



**#10: *The Teachings of Jesus (II):  
Relationship with Jesus; Abiding in Christ***

**Bible Reading: [John 15:1-17](#)**

**by John Pearse**

Series editor: Andy Murphy

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**INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES: *Faithful God, Covenant People***

This series is taking us on a journey through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, looking at God's purposes in calling human beings into a **covenant relationship**.

**PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS**

As you prepare to lead this session, pray for your group and also for yourself: for wisdom in leading the session. Our focus is on the last of Jesus' "*I am*" sayings - "*I am the true vine*" – and what this tells us about our relationship with Jesus. Understanding the context in which Jesus said this is important, and so we suggest you firstly remind yourself of this by reading quickly [John chapters 13-17](#). Then return to [John 15:1-17](#), reading this slowly and reflectively, together with the background information on the next page. Turning to the prayer time at the end of the session, perhaps you would consider including something of the 'Covenant Living' paragraph right at the end.

**PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)**

In this session, we shall be considering mainly the saying of Jesus "*I am the true vine*", and what this can teach us about our relationship with Jesus, which is so important in helping us understand the difference between the New Covenant and the Old. It is also important to place this saying in the context in which Jesus said it. So, if you have time, you may find it useful to quickly read [John chapters 13-17](#) before returning to our main passage, [John 15:1-17](#), reading it more slowly and prayerfully. You will note in particular that the second half of that passage (verses 9-17) has so much to tell us about our relationship with Jesus. In the 'Finding our Roots' section below, the questions relate to our relationship to other people. Perhaps you would like to consider these firstly at home.

**STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER**

Loving God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit;  
you are one God but three persons in total unity: a relationship like no other.  
Thank you, Jesus, for showing us something of the nature of this divine relationship  
and also the importance of maintaining good relationships with one another.  
Lord, we ask you to help us to truly love one another – supporting, encouraging and caring for one another  
through all times and circumstances. We offer this prayer in your name, Lord Jesus. **Amen.**

**FINDING OUR ROOTS – some questions to explore**

Relationships are a part of life and they change from childhood right through to old age. A few may be bad but hopefully most have been good, with some offering advice and guidance helpful to your future life.  
*Can you think of people that have helped you mature in your life and share some of this in your group?*  
*Can you think of people that have been particularly helpful in encouraging you to mature as a Christian?*

## READING THE SCRIPTURES – with background information

### Read together the Bible passage: **John 15:1-17**

“*I am the true vine*” is the last of the seven “I am” sayings of Jesus recorded in John’s Gospel; part of Jesus’ intensive teaching of the apostles (known as ‘**The Farewell Discourse**’, **John 13-17**) immediately after the last supper, continuing on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus would pray for himself, his disciples and for all believers to come, before being arrested. The whole action and teaching was over a few hours during the evening on the day before Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus was preparing his disciples for when he would not be with them physically. Spiritually, he would never leave them.

The metaphor of **the vine** would have been familiar to the disciples with their Jewish background and knowledge of their scriptures (e.g. **Psalm 80**, **Isaiah 5:1-7**): it was often an image of God’s people. The principle of cutting dead branches and pruning good branches to encourage healthy growth of plants is familiar today. Jesus is applying this to our lives: cutting out the bad stuff and even pruning the good to allow us to be even more fruitful. To be fruitful, we need Jesus (to remain with him and ‘in’ him). We cannot achieve what God desires for us on our own.

This passage has a central theme: **our relationship with Jesus** – a major difference between **the New Covenant** (based on this relationship) and **the Old Covenant** (often interpreted to be primarily based on rules) – although both find their origins in God’s grace. The second half of the passage (**verses 9-17**) emphasizes that this relationship is one of **LOVE** – love within the Trinity; God’s love for us; our love for God; and our love for other Christians. The passage ends with Jesus’ New Commandment to “*Love one another...*” (**John 15:12**, reiterating **John 13:34-35**), and emphasizing the self-giving nature of this love. Obeying this command would be vital for those disciples (particularly as Jesus would soon no longer be physically with them), and remains vitally important for us and our mission today.

### DIGGING DEEPER – some questions for you to consider in your group:

The whole thrust of this teaching is an ongoing relationship with Jesus. The disciples were told: “**Remain in me**” or “**Abide in me**” (verses 4-7). *What do you think his disciples made of Jesus’ words, having been told also that he was just about to leave them? How do we understand these words in our relationship with Jesus today?*

If you feel comfortable doing so, share with the group: *How would you describe your relationship with Jesus? How did it begin, and how is that relationship maintained? Do you believe it continues into eternal life?*

*What’s the difference between cutting off and pruning? (verse 2) What sort of things do we think need to be cut, and what pruned? How can we apply these principles to our lives and the life of the church?*

*What do you think Jesus meant by “**Apart from me you can do nothing**” (verse 5)?*

Jesus said, “**If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love**” (verse 10). *How does this tally with our belief that Jesus’ love is unconditional? What part can obedience play in love?*

Both the Old and New Covenants understand God to be a **God of grace** (or ‘covenantal kindness’). The **means of grace** for Jewish people are: reading scriptures, prayer, repentance, and observing commandments. *What are the ‘means of grace’ for Christians? What personal or communal things help us stay connected to Christ?*

Jesus commands his disciples to **love one another as he has loved us** (verse 12). *What do you think Jesus meant and why did he attach such importance to this?*

*Even though Christian unity has improved over the last 100 years, why do you think there is still so much disunity in the Christian Church? What can we do to build on the unity we have in our local area?*

### PRAYING TOGETHER

In a time of open prayer and reflection, bring to God any concerns or needs within your group or wider community. Pray for those who are taking first tentative steps into a relationship with Jesus, and those who feel they are losing their grasp or falling away. Pray also for closer Church unity and tolerance, even when our views and practices differ; and pray for other local churches. Sing or say together the hymn: ‘**Breathe on me, Breath of God**’ (*Singing the Faith*, 370), and say **The Lord’s Prayer** together.

### COVENANT LIVING: PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE (to think about afterwards)

**John 15:1-17** shows so vividly the desire of Jesus for an intimate relationship with his disciples, and Jesus desires that relationship with us today. Some Christians regularly talk with Jesus during the day, not just times of devotion. If you do not already, how about trying this week: if you are faced with a problem, big or small, speak to Jesus, asking, “*What would you do, Jesus? Guide me and strengthen me.*”

# Junior Good Soil, issue #10

## JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES - “Love one another”

Written by Andy Murphy.

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Junior Good Soil is for children's and young people's groups in churches.  
It can be easily adapted and you can add your own ideas!



### PLANTING THE SEED – what are we thinking about today?

Today, we are thinking about one of the main messages of Jesus's teaching for his disciples. This one came near the end of his time with them, after everything they had seen him do, and all of his words to them. Before they had their last supper together, on that very special night, Jesus washed their feet. Even though it was normally a job for servants or slaves (or to just do yourself), Jesus wanted to show them how to serve one another. Afterwards, he gave them a very special commandment. It is the simplest and sometimes hardest of all the commandments: “**Love one another.**”

### QUIET TIME – a prayer (for use at the start or end of the session)

Dear Lord Jesus,  
We thank you for your love for us, which is always there for us.  
Your love designed us and made us. You have a plan for us. You forgive us when we get things wrong. And you prepare a place for us in heaven.  
To spread your love, and to make the world a better place, you ask us to love one another, just like you have loved us. Help us when loving is hard.  
And help us to think always about how we can show your love to others **Amen.**

### TELLING THE STORY – reading the Bible... **John 13**

For younger children, you can read some of the story in the **Usborne Children's Bible**, pages 122-123. Or you can read it using these links to the **International Children's Bible**:

**John 13: 1-16** (Jesus washes the feet of the disciples)

**John 13: 34-35** (A new commandment)

### WATERING AND GERMINATING – what can we learn? / what does it tell us?

To explore this story more, look at **John 15:1-17**.

How does Jesus want us to remain connected to him? How does his love flow to us, and then to others?

### LETTING IT GROW – ideas for activities and discussion

As an optional activity (only if people are happy to do it), get a bowl of water with some bubble-bath in it, and offer to wash people's hands. This could perhaps be done by the children washing each other's hands. As you wash their hands, you could say some words like: “Do you know how much God loves you? He would do this for you, and so much more.”

If you're feeling adventurous/messy (and have the parents' permission), invite the children to take off their shoes and socks and make footprints on a large sheet of paper, using poster paint. You could then do the same as above, washing their feet. (What footprints do we leave in life, and how can Jesus wash us clean?)

Can you think of practical ways you can show love; to let people know they are precious to God?

### PRAISE AND WORSHIP – hymns and songs (can be used at the start or end, or whenever!)

**Your love is amazing** (by Brian Doerkson & Brenton Brown) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJK0RW\\_3Vm8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJK0RW_3Vm8)  
(also found in *Singing the Faith* – no.98)

**Love each other** (by Graham Kendrick) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcytvqn8h3o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcytvqn8h3o)  
(also found in *Singing the Faith* – no.266)