

*I am the vine. You are the branches. If anyone remains joined to me, and I to him, he will bear a lot of fruit. You can't do anything without me.*

—John 15:5 NIV

### **Opening Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for joining us to Your Son in the waters of baptism, equipping us with Your Holy Spirit through Jesus who lives in us. Strengthen our faith, so we may always recognize we are connected to You. Help us point others toward You. In Your Son Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **Opening Thoughts**

How often do we think we can do things all on our own? We can raise the best children, create the best presentation at work, bake the best cookies, and the list could go on and on. We often take pride in our accomplishments and assume we do these things by our own abilities. But the only way we can do these things is through Jesus. This is because we are connected to Him in the waters of baptism, nourished and fed by Him in worship, and strengthened in Christian community. We are dependent on God.

### **Read Acts 8:26-40**

- (v.29) Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit pushing you in a certain direction?
- If so, what happened? Did you do what He was telling you to do?
- (v.32) Think about the first sentence of this verse. Think about God's plan and His timing. Have you ever felt God's plan being revealed to you?
- (v.32-33) Reflect upon this Bible passage. How would you explain this passage to another person?
- (v.36-38) How does this passage show the importance of baptism for all people, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities? (note: Some versions of the Bible include a verse 37, others do not.)



Read John 15:5

## Baptism

Through the gift of baptism, we are joined to God. In our baptism we are joined to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are connected to Him. In baptism, we join a multitude of believers from every nation, ability and walk of life in the family of God. This *Christ Connection* brings us forgiveness. This *Christ Connection* brings us eternal life in heaven. God knows our name and gives us each gifts and talents to use for His glory. He gives fruit to those works so others can see His goodness through each of His children. Without God, we can't do anything.

Read Psalm 95:1-6

- (v.1-2) Sometimes it is difficult to thank God during times of trouble. What are some ways to approach this issue?
- (v.3-5) How does this passage support the fact that God is powerful?
- (v.6) Who is the psalmist speaking about in this verse?
- What does this passage say about all people of all nations and abilities?
- How do you feel about that?

## Worship

As a family of God, we are fed through worship. We join together and study God's Word; we sing praises to Him and receive His gifts. God strengthens us during worship so we can go out into the world and point others toward Him. This calling has no restrictions. Jesus wants everyone of all abilities in His family because without Him, we can do nothing.

Read Acts 16:13-15

- Why do you think this story of Lydia is in the Bible?
- (v.15) Lydia is only briefly mentioned in the Bible. It may appear as if she is not as important to God's family and story as others in the Bible may have been. But Lydia had an a unique gift. What did Lydia do for the people who were preaching the Gospel?



