

Opening Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You for this time together. Thank You for Your deep and mighty love for us. Help us see ourselves and others as You see us, as Your creations. We are grateful You are always reaching out to us every moment of every day. Give us what we need to take Your hand and follow You. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Opening Thoughts

The Bible begins with God’s creation and longing for humanity. Have you ever imagined God the Father, God the Son, Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit having a conversation - planning creation, planning us? How do you imagine the conversation?

“...and John will ride horses; he will cherish them. He’ll love how fast they go.

When Michelle discovers the circulatory system in high school, she’ll want to help people stay healthy.

Ashley will be heartbroken when her mom dies. I will be with her.”

- What conversation do you imagine the Trinity having about you before you were created?

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

Jesus as the Vine

Jesus tells us in John 15:5 that He is the Vine and we are the branches. God is the initiator in our lives. Just as a branch does not initiate a relationship with the vine, but grows from the vine, we also grow from our connection to God through Jesus Christ. Read the following scriptures. As you read them, consider the following:

- Who are the key players?
- What are they longing for?
- What is God longing for?

- Read Luke 1:26-38 - Annunciation
- Read Luke 5:27-31 - Jesus chooses Levi (Matthew)
- Read Luke 8:40-48 - Jesus heals a woman
- Read Luke 10:1-23 - Jesus sends out the 72



Bearing Fruit

In the same verses we just read, let's look at what happened once the key players said "Yes" to Jesus.

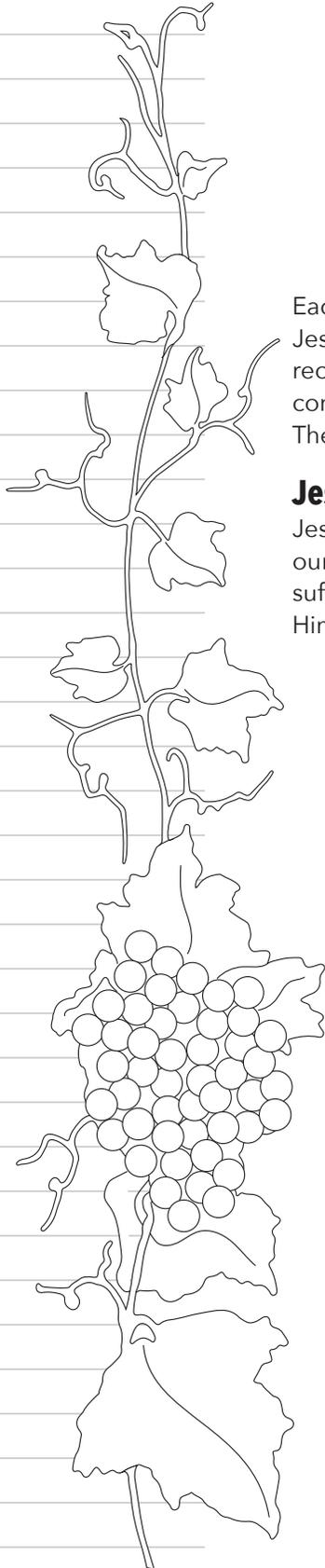
- What happened to the people in these stories once they said "Yes" to Jesus?
- What *fruit* did they receive through the *Christ Connection*?
- How has your life been affected by saying "Yes" to Jesus?

Each person felt Jesus' connection through different means. Mary felt Jesus' connection to her through her faithfulness. Levi felt it when he recognized his sin and was offered new life. The woman knew Jesus' connection because she was in a health crisis and was offered healing. The 72 felt joy when Jesus gave them a new purpose. (Luke 10:17)

Jesus Comes to You

Jesus is always with us. He uses all sorts of means to help us recognize our connection with Him. He reaches out to us in our pain, in our suffering, in our faithfulness, in our boredom and in our joy. He calls us to Him so we can bear good fruit. Let's look at **your** story.

- How have you recognized Jesus, the Vine, in your life?
- We are called to do many things for Jesus. We are called to be parents and siblings, friends and supporters, leaders and teachers. This is called *vocation*. Name one of your vocations.
- What is something you do because of this vocation?
- Do you feel Christ's connection to you during times of joy? Why or why not?
- Do you feel Christ's connection to you during times of sorrow? Why or why not?
- If you've felt Christ's connection to you, how did you respond?



- Think about people with disabilities. Like all people, they have vocations. What are some ways people with disabilities can or do serve in your church or place of worship?

Deeper Discussion

At different points in Scripture, people knew they were hearing from God.

- God came to Joseph in a dream. (Genesis 37)
- God came to Balaam through an unimaginable event. (Numbers 22)
- And God came to Zachariah in a vision at the temple. (Luke 1).

Scripture tells us *the heavens declare the glory of God*. (Psalm 19) But it also tells us to *be still and know that He is God*. (Psalm 46)

- Have you ever felt as if God was trying to tell you something?
- Did you respond to Him? Why or why not?

Consider the outcome of the story about the rich young man. (Luke 18:18-23) Jesus offered a new level of connection to the young ruler and the man did not do as Jesus said.

- How do you think Jesus felt about this outcome?
- Has there been a time when you know God had a longing for you and you chose not to follow it? If so, what was the outcome?

Final Thoughts

Throughout Scripture we see how Jesus is the initiator. He called Levi and the Apostles. Jesus called Mary and the 72. Jesus always calls and we choose how to respond; so it is with the vine and the branch. The vine gives life to the branch. In this way, as branches, we are dependent upon Jesus. Jesus longs to give us abundant life, just as a vine longs for a branch to thrive and bear fruit. As branches, when we receive what Jesus is longing for in our lives, we will find life and find it abundantly. Consider the word vocation. What is God calling you to do?

