the true vine?

Branches: (Verse 5) This final ‘I am’ saying is the only one with a ‘you are’ clause.

What does it mean to be the branches? What does it tell us about our identity and vocation?

Fruit / fruitfulness: This is a major idea of this passage, occurring seven times within the eight verses. Elsewhere in the New Testament, fruit is a metaphor for: people won to faith (Colossians 1:16), character (Galatians 5:22-23), righteousness/good works (Colossians 1:10), good speech (Luke 6:44-45), service (Romans 6:4-6), praising God (Hebrews 13:15).

In the context of this passage, what do you think is the fruit Jesus is referring to here? See 15:9-17. Also compare verse 8 with John 13:35.

Remain in me (Verses 4-7): Is this a reference to staying in vital relationship with the Christian community (ie. The true vine/true Israel)? Or is it a reference to maintaining intimate relationship with Jesus? Or is it both?

Pruning (Verse 2): This was (and is) done to remove superfluous growth and make the vine more fruitful.

CONSEQUENCES

1. “I am the True Vine, and my Father is the gardener.” “I am the Vine; you are the branches.”

What practical difference do these statements of Jesus make to your life? What is the invitation in it for you?

2. “The vine-dresser is never closer to the vine, taking more thought over its long-term health and productivity than when he has the knife in hand.” (Tom Wright)

What superfluous growth might God want to remove from your life so that the love of God might flow through you more effectively to produce more fruit?

3. Of each of the ‘I am’ statements of Jesus we have explored this week, which one is most personally important to you right now? Why?

4. What one thing have these ‘I am’ statements revealed to you about Jesus that would make a difference to the people around you who don’t know Jesus?

