

## Life Link

### Video Illustration: Identity

### Slide Background: The True Vine

#### Title: "Fruit Producers"

**Big Idea:** **Introductory Illustration:** The process of maturing as a Christian takes time and work. When a person comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus, they are born in to the family of God. Jesus said in John 3 that we "must be born again". That rebirthing process produces a spiritually in mature "babe in Christ" There are no short cuts to Christian maturity. Unless you have a perfect environment where the fruit you grow is protected from all the elements such as heat, storms, droughts, disease and insects the produced fruit will not be able to withstand the elements in this world. The same is for the Christian life. It takes years for us to grow to Christian adulthood, and it takes a full season for fruit to mature and ripen. The same is true for the fruit of the Spirit. The development of Christ like character cannot be rushed. Spiritual growth, like physical growth, takes time.

When you try to ripen fruit quickly, it loses its flavor. In America, tomatoes are usually picked un-ripened so they won't bruise during shipping to the stores. Then, before they are sold, these green tomatoes are sprayed with CO2 gas to turn them red instantly. Gassed tomatoes are edible, but they are no match to the flavor of a vine-ripened tomato that is allowed to mature slowly.

Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 217. The key to Christian maturity is threefold (1) Abiding in Christ and (2) Pruning of Christ and (3) Bearing Fruit

#### **Read Sermon Text:**

#### **John 15:1-6 The True Vine**

15 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. NKJV

#### **1. Abiding in Christ(vs. 5)**

**John 15:5** "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. NKJV

To be a branch in a vine means very little. We must first understand it is only if we are a vine (Jesus) are we able even to exist. Being in the Vine of Christ means to be completely dependent upon Jesus for life it's self. Without the vine the branch dies. Without the vine the branch cannot produce fruit. Jesus said "without me you can do nothing." The branch cannot bear fruit, it cannot grow, it cannot even live without the vine. The branch gains it strength and sustenance like water and nutrients from the vine which is the conduit that provides all that is needed for life and growth. It is only when we are connected and to

Jesus that life has meaning, Having meaning in life produces the fruit means abiding in Jesus. Life only has real meaning when we are attached to the vine

**Gal 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. NKJV

**John 5:19** Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. NKJV

**John 9:33** If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." NKJV

**2 Cor 13:8** For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. NKJV

**Phil 4:13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. NKJV

### Text Illustration:

#### MAKE SURE WE WERE ABIDING

Stuart Briscoe, author and long-time pastor of Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin, tells about the time he traveled to Poland during the cold war. He was involved in several weeks of itinerant ministry, and one winter day his sponsors drove him in the dead of night to the middle of nowhere. Briscoe walked into a dilapidated building crammed with one hundred young people.

It was a unique opportunity, and through an interpreter he preached from John 15 on abiding in Christ. Ten minutes into his message, the lights went out. It was pitch black.

His interpreter urged him to keep talking, and so he did. Unable to see his notes or read his Bible, he continued. Then, after he had preached in the dark for twenty minutes, the lights suddenly blinked on, and what he saw startled him: everyone was on their knees, and they remained there for the rest of his message.

The next day Briscoe commented on this to one man, and the man said, "After you left, we stayed on our knees most of the night. Your teaching was new to us. We wanted to make sure we were abiding in Christ." (Marshall Shelley, *Changing Lives Through Preaching and Worship*, Random House, 1995, p. 147. From a sermon by C. Philip Green, "Breaking Free".)

## 2. Pruning of Christ (vs. 2)

**John 15:2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. NKJV

- a. The branch that is un-productive, that is not producing fruit will cause the vine to less productive. The Christian who produces no fruit is useless and can be compared to salt that has lost its savor. ( Matt 5:13) What good is a light which is hidden or is no longer connected to a source of electricity or power. (Matt 5:14-16)

**Matthew 5:13** "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. NKJV

**Matthew 5:14-16** "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. NKJV

- b. This is not to say and is not saying that a person who is not producing fruit will be lost but it is simply implying that Christian who produces nothing will be pruned and remove from the vine.

**1 Cor 3:15** If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. NKJV

While the branch (un-productive) member of the body of Christ may be removed from the vine. This person will not suffer the loss of their salvation but instead have any rewards. Many will try to use this verse to imply that a follower of Christ will and can lose their salvation. But, Jesus states emphatically that our salvation is secure and reserved for us in heaven.

**Acts 4:11-12** This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." NKJV

**1 Peter 1:4-5** to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. NKJV

### **Text Illustration: WHERE FRUIT BEGINS**

I believe with everything that is in me that fruit begins with each one of us. It begins with a decision, "I want to bear fruit. I want to honor Jesus. I want to walk in his ways. And I will do it no matter what. No matter what life throws at me. No matter what struggles I face. No matter what disease afflicts me or my loved ones. No matter how much success I have financially or how miserably I fail. I will not give up in this one area. So Lord, I give you my heart. I give you my very life. I give you my all."

When we can pray like that, this is a grand start. Sure there will be weeds to pull out. Sure there will be stones to unearth and haul away sometimes leaving at least temporarily a big hole. Sometimes we will need to dig out those tree stumps in the fields of our lives rather than plow around if we are to bear a bountiful harvest. Sometimes the fields of our neighbors may seem like a rock garden or overrun with debris but if we remember to focus on our own field, we will see that we have more than enough to do rather than fix what we think is wrong with everyone else.

There is a saying, "The grass always looks greener on the other side." But you know what? I think, "The weeds always look taller in someone else's yard." Take responsibility for your own life first.

Clear out the log of your own eye. Be the type of fertile soil that Jesus wants you to be so that he (not you) can produce the bountiful crop. (Sermon Central:Mark Emberly, Kearsarge Church of God)

### 3. Bearing Fruit (vs. 5)

**John 15:5** "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. NKJV

Without Christ as the root and source we are unable to do anything. Why is the world dying and unproductive, the answer is no Jesus. We need Christ in our life. He will give us life, He will provide us what we need to live and not only to live but to produce fruit. But not just fruit but "much fruit". Man's greatest need: -- No man lives a true and useful life who lives without Christ. The good man feels his need of Him, and of all of Him always.

1. His eye to guide him.
2. His hand to uphold him.
3. His arm to shield him.
4. His bosom to lean upon.
5. His blood to cleanse him.
6. His Spirit to make him holy and meet for heaven.

Christ is the one only Savior who can make a sinner a saint, and secure to him eternal life. Usefulness is suspended upon holiness, and we are made holy by Christ's cleansing blood, and in no other way. (Homiletic Monthly.) (from The Biblical Illustrator Copyright © 2002, 2003, 2006 Ages Software, Inc. and BibleSoft, Inc.)

**Conclusion:** Jesus is the answer for the world today. Without Him the world has no hope and without Him those who live in the world have and without Him those who way they follow him have no hope. Jesus is the only hope for us today.

#### **Text Illustration:**

#### SAVED FROM OUR RUBBLE OF SIN- COMMUNION MEDITATION

The September 11, 2002 issues of TIME magazine has a touching article about 31-year old Genelle Guzman. Genelle was the last of just four people caught in the debris of the Twin Towers to be found alive.

After the planes hit the World Trade Center, Genelle was descending a stair case from the 64th floor of the North Tower. Steel beams weakened to their breaking point. Solid concrete was pulverized. But somehow her body found an air pocket.

Her right leg was pinned under heavy concrete pillars. Her head was caught between stacks of wreckage. But somehow she was still alive.

For twenty-seven hours Guzman lay trapped and seriously injured.

In recent months before the attacks Genelle had started attending the church called Brooklyn Tabernacle, and wanted to get her life turned around. So while she was stuck in the rubble, she started to pray. She'd trail off into sleep – wake up and pray

some more. Shortly after noon on Wednesday the 12th, she heard voices. So she screamed as loud as she could, "I'm here! HEY, I'M RIGHT HERE!" A rescue worker responded, "Do you see the light?" She did not. She took a piece of concrete and banged it against a broken stairway overhead—probably the same structure that had saved her life. The searchers find the noise.

Genelle wedged her hand through a crack in the wall, and felt someone grab it. She heard a voice say, "I've got you," and Genelle Guzman said, "OH GOD, THANK YOU."

It took 20 long minutes, and then she was saved.

In many ways, Genelle Guzman represents the plight of all people. We are buried under an enormous mess of spiritual black marks – ways we have wronged our perfect God. The Bible calls these things sin. We have no hope of freeing ourselves. We are truly stuck. In need of rescue.

But by admitting the need to be forgiven – by reaching out and saying, "God, help me! I can't get out of this unless you save me," we can be confident that he hears and helps.

That's what we remember at communion--that God reached down into the rubble and saved us by the death and resurrection of Jesus. SOURCE: Matthew Rogers. Citation: TIME Magazine, 9/11/02, p. 38.