This includes:
1. Leader Preparation
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LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW
The best way to bear good fruit in our lives is to remain connected to God. Jesus said his disciples would remain in him, and when we do that, we will bear fruit that lasts. This lesson will help your students understand what it means to abide or remain in Jesus, and how they can see God produce good fruit in their lives.

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. WHAT: Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches; if we are to bear fruit, we must remain connected to him.
2. WHY: When we are disconnected from Jesus, we can “do nothing” that honors God with our lives. When we are connected to Jesus, we bring glory to God.
3. HOW: Encourage your students to remain connected to Jesus as they obey his commands—and encourage them to pray for God to produce lasting fruit in their lives.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
John 15:1-17

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES
Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33-37; and Romans 1:13

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your small group lesson.

Read John 15:1-17.

This teaching comes from one of the most intimate moments Jesus had with his disciples. They were celebrating Passover—a yearly reminder of God’s salvation of the
Jews from slavery in Egypt. It was the last night before Jesus would go to the cross (although he was the only one in the room who knew), and it was a special time to make an impact on their hearts.

Jesus taught so many things during his three years of ministry on earth. All of them could be summed up with a single word: love. God’s love for us, in sending his Son. The love we ought to have in response, back to God and reflected to others.

As disciples, it is imperative that we remain in Jesus: connected to him in obedience so that we might bear fruit and bring glory to God.

**THE BEFORE & AFTER [optional]**

**Text Message Questions**

We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Are your actions and attitudes pointing the way to Jesus? Let’s dig deeper tonight at small group.

- How well connected to Jesus are you? How does a person connect to Jesus? We’re going to talk about this tonight at small group; hope to see you!

**Parent Email**

We've provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We’ve launched a two-week small group series on Bearing Fruit in Christ by examining the importance of “abiding” or “remaining” in Jesus.

Our key verses for this lesson came from John 15, part of a longer passage of Scripture that offers insight into Jesus’ final teachings for his disciples. He wanted them to grasp the reality of what was about to happen and to be prepared to maintain
their faith once he was no longer physically with them. From this week’s passage, we discovered that Jesus’ disciples are fruitful when they remain rooted, abiding, and growing in him through obedience to his commands.

This truth is grounded in the idea of us as Christians spending time with God and developing spiritually healthy habits in our lives. Abiding or remaining in Jesus is a lifelong process and experience that requires discipline, commitment, faithfulness, teachability, and obedience.

I’d encourage you to take a few minutes this week to talk about some of the ways you’re seeing good fruit develop and grow in your teenager’s life. Here are some questions you could ask:

- Jesus said his true followers would remain or abide in him. What do you think it means to remain or abide in Jesus?
- How can your actions help produce good fruit in your life? For example, if you want to become more patient or loving or joyful, what are some specific things you can do to cultivate the “soil” of your heart?
- Who do you know who exhibits many good fruit? What’s your sense of how those fruits developed in that person?

Thanks for your prayers and your commitment to our youth ministry and our small groups. Have a great day!
2. Lesson Guide

Getting Things Started [Optional]

Before your small group meets, go to a local nursery or a larger store that sells plants and seeds, such as Walmart, Target, or Home Depot. Purchase six to eight packages of seeds. Pick a wide variety; look for some seeds that might be familiar, like sunflower or pumpkin. At your small group, you’ll need one cup or plate for each packet of seeds that you buy.

Before your students arrive, open a seed packet and pour out all the contents into a cup or onto a plate. Repeat this for all the packets.

As you begin your small group, welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then ASK:

- Let’s take a look at this particular plate of seeds. What will grow if I plant this particular seed? Or this seed from a different plate? Or this other seed over here?
- If you don’t know what these seeds will produce, how would we get that answer?
- What will it take to successfully grow the fruits, vegetables, and plants represented by these seeds?
- How might that experience be similar to the process of growing fruit—evidence of God’s work in our lives?

Say Something Like: Just like most areas of spiritual growth, we can see the good fruit grow in our lives when we make wise choices, follow God’s plan, and pray for God’s work inside of us. This week, we’re going to discover what it takes to plant the “seeds” that will produce the fruit God desires to see in our lives.

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you’d like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.
TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) Get connected and (2) Bear fruit.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read John 15:1-17 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Let’s spend some time talking about growing the kind of fruit that God desires from us.

1. Get connected

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Let’s start with the basics. In these verses from John 15, Jesus tells his disciples that spiritual growth and spiritual fruit happen because of being rooted and grounded in him.

ASK:
- If you compared growing the good fruit to the process of growing a plant fruit, how would you visually describe the decision to follow Jesus? [NOTE: It could be described as preparing the soil or planting the seed or planting the sapling.]
- In verses 5-7, Jesus says his true followers will remain or abide in him. What do you think it means to remain or abide in Jesus?
- Think of someone you consider a mature Christian. What are some ways this person remains or abides in Jesus?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: There’s no one simple answer to remaining or abiding in Jesus. There isn’t a magic formula or three easy steps. It’s really a reflection of our devotion and desire to follow Jesus for the rest of our lives—and recognition that spiritual growth won’t happen automatically but requires our commitment.
2. Bear fruit

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Jesus is pretty clear that his disciples will be recognized by the fruit they produce. Our lives will produce some kind of fruit—it’s just a question of whether we will produce “sinful fruit” or “Christ-like fruit.”

**ASK:**
- A fruit tree must be pruned periodically to remain productive. This may seem like an odd concept, but it’s true. In verse 2, Jesus says that we as branches will be pruned to become even more fruitful. What does “spiritual pruning” look like? How does God prune us to become more fruitful?
- What did Jesus mean in verse 5 when he said that apart from him, his disciples could do nothing?
- In verse 16, Jesus says his followers’ lives would produce “lasting fruit.” What does that phrase mean? How might you tell the difference between “lasting fruit” and “temporary fruit”?

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Ultimately, God is the one who produces spiritual change in our lives, but God also asks us to help prepare the “soil” of our lives for that growth and change.

**ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]**

**ASK:**
- Read Matthew 7:15-20. Based on what Jesus says in this passage, particularly verse 20, how easily can we evaluate a person’s spiritual life by actions or deeds?

  - What’s the difference between “identifying people by their actions” and “judging people for their actions”?

- Read Matthew 12:33-37. Based on what Jesus says in these verses, what role do your thoughts and inward motives play in the fruit your life produces?

- Read Romans 1:13. Why kinds of fruit might Paul have most wanted to see among the Roman Christians, and why?
APPLICATION

ASK:

- How can your actions help produce good fruit in your life? For example, if you want to become more patient or loving or joyful, what are some specific things you can do to cultivate the “soil” of your heart?

- When in your life have you been most “fruitful” spiritually? How did that happen?

- How is the idea of remaining or abiding in Jesus similar to such character traits as discipline, commitment, faithfulness, teachability, and obedience?

- Think of someone you know who exhibits lots of good fruit. What’s your sense of how those fruits developed in that person?

Pair up with another person in the group for these questions.

ASK:

- When do you see your life most strongly connected to Jesus? Do you find yourself connected to Jesus through your emotions, your thoughts, your environment, or some other factor? Explain.

- What might be the most effective ways to pray for good fruit to grow in your life?

- What is one good fruit you’d like to see God help you develop in your life, and how can you take steps to grow in this characteristic?

Bring everyone back together and ask for a few students to share how they are most strongly connected to Jesus. If you have time, also ask for some examples of how your young people are growing in good fruit—evidence of God’s work in their lives.
SUMMARY
End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]
Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).