

A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus

I Am the Vine

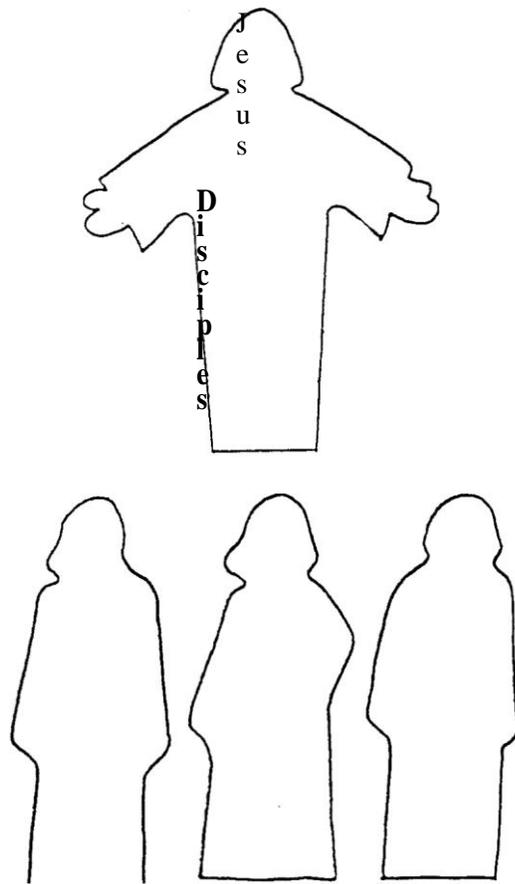
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I AM THE VINE ... MATERIALS

- medium wicker basket to hold
- wooden Jesus figure
- three wooden disciple figures
- laminated "vine" card



I AM THE VINE JOHN 15: 1-7a

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the *story* basket from the shelf and return to the circle.

Allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you reverently touch one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the Jesus figure toward at the center of the storytelling area.

Rest your hand lightly on the Jesus figure.

Place the disciples next to Jesus.

Place the vine card in front of Jesus.

Cover one of the branches on the card.

Indicate a branch on the card with fruit.

Touch each of the disciples.

Touch first a disciple, then Jesus.

Touch the spot on the card where a branch is connected to the vine.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this *story* so you will know where to find it if you choose to make it your work today or another day.

All of the words to this *story* are inside of me. If you will make silence with me I will find all the words to this *story* of God's people.

Jesus spent much of his time on earth helping people understand who he was.

When they wondered if Jesus was really the Savior, the Messiah he told them about himself in different ways.

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine.

The father God is the gardener.

The gardener cuts away *every* branch that doesn't give any fruit.

But the branches that give fruit get trimmed clean so it will give even more fruit.

Like you, who are all clean because of what I have said to you."

As his disciples listened Jesus told them, "Stay connected to me and I will stay connected to you.

Just like a branch can't grow any fruit if it's not connected to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you are joined to me.

Put both hands together to indicate being joined.

Touch one or more disciples.

Speak sadly and quietly.

Move the disciples closer to Jesus.

Place all the wooden figures in the basket one at a time.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Dismiss the children when everyone has had a chance to choose his/her work.

I am the vine and you are the branch. If we stay joined to each other we will be able to produce a lot of fruit."

Jesus reminded the ones who walked with him, "If you don't stay connected to me, you will be thrown away.

You will be like dry branches that are picked up and burned in a fire.

So stay joined to me and let my teaching become part of you.

\WONDERING QUESTIONS

If Jesus is the vine, I wonder what is the soil in which Jesus grows?

I wonder what kind of fruit I am?

I wonder if any of the branches are connected to each other'!

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will do for your work today? Let's begin.

I AM THE VINE TEACHER HELPS

We are uncertain about the setting for this discourse from Jesus to his disciples. In the gospel the setting occurs after they have left the upper room. It makes no mention of where they might have been, although, the garden is sometimes assumed as their destination (New Bible Commentary: Revised: p.959). The metaphor of a vine was well known to Jewish people from the scriptures where Israel was often referred to as the vine or vineyard. Isaiah 5: 1- 7 and Ezekiel 15: 1-6 are examples. With such a familiar metaphor it would have been easy for Jesus to say to the disciples, "Unlike those references, I am the TRUE vine. I'm the one God sent."

The most important teaching from this story is the obvious one: we need to stay connected to Jesus if we are to bear fruit Jesus is the source of life. The only way to have life is to know the source and have an open connection to that source.

Jesus also spoke some hard words in this text. The branches that do not bear fruit are cut off Gardeners know the value to cutting away those branches, large or small that no longer give anything to the tree. They become a dead weight, robbing the other branches and fruit of valuable energy. In our role as branches, it is our responsibility to stay connected to the source of life and let our lives reflect that life.

The ending of the story today reminds us that we must become almost as one. The branches cannot be seen as separate from the tree. The branches and the tree must be one and then the fruit will grow large and ripe and be a source of life for others.

The wondering questions begin by asking who or what might be the soil in which Jesus is planted. Some of your children will say God is the soil, while others might say it's love or caring that grows Jesus, the vine.

The second question wonders about what kind of fruit each of the children and adults might be. You may need to encourage the imagination of the children by guiding them with, "I wonder if you are ripe fruit or still growing fruit? I wonder if you are sweet fruit or sour fruit?" They will soon catch on and find themselves as sour apples or sweet oranges. They may say they are young fruit and not ready to be picked or they may believe they have grown into ripe fruit that would give life to others.

The final wondering question about the branches being connected to each other is to remind us that we are not only connected to God, but to each other. What happens on one branch can affect another. Listen to what your children say and enjoy this adventure.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

In our story today we hear about pruning dead branches. What part of yOU' life needs to be cut away? Have you already pruned away some parts?

Branches are known by their fruit. What is the best fruit you have to give? What parts of your life make a difference in yOU' relationships and your larger world?

Jesus is called the vine, or source of life. How do you stay connected to the source of life in your busy life? If you don't, how can that change?