



One Hope Community Church Suggested Reading Plan & Guide Book of John: Chapter 15 part 1

Spiritual transformation happens when we purposefully spend time with God each day. God created you and is waiting to be known by you.

Always begin in prayer, start the conversation with God by asking Him to use His Holy Spirit to reveal whatever wisdom and insights He wants you to learn. Open your Bible, reflect on what you have read, perhaps take notes. The questions below are designed to help you examine the scriptures for both cultural context and personal application, to engage with the Holy Spirit for relational growth with God and to review with your small group if you are in one. This is your space for your time with God, learning and experiencing spiritual transformation. The plan is laid out for five days of reading and reflecting.

We know small groups meet on various days. You may find it helpful to read all of the verses and begin working through the questions before you meet so that you are ready to discuss them with your small group whenever it meets. The discussion with your small group is meant to help you learn from each other and grow deeper in community with each other.

Song for the week: Gratitude - Brandon Lake

Song links: <https://youtu.be/dQdfs5S6jyA?si=9M4cqLvGAH-OHGVs>

John 15 (February 11 - February 17)

Day 1: John 15:1-3

Day 2: John 15:4-8

Day 3: John 15:9-11

Day 4: John 15:12-14

Day 5: John 15:15-17

Lent begins Wednesday, February 14 and ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. It is a time for reflection and self-discipline, choosing practices to create spiritual transformation and connection with God as we remember the sacrifice He made (giving up) so that we may be made right with God through belief (adding us into His family). Observing Lent can deepen our intimacy with Him. When we give up something and crave it, each time we say no, we can remember God's sacrifice. Likewise, each time we add something, we can remember God's overflowing love that chooses us.

Putting it into practice: Consider something meaningful to give up (or add) for Lent this year to help you to focus on God, reflect on your priorities and realign your will with His.

5 Ideas for Giving Up Something: speeding, bad language, gossiping, fast food, engaging less in social media

5 ideas for Adding In Something: start a gratitude journal (try the free penzu journal <https://penzu.com/> on any device), compliment someone each day, pray at 2:42 (see note at the end), read the Bible each day, listen to praise music

John 15:1-3

John 14 ends with “Come now, let us leave.” Jesus and His disciples may have been on their way to Gethsemane and seen a vineyard or seen vines engraved somewhere prompting Jesus to use them as a picture or metaphor of the relationship between Jesus and those who believe in Him.

Jesus is the Vine, connected to and abiding in God the Father who is the Gardener, the owner, the headship. Jesus said these things as he was headed to a garden to have a conversation with His Father, the Gardener. He was using everything around Him to communicate truth to His disciples.

Watch this 4 minute video. [▶ The Vine and the Branches | John 15:1-15](#) How do the creative elements help you connect with the verses you are reading? Did you notice anything new? Which part of the video teaching might you use when talking with someone else about these verses?

As a believer, you are connected to the Vine and tended to by the Gardener. How do you live your life with God - at home, at work, with friends, with your hobbies? What kind of conversations do you have with Him? Isaiah 58:11 says, “And the Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.” Where in your life do you want to invite the Gardener, God the Father, in to tend to you? Take some time to talk with Him about it.

As the Gardener, God cuts off the dead branches which are not producing fruit. Some of the dead branches are those people who have a superficial connection to the True Vine. These could be people professing to be Christians because of baptism, works or how they were raised but they have failed to have a personal saving belief and relationship with God.

Other branches must be pruned. Believers profess belief in Jesus, they are abiding in the Vine, depending on it. They have both their sinful nature and the nature of Christ growing in them. Their sanctification happens over time. God the Father as the Gardener develops a believer’s new nature, which produces fruit. The pruning of the sinful nature helps grow the fruitful, abiding branches.

Putting it into practice: Consider trying this exercise which you can do on your own and again individually in your small group time. If you do it as part of your small group time, share with each other any observations you had while praying this way. Close your eyes, picture meeting God the Father in a garden and telling Him your current struggle. Know that He is listening, just as He did with Jesus. He wants to hear you and your requests. Ask Him what He wants to prune and what He wants to grow in you. Take time in silence to listen for what He may say. Thank Him for being available and, as Jesus did, bend your heart to His and ask for His will to be done.

John 15:4-8

Jesus said “apart from me you can do nothing.” He is the Word which created everything, including you. He is the True Vine which sustains believers. From the vine’s fruit comes wine. Jesus’s first recorded miracle was turning water into wine. At the Last Supper, Jesus held the wine and said “This is my blood shed for you.” The change in conversation is purposeful and connected.

Jesus is Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer. What does this mean for you personally? How does this affect how you live? Jesus said, “apart from me you can do nothing.” Yet people often try to do good on their own. What is the difference between human motivation (our own power) versus God working through us (in His power)?

Gratitude and love are motivators for living out of the overflow of Jesus’ love. Who in your life is challenging for you to love right now? Talk to God about this person and your struggle, pour out the details to Him. If it is safe for you, ask Him to help you love this person from His overflow with actions. If it is not safe for you to enter into a relationship with the person, ask Jesus to minister to your hurt places, to heal and redeem that which has been broken.

The burning of the withered branches may refer to the final judgment. “The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire (Matthew 3:10).”

However, there is a hope that remains until a person’s last breath. “And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again (Romans 11:23).” And the dead branch may be raised to life again as “a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live (John 5:25).”

Does the Gardener cutting away bring someone to your mind? Talk with God about this person. Ask God to make Himself known to the person. Ask Him to use you to share the overflow of His love with this person for God’s glory and the person’s salvation.

John 15:7 says, “If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” Remaining is different from the word abiding used in John 15:3. Remaining in His words refers to living out His teaching and His commands.

Putting it into practice: Asking in Jesus’ name is to acknowledge His authority, to accept His will in the answer and to remember that we should ask for things which will glorify God. The Gospel Coalition says “the primary purpose of prayer as a spiritual discipline is to help us conform our will to God’s. The goal of this spiritual discipline is to conform our prayer life so that whatever we are asking God for is rooted in the same seven words: Not my will, but Yours be done (Luke 22:42).” Using ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication) as a prayer guide, spend some time talking with God. What about Him is praiseworthy? What do you need to confess and ask forgiveness for? What do you want to thank Him for? What are some things you can confidently ask for in Jesus’ name? End with Jesus’ words “not my will but Yours be done.”

John 15:9-11

The Greek word for remain is meinate. It means to continue, remain, stay or abide. Jesus told the disciples to abide in His love. Abiding is a choice. Ephesians 5:8-10 tells us what will grow in us when we abide in Jesus’ love. “...Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).” While we abide in Jesus, the Holy Spirit abides in those of us who believe. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

We are to abide - remain - in Jesus' love. What might that feel like? How does it affect your thinking? Does abiding in Jesus' love change your behavior and actions? How might this look to others who see you? How do you abide when you feel distant from God? How does abiding lead to fruit bearing?

Jesus said, "just as I have kept my Father's commands" which points to His perfect sinlessness and willing submission to God the Father. The Father loved Jesus, who was most worthy, and Jesus loved his disciples, who were unworthy.

Keeping Jesus' commands is an outward showing of your love for Him. Practically, how do you keep His commands when you are tired, triggered or the person in front of you is unkind or mean? How does fruit bearing lead to sharing the overflow of God's love?

Jesus is the prophesized Man of Sorrows. "He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem (Isaiah 53:3)." Yet He had joy.

Putting relationship with God into practice: Jesus knew suffering and pain yet He remained in the Father's love, kept His Father's commands and had complete joy. He was leaving soon, knew the disciples would feel sorrow and He wanted them to also experience His joy. That same complete joy of Jesus can live in us. Practically, how do you find the joy of Jesus when life is hard? Have you ever invited Jesus into your suffering or pain? How does remaining in God's love and keeping His command to love others ignite joy when you are suffering or in pain?

John 15:12-14

Jewish rabbis did not place value on laying down their life for anyone; however Greeks did treasure this as the greatest expression of friendship. Loyalty was one of their highest ideals. The Gentiles would appreciate this message.

Jesus used repetition to teach. Just a few days before Jesus taught that the Law and Prophets had two great commands "Love God with all your heart" and "Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40)." In this repetition, the second implies the first. This is echoed in 1 John 4:20, "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen."

Putting it into practice: Consider memorizing these verses this week. Or write them on 3 x 5 cards and place them in your car, office or home to remind you of Jesus' words. Love like this is impossible without Jesus. Ask God to give you the ability to love like Him.

John 15:15-17

In John 12:26 Jesus said, "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me." And "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master (Matthew 10:24)." There is a turn - Jesus no longer called His disciples servants but friends.

In the Greek, the word servant is doulous. It means bond-servant or slave. Jesus shared truth and His life with the disciples so they were now more than master and servant, they were friends. Some of the apostles who spread the message of the gospel of Jesus, who understood the freedom that friendship brought, still applied this title of doulous to themselves, elevating Jesus as the continued master.

Who are your closest friends? What did it take to grow those friendships? What do those friendships mean to you? Now think of Jesus calling you friend. What can you do to grow a friendship with Him? What does friendship with Jesus mean to you?

In the Greek, the word "chosen" used twice by Jesus is exelexasthe the first time and exelexamen the second time. Both are derived from the word "elect" and mean the same thing, to choose, pick or select. In Jewish culture, the rabbis did not choose their disciples, this was unique to Jesus. Jesus had picked these disciples to know, teach and share life with. Now He was going to send them out as apostles, to fulfill His purpose in them. This work was essential to His Kingdom here on earth and the Kingdom to Heaven to come. The fruit of the Spirit in them would build the church, spread the gospel and write the biographies and letters which became our New Testament.

God has purpose for you, too. The work He has called you to is also essential to His Kingdom work. How is God using you this week? What unique ways has He created you for His purposes?

He had also chosen them as the first fruits experiencing sanctification - spiritual transformation. "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13)."

Putting it into practice: Jesus often used visual illustrations to communicate truth. This is more powerful than words alone. What things or situations in your daily work or in your home could you use to explain Jesus or faith to others? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can communicate His message of love to others. Or take time to create a sketch, painting, sculpture or poem which communicates God's love overflowing from you. If you are comfortable, share what you have created in word or art with your small group or friends to encourage them.

Consider:

What if we looked forward to pruning? Shedding all the things we don't need to carry around anymore? Pruning gets rid of all that saps our spiritual energy. - Shannon Swift

Each day I need to die to myself and recommit my life to whatever direction Jesus wants my life to go. When I spend time with Jesus each day, it helps me hear His voice. - Frank Vandy

Putting it into practice: Set an alarm for 2:42 pm. When your alarm goes off, pray something like this: Jesus, you are the Lord of my life. I know you have a purpose and a plan for my life and I fully submit my life to you. I pray that You will make Your will known to me.