



## John 15:1-6 Small Group Discussion Questions

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- Have two people in the group read John 15:1-6. What is the metaphor that Jesus uses to describe the relationship between Him, the Father, and His followers? Why do you think He chooses this metaphor?
- Why do you think Jesus calls Himself the vine?
  - Ben taught us that Israel in the Old Testament is often compared to a vine, such that Israelites thought of the nation of Israel as the vine. How does Jesus' declaration upend this belief?
  - Why is it necessary to see Jesus as the vine, instead of any other nation, people, or institution?
  - If Jesus is the true vine, the true source of salvation, what are some false vines that we or others may turn to for life and meaning? What is it about false vines that fall short in providing life?
- If Jesus is the vine, who is the vinedresser/gardener? Who are the branches?
  - What are the two kinds of branches that Jesus describes in verse 2? What does the gardener do to each kind of branch?
  - Jesus first mentions dead branches, branches that do not bear fruit. What is a "dead branch," or a dead disciple?
    - What are some characteristics of those that think they're joined to the vine but actually are not?

- Who is an example of a dead branch in Jesus' inner circle?
- Dead branches are ultimately still unbelievers at heart. As we evangelize, how can we identify dead branches, and how might you tailor your evangelistic approach to a dead branch?
- The second kind of branch is a living branch. What is a living branch or living disciple?
  - What are some characteristics of a living branch, according to the metaphor?
  - Ben said that the living branch is connected to the vine so that the nature of the vine is communicated to the branch. In the Christian life, what does it look like for God to change us to be more like Him and His nature?
  - In the metaphor, the living branch bears fruit. What does it mean to bear fruit in the Christian life? How do you assess the kind of fruit that you're bearing?
  - What kind of fruit do you feel like you have been bearing recently? What kind of fruit do you feel like God is wanting to grow in you through your connection to Jesus?
- What does the gardener do to living branches?
  - What is pruning? If you're a plant, how might pruning "feel"?
  - Pruning, Ben said, is essentially wounding the plant so that it bears more fruit. It is for the good of the plant even if it hurts in the moment. How might God prune us in our lives?
  - How have you felt God prune you before? When have you seen God's pruning lead you to bear more fruit? What was that like?

- How does the reality that God is a good gardener help us think about suffering and hardship?
    - Is all suffering pruning? How do you think about the relationship between God’s careful pruning and the reality of living in a fallen world?
  - Ben said that “God’s commitment to your fruit-bearing is greater than His commitment to your comfort.” What is the significance of this claim? What practical steps might this idea help us take when we find ourselves in uncomfortable seasons?
- In verses 4-5, how does the branch bear fruit? What does it do?
  - Ben said that abiding in Jesus comprises two actions: resting in Jesus and pursuing Jesus. What do you think it means to abide, to rest in Jesus?
    - How is spiritual rest different than physical rest?
    - How does spiritual rest relate to the gospel?
    - Ben said that resting in Jesus ultimately is to rest in the fact that we are made new before God and can thus rest in Jesus’ work accomplished on our behalf. What are some steps you can take this week to rest in Jesus and His work?
    - What are some aspects of your life that distract you from resting in Jesus? What are some practical things that you have done to continue resting in Jesus in both smooth and choppy waters?
    - Why does Jesus emphasize that apart from Him, we can do nothing? How does this shape our understanding of spiritual growth and success?
  - What does it mean to pursue Jesus, not just theoretically, but realistically?

- Ben said it takes work to build in rhythms in our lives that lead to pursuing Jesus: what kinds of rhythms or habits can lead us to pursue Jesus?
- What kinds of rhythms or habits can lead us away from pursuing Jesus?
- How can you structure your calendar so that you can build in those habits and rhythms?
- Lots of times, we know that we need to read Scripture and pray more, but we just don't do it. Where are you going to carve out time this week to do this, to abide in Jesus by pursuing Him?