



SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS, 2022

Week 3: John 15

OPENING DISCUSSION

Highs and Lows, >10 minutes

In one or two sentences, have each group member share one good moment and one difficult moment from the past week.

Responses from Sunday Worship, >10 minutes

Before we begin our discussion about the Scripture reading from this past week, is there any part of this past Sunday's worship service that impacted you in a significant way?

Small Group Covenant Reminder

Other important values we share as a small group:

1. As members of this group, we will support, encourage, and pray for one another.
2. For maximum impact in our spiritual growth and to make the best use of our time together, we will focus our prayer time on group members and their immediate families.

Mission Opportunities to Consider

East End Cooperative Ministry Meal Prep and Service on Friday, October 14. (Contact Lindsey Mitko)
Storehouse of God One-Day Mission Trip on Saturday, October 22. (Register Online)

A READING AND QUIET MEDITATION ON GOD'S WORD

On page 3 of this discussion guide, you will find a *personalized* version of John 15.
Each small group member should have (or be given) a copy of this page.

Read these instructions aloud to the group:

These words of Jesus were spoken to specific people (his eleven disciples) in a specific time and place. There are limitations to the following practice, but it seems worthwhile for our purposes of developing the personal discipline of reflecting deeply on the personal nature of Scripture.

For this reading exercise, insert your own name wherever you see a blank space. Write it there if that helps. Imagine Jesus seated in the room with you. Imagine him speaking directly to you. Yes, he is speaking to a group of disciples. The "you" within this passage is plural. Yet, as with any group discussion, while we acknowledge the speaker is addressing everyone in the room, we also receive it in a personal way.

Allow **12 minutes** of silence for this exercise. Read the passage **slowly** a couple times. Then, for the remaining time, meditate on those parts of the passage that seemed most meaningful.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ABOUT GOD'S PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES

After reading the personalized version of John 15, consider the following questions:

1. Did reading and reflecting on the words of Jesus from John 15 in this unique, personalized way affect you differently than a typical reading of the passage? If so, how was it different?
2. Take turns comparing your experiences with this discipline by having group members share which sections of this chapter seemed to stand out during the exercise.
3. Now, consider some of these questions we typically use to reflect on the Scripture each week:
 - a. What do you think is the meaning of each section of the chapter?
 - b. How might these portions of Scripture shape the way you think and live?
 - c. What fresh insights have you gained about God, yourself, other people, or our world?
 - d. What questions do you still have about this content?

Use these questions above to guide the group discussion about other portions of the chapter.
Then, move on to another portion of the Bible chapter to discuss in the same way.

Encountering God's Presence in Daily Life

1. Group Discussion (if time permits):

Jesus says we should expect to encounter people in this world who do not desire to follow him and, therefore, do not share our Christian perspective. When you encounter such people, how do you respond? Do you grumble and complain? Do you engage in gossip? Are you combative, or do you simply remain silent? As a group, discuss what a Christ-like response might look like in different scenarios you've experienced.
2. Private Consideration:

Jesus says that his Father, the heavenly Gardener, prunes the branches that bear fruit so that they will be even more fruitful. What moments in your life might you consider God's pruning process so that you would bear more fruit?

CLOSING PRAYER

Take prayer requests and close in prayer. Allow time for small group members to pray aloud.
Read the following passage of Scripture to open your time of prayer.

John 15:9-11

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

John 15

_____, I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. _____, remain in me, as I also remain in you.

No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. _____, you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I remain in you, you will bear much fruit. _____, apart from me, you can do nothing.

If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

_____, as the Father has loved me, that's how I have loved you. Now remain in my love.

If you keep my commands, _____, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you

_____, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last— and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

If the world hates you, _____, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world.

_____, I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. _____, they will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: "They hated me without reason."

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you, _____, must also testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.