



Vine and Branches

(based on John 15:1-8)

Jesus was talking with his friends. It was the last time he would see them for a while, and he wanted them to know that he would be with them again. They had shared a meal together; Jesus reminded them to remember his love and to love each other. Now he wanted to let them know that, even though he was going away, they would always be connected. He was saying “goodbye” but only for a little while.

At their supper table, Jesus and his friends shared some bread and some wine. Jesus knew that he could help his friends understand better if he told them some stories about nature and things they knew. So he told them this:

I’m the true vine. God is like the vine grower, like a gardener that takes good care of the vines. The Good Gardener has to trim the branches and sprigs away from the vine, so that the whole vine and all the other branches can grow lots of beautiful sweet grapes.

The branches can’t grow all alone; they can’t grow if they are cut off. The only way the vine and branches grow is when they all stay connected. So stay connected to me. That way you will be able to do wonderful things, just like the branches that are connected to the vine grow beautiful sweet grapes.

If you are cut off from me and from the other branches, you won’t be able to do much. The branches that get cut off are swept up and tossed away. So stay with me, the true vine. You will see that your faith will grow and you will be able to help others too. When we all stay connected, like a vine and branches, we can bring glory to God.

Jesus’ friends listened carefully. Maybe they looked at the wine in their cups and thought about how they were like the branches, growing on the vine, and making sweet and delicious grapes. They knew they wanted to stay connected to Jesus.



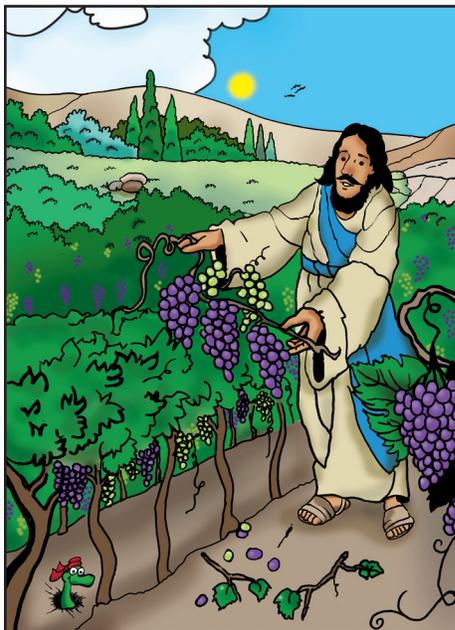
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Take a walk where you can see plants and trees. Explore the way leaves and branches are connected to stems and trunks. Notice what happens when a leaf or a branch is not connected.
- Jesus used word pictures to tell stories. In this story, he talked about being connected to him and to God using the picture of a vine and its branches. Wonder together what other images you can think of that tell about connectedness. Try telling the story again using those images.



Responding to God's Grace

- Jesus talks about bearing fruit. Later, Paul wrote to the Galatian church about the fruit of the Spirit, the ways we might act when we are connected to God's Spirit. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Write each "fruit" on a piece of paper or a craft stick. Place them in a cup. Take turns pulling out a "fruit" each day and working on actions related to it.
- On a large piece of paper, write the name "Jesus" across the center. Write in cursive or connect the letters if possible, making a sort of vine out of his name with the vine extending from the J and the last S across the page. Have each person add their name to the poster, connecting it with "Jesus" in the center, and decorating it. Display your family poster to remind you that you are all connected to Jesus.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Explore how we are connected with one another by reading *Because Amelia Smiled* by Daniel Ezra Stein (Candlewick, 2012) or watch the YouTube video "Because Amelia Smiled Digital Reading" (bit.ly/BecauseAmeliaSmiled, 3:23). Wonder together what may happen when you smile at someone today.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

Great Gardener God, may I stay connected with you each day so that I may be nurtured by your love and bear the fruit of love and service to others. Amen.