

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

*Lesson 15 – Study Questions
John 15:1-27 and John 16:1-33*

DAY ONE

1. Record and share with your group the thoughts from your study of the Gospel of John Chapter 14 that were particularly memorable.

Read John 15:1-8

2a. As today's lesson begins, Jesus continued his Last Supper Discourse stating that He is the true vine and the Father is the vine grower (verse 1). According to verse 2, what two things does the vine grower do and why?

b. In the New Living Bible translation of verse 3 Jesus stated to His disciples: "You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you." How did this message relate to their understanding and commitment to Jesus?

3a. At the beginning of verse 4 Jesus warned the disciples that a branch could not bear fruit unless it remained on the vine. If Jesus is the vine and they are the branches, what is necessary for them to bear fruit (end of verse 4)?

b. The word "prune" refers to cutting back or shaping. Jesus related the pruning of branches to shaping us into even more fruitful people. Can you think of a way in which you have been "pruned" for the better by our Lord?

4a. Jesus reiterated that He is the vine and we are the branches. Complete Jesus' words in verse 5 about what happens with and without Jesus.

Whoever remains in me and I in him

Because without me

b. According to verse 6 those who do not remain in Jesus “will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and they will be thrown in the fire and they will be burned.” What does the word “wither” say to you in this verse?

5. In verse 7 Jesus promised them that if they remain in Him and His words, the disciples could ask for whatever they wanted and it would be done. By what would then the Father be glorified (verse 8)?

6. CONNECTION: The more we love Jesus, the more our lives will be conformed to His. As Saint Catherine of Siena recorded, “I am the gardener, then, who planted the vine of my only-begotten Son in the earth of your humanity so that you, the branches, could be joined to the vine and bear fruit.” Today’s lesson causes us to ask ourselves: “To what kind of vine are we attached?” Ask yourself, “What is one thing I need to be happy?” and then contemplate this question: “Does that one thing bring me closer to Christ?” Share some thoughts with your small group.

Read Revelation 2:10 and record the last sentence. Begin your prayer today asking the Lord to strengthen your faithfulness.

DAY TWO

Read John 15:9-17

7a. How amazing that just as the Father loved His own precious Son, Jesus, so Jesus loves us (verse 9). What must we do to remain in His love, just as He did for His Father (verse 10)?

b. In verse 11, Jesus told the disciples the reason they were to keep His commands: “So that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete.” Considering verses 10 and 11, why do you think Christians should be joyful?

THINK: “A joy-filled Christian is one who, rather than endure life, has learned through faith, to treasure life and witness the kingdom of God.” (G.K. Chesterton)

8a. Jesus commanded them (and us) to love one another as He loves us. He continued with one of the most beautiful and familiar verses in scripture. Record verse 13 and then take a few minutes for meditation.

b. Once again Jesus linked friendship with obedience. How do we demonstrate our friendship with Jesus according to verse 14?

9a. In verse 14 Jesus called us His friends. In your own words explain how Jesus differentiates between servant and friend (verse 15).

b. Briefly compare the relationship of Jesus and His disciples with the Old Testament relationship between God and His people as described in Isaiah 41:8-10.

10a. What do we learn in the first sentence of verse 16?

b. Jesus instructed them to “bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name he will give you.” Read Galatians 5:22 and record the “fruit of the Spirit” listed in this verse.

11. What did Jesus command us to do in verse 17?

12. CONNECTION: In today’s verses we are called to love one another just as Christ loved us. “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friend.” What greater friend could we have than Jesus, who laid down His life for us? We may never be asked to give up our life for another, but we all are asked every day to give of ourselves to others. This “suffering” in obedience to Jesus’ law of love brings joy. Describe a time when you gave or received sacrificial love.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta said “I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.” Let thoughts of Jesus’ lifegiving love lead you into prayer.

DAY THREE

Read John 15:18-16:1

13a. In verse 18 the disciples were encouraged to remember that even if the world hates them, the world hated Jesus first. How does the world treat those who belong to the world according to verse 19?

b. How does the world treat the disciples, and for what reason?

14a. Jesus reminded His disciples that servants are not greater than their master. Complete the two things they can expect according to the last sentence of verse 20.

If they persecuted me,

If they kept my word

b. How did Jesus explain the reason the disciples would also be persecuted on account of His name (verse 21)?

15a. Jesus continued, stating that if He had not come and spoken to the world, there would be an excuse for not believing in Him (verse 22). According to verse 23, what occurs when one hates Jesus?

b. Those who saw Jesus' miracles and still did not believe were guilty of sin. By seeing, not believing, and hating Jesus, what was the result (end of verse 24)?

16. In verse 25 Jesus stated that "these things" (i.e., unbelief) occurred to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy. Scholars believe that Jesus was referring to Psalm 69:5. Record a phrase or phrases which speak to you of the fulfillment of the prophecy.

17a. In verse 26 Jesus again spoke about the Advocate. Complete His prophetic words regarding the Spirit and His disciples.

When the advocate comes

the Spirit of truth

he will testify to me

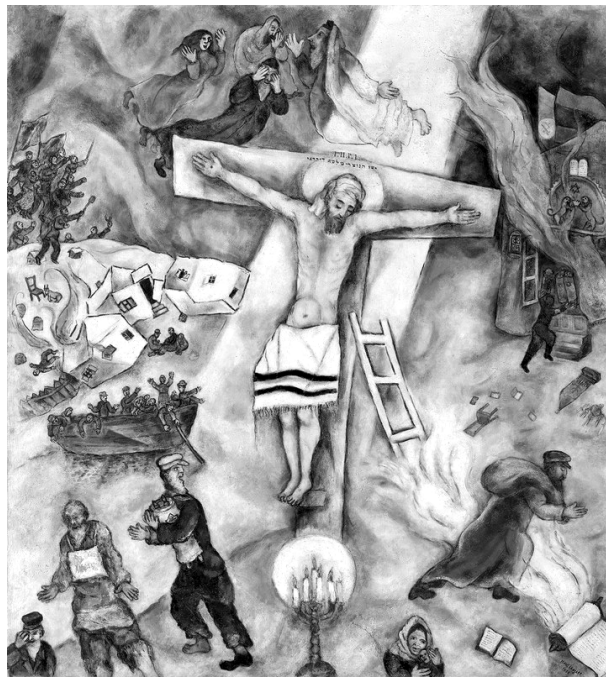
because you have been with me

b. According to Chapter 16:1, for what reason had Jesus told the disciples all this?

NOTE: Lesson 15 contains Chapters 15 and 16 of the Gospel of John. There is an uninterrupted flow of dialog in the Farewell Discourse between Chapters 15 and 16.

18. CONNECTION: In today's lesson Jesus reminds us that God has chosen us for Himself, setting us apart to a different standard. It is not surprising that in certain ways Christians do not fit perfectly in the "world". It is not surprising that the "world" does not love us as its own. What are some of the aspects that make it difficult to live as a Christian and proclaim the Good News? Give some specifics to share with your small group.

Look at the picture of Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion*, which portrays around the Cross the death-dealing political madness and hatred of the twentieth century. Like this painting, Pope Francis sees the Catholic Church of the twenty-first century as a kind of field hospital on a battlefield strewn with the human wreckage caused by false ideas of the human person and false claims of what makes for happiness, with Christ alone as the answer. Meditate on your role in such a Church.



Marc Chagall, 1938, Art Institute of Chicago

DAY FOUR
Read John 16:2-11

19a. As today's lesson begins, Jesus continued His sermon to the disciples saying that (the time will come when) they will be expelled from the synagogues. What other dire prophecy did Jesus share with them according to the end of verse 2?

b. What reason did Jesus give them that this would happen according to verse 3?

20. Jesus told the disciples what would happen to them so that when their hour came they would remember that He told them. For a moment, put yourself in the place of the disciples. What might you be feeling or thinking at Jesus' words?

21. Jesus again told the disciples that He did not say these things to them earlier because He was with them (end of verse 4). He then told them He was going to the One who sent Him. With what question did He end His statement in verse 5?

22a. What does He say was causing their sorrow (verse 6)?

b. Jesus told them that it was to their advantage that He was leaving? What was the reason (verse 7)?

23. Read verses 8-11. Jesus said that when the Advocate comes, He will prove the world guilty of the sin of unbelief and He will convince the world of Jesus' righteousness (verses 9-10). According to verse 11, what else would the Holy Spirit lead believers to see and for what reason?

24. CONNECTION: Jesus predicted that people would kill (some of) the disciples and by so doing believe they were offering worship to God. Although this is an extreme example of the evil with which people are capable of acting, every human heart is vulnerable to pride and arrogance. We think that we are right and the other fellow is wrong and therefore "bad" and not worthy of our respect. We harden our hearts and let our own agendas cause us to believe that others are our enemies. Share with your small group an example of "hardheartedness" and how you would go about changing this.

Read and record James 4:12 and pray for the humility to love your enemies.

DAY FIVE

Read John 16:12-24

25a. As today's lesson begins Jesus told His disciples that while He still had much more to tell them, it would be too much for them (verse 12). He said that the Spirit of Truth was coming to guide them to all truth (verse 13) and would not speak on His own. What would the Spirit speak and declare?

b. Complete Jesus' statement (which He repeated twice) regarding why the Spirit would glorify Him (verses 14-15).

Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that

NOTE: Jesus received everything from the Father; the Paraclete (Spirit of Truth) receives everything from Jesus. (Brown)

26a. Jesus then again warned them of His leaving in a paradoxical statement (verse 16). What did He say?

b. To what do you think He is referring? Briefly explain.

27a. Jesus knew that the disciples were confused (verses 17-19) and seeing their confusion He tried to explain in a beautiful but mysterious statement. What did He prophesy in verse 20?

b. In verse 21 Jesus compared what the disciples would experience to childbirth. In your own words describe what He says about a woman's pain during and after labor.

28. In verse 22 what three things does Jesus promise would follow the disciples' period of pain "on that day"?

29a. Jesus continued His promise, assuring them that on the day that He is seen again they would not question Him about anything. Complete His beautiful promise according to verse 23?

whatever you ask the Father in my name

ask and you will receive,

b. In verse 24 Jesus pointed out that until that time His followers had not asked for anything in His name. What did He repeat to them in the second part of verse 24 and what would be the result?

30. CONNECTION: Jesus encouraged His disciples by promising them that their pain and confusion would only be temporary and that ultimately they would experience joy beyond their imagining. Like the disciples, when we are in the midst of a storm, it's often difficult to look beyond the moment; yet there is a purpose for everything and through it all, our hope in Jesus Christ can sustain us. Look back on a period of personal pain or suffering that ultimately resulted in great joy. Explain what end result, lesson learned, personal discovery or transformation made the struggle worthwhile.

Read and record Psalm 30:12 and share with your group the name of a favorite joyful hymn.

DAY SIX

Read John 16:25-33

31a. As this last part of the Farewell Discourse begins, Jesus explained to the disciples that He had been using figures of speech but He would soon speak clearly about the Father. What new relationship will be revealed on “that day” (verse 26)?

b. Record the very important reason that Jesus gave the disciples as to why He would not need to ask the Father anything on their behalf (verse 27).

32. Jesus told the disciples that He came from the Father and was going back to the Father (verse 28). The disciples responded that now He was speaking clearly, and that they realized that He knew everything and didn't need to have anyone question Him (verses 29-30). Can you think of a time when you understood more clearly that God was in control? Briefly share a few of the circumstances.

33. The disciples had begun to understand that Jesus came from God. How did Jesus respond to them in verse 31?

THINK: Can you answer that question with an unwavering “Yes, Lord, I believe!”? If not, pray today for the grace to strengthen your faith. Your small group can pray for you!

34a. In verse 32 Jesus shared with them that the hour was coming when they would be scattered and would leave him alone. Despite this, why did He say He would not be alone?

b. Jesus then explained that He was telling them these things so that they might “have peace in me.” (first part of verse 33). Why might He have been talking about their need for peace?

35a. In the last half of verse 33 Jesus' final words to the disciples in the Farewell Discourse were to warn them of the threat they would face in the world. What did He tell them (and us) that would give them courage?

b. Read and record the second sentence of 1 John 5:4.

36. CONNECTION: “Take courage; I have conquered the world” are the words of teaching and encouragement Jesus spoke to His beloved disciples before the hour of His passion and death began. Like the disciples, we too will face opposition, struggles and suffering. Choose one of the following promises from the Bible, or select another one of your choice and share with your small group how God has kept that promise in your life.

Deuteronomy 31:8: *It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you and will never fail you or forsake you. So do not fear or be dismayed.*

Isaiah 40:29: *He gives power to the faint, abundant strength to the weak.*

Romans 8:28: We know that *all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.*

Philippians 4:7: *Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

2 Thessalonians 3:3: *But the Lord is faithful; He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.*

Begin your prayer praising God for His trustworthy promises and thanking Him for the gift of His Word.

Read Lesson 15 John 15:1-27 and John 16:1-33 in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Gospel of John* by Rev. Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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