

A SUMMER UNDER THE VINE

Discovering the Fruit the Spirit Grows

Study Guide Week One

Five Weekly Sessions for Small Groups

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WELCOME

Discovering the Fruit the Spirit Grows

You don't grow fruit by trying harder.
You grow it by staying connected.

For five Sundays one summer, our church gathered in our backyard beneath a real grapevine, a living canopy over our heads. We enjoyed a light breakfast, which, of course, included fruit salad. Pam, my wife, led us in worship. Then we opened the Bible and talked about the Holy Spirit and the fruit He grows in us, trading stories and questions along the way. An old fountain chuckled nearby. Butterflies visited the milkweed. All the while, grapes ripened overhead.

Five weeks later, the grapes had grown and matured. So had we.

On that last Sunday, we took communion with juice pressed from that same vine.

A Summer Under the Vine was born in community and conversation, and this guide is meant to carry both to your table. Over five weeks, you'll follow the fruit of the Spirit from the interior life, to the exterior life, and finally to the hard moments that test whether that fruit is real.

Any table will do. Bring your Bible, the book, and a few people willing to be honest with God and with each other. Food is encouraged, especially fruit salad.

I'm glad you're here.

Michael

INSTRUCTIONS

How to Use the Study Guide

Like the book, this guide is meant to be approachable. It grew out of stories, conversation, and curiosity about what Scripture says about love, joy, peace, and the rest of the fruit of the Spirit. You don't need to be a Bible scholar to keep up. All it takes is a little time each week and a willingness to talk. The five sessions follow the four chapters and epilogue of *A Summer Under the Vine*, in the same order we followed those five Sundays.

Before your first meeting

Get the book at least a week before your group begins. Read the Preface and Chapter One (pages vii–ix and 1–19, about 20 minutes), then take some time with the Week One questions in Between You and God. Your first meeting picks up from there. Page numbers refer to the print edition. Ebook readers can go by chapter.

If your group is just getting started and hasn't had time to read, use your first time together to get to know each other, look through the guide, and read Week One's Scripture aloud. Then read the Preface and Chapter One and meet again for Week One.

Need a copy of the book? Find it at asummerunderthevine.com, or scan the QR code below for purchase options.

Before each meeting

Read that week's chapter. Most readings take 15 to 35 minutes. Each week in the guide opens with a short introduction and the Scripture passages that anchor it. As you read or after, take time with the questions in Between You and God. Those are yours to keep and ponder. No one will ask you to share, but you're welcome to if you'd like.

When you meet

Read the Scripture together. Each discussion opens with a chance to get started or share what you noticed during the week, then moves into the questions in To Discuss with Others. You won't get to every question, and you don't need to. Choose the ones that fit your group.

During the week

The Week Ahead gives you something to watch for in the people and moments around you, a first look at the fruit you'll talk about next. It also tells you which chapter to read before you meet again.

WEEK ONE / THE ABIDING

You Will Have Grapes in Three Years

Book Reading

Read the Preface and Chapter One before you meet (pages vii–ix and 1–19, about 20 minutes).

Michael's brother-in-law, Paul, looked at two bare sticks in one-gallon pots and saw grapes. God looks at us and sees the likeness of Jesus waiting to grow.

This week is about what the Holy Spirit grows in people who abide in Christ, and why we can't grow it ourselves.

Scripture Readings

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine,
neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me
and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:4–5 (ESV)

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of
the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are
opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the
Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery,
enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and
things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit
the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ
Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16–25 (ESV)

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Between You and God

Take your time with these questions, as you read or after, before your group meets. You can write, pray, or simply sit with one. You won't be asked to share your answers.

1. Think about your prayer, Bible reading, and worship this past month. When were you abiding, simply staying close to Jesus? When were you striving, trying to make yourself grow or prove you were doing well? Tell God honestly what you noticed.
2. The book asks readers to put their own name in front of Paul's list in Galatians 5:22–23: _____ is loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. Try it. Where did you flinch? Most of us do somewhere. What would you want to say to God about that?
3. The curve inward doesn't always look sinful. It can look like serving to feel needed or praying to feel righteous. It can even look like a committed Bible teacher on a Sunday morning, sure he has it all figured out. Where might your devotion be more about securing your standing than about God?
4. A young vine puts everything into roots and wood for years before it fruits. Think back over your life with God. Where did growth happen that you couldn't see at the time? Where do you need patience with what He's growing now?
5. Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? When we believe in Him, God seals us with His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14), and it's the Spirit who grows this fruit in us. If you aren't sure where you stand, read Romans 10:9–10. The prayer near the end of Chapter One can help you express your trust in Him. If you have questions, ask a pastor or a mature Christian you trust to talk and pray with you.

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Getting Started

Take a moment to introduce yourselves. Have you ever grown something, a garden, a houseplant, anything at all? What did it teach you about waiting? Your time in Between You and God is yours to keep, but if something stood out, you're welcome to share it.

To Discuss with Others

1. The vine started as two bare sticks, and someone who knew grapes said, "You will have grapes in three years." Has someone ever seen something in you before you could see it yourself? What difference did their confidence make? The apostle Paul looked at people the same way, seeing the character of Jesus waiting to grow. What might God see growing in you that you can't see yet?

2. Read John 15:4–5 and Galatians 5:16–25. The book's premise is that we pursue God-centeredness, and the Spirit produces God-likeness. Jesus connects abiding with His words remaining in us and our keeping His commandments (John 15:7, 10). How can prayer, Bible reading, and obedience express dependence on God rather than an effort to secure our standing? How does that change the way you approach spiritual growth?

3. The Galatians weren't careless. They were devout people adding their own effort to what Christ had already done, and Paul was more alarmed by them than he might have been by open sinners. Why is religious flesh so hard to see in the mirror? What might it look like in a group like ours?

4. The book describes sin as *incurvatus in se* (pronounced in-kur-VAH-tus in SAY), Latin for "curved in on oneself." It pictures a hand made to open outward, closed into a fist. We were made to open toward God and toward other people. Sin closes us around ourselves, so we live for ourselves and answer only to ourselves, as though God isn't in the room. How is that different from thinking of sin as a list of wrong things we do? If the problem is the direction of the whole person, what does that mean for how we change?

5. The chapter describes the Holy Spirit as a person who speaks, teaches, guides, intercedes, and can be grieved. How does that compare with the way you've understood Him? What difference does His being a person make to walking by the Spirit?

6. Paul writes *fruit*, not *fruits*. The Greek word *karpos* (pronounced KAR-pos) is singular. The book puts it this way: "The Spirit isn't building nine separate traits. He's growing one kind of life, and that life looks like Jesus." How would that change the way someone tries to "work on" patience or kindness?

7. Fruit grows gradually, inevitably, internally, and visibly. Which of these encourages you most? Which challenges what you've expected from your own spiritual growth?

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Close in Prayer

The Week Ahead

Next week turns to love, joy, and peace, the most interior of the fruit. This week, watch for them. Notice someone who loves without being asked, joy that shows up in an unlikely place, or a calm that holds even when nothing around it has changed. When you meet again, share what you noticed if you'd like.

Before you meet again, read Chapter Two, "All You Need is a Bus Ride" (pages 21–55, about 35 minutes).

Find the book and the complete study guide at asummerunderthevine.com, or scan the QR code.