***4***

## ***Being Connected***

***John 15:1-17***

For those who train dogs in obedience, "Stay!" is a key command. It requires the dog to stand still, "stay put" and not change its position, for as long as the trainer wishes. This takes discipline on the dog's part; some never learn to do it, even after years of training.

Jesus tells Christians to "stay put" in him-that is, to maintain dependence on him for vision, goodwill and wisdom to act, and help as they act. He compares this connection to a branch of a vine, drawing nourishment from the main stem, because as vintners want many grapes on their vines, so the Father and the Son want much fruit from our lives-effective influence in works of love that witness to who Christ is and help bring the kingdom of God to earth.

"Without me you can do nothing," warns Jesus. Hasty, self­ reliant people find this a hard lesson to learn. But learn it we must, if our lives are to please and honor our Lord.

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** Would you say that you are a "natural connector" or a "natural loner"? How does this natural preference show up in your choices?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** Reflect on your natural inclination to either connect with other people or to be alone. If you are a natural loner, what do you need to overcome in order to make important connections with others? If you are a natural connector, what do you need to overcome in order to have fruitful time alone?

***Abiding in Christ 24***

At the close of chapter 14, Jesus said to his disciples, "Come now; let us leave." Leave to go where? They are likely now walking together the road toward Gethsemane, but Jesus continues their conversation. Read john 15:1-17.

l. In this passage, Jesus continues to speak of truths he

introduced earlier during this last conversation with his disciples, and he also interjects some new ideas. What do

you find here that is familiar, and what do you find that is new?

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2. What is revealed about the relationship between God

and his people as you study Jesus' image of the vine (vv. 1-8)?

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3. Notice that several times Jesus uses the word remain (NIV) as he speaks of life on the vine. What cautions and what encouragements do you find as you study his various uses of that word?

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4. When and how have you experienced the connectedness

of life on the vine?

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**Being Connected 25**

5. Jesus' image of life on the vine includes happy words like fruit and painful words like prunes, but all within the context that "no branch can bear fruit by itself" (v. 4). When have you seen the value of both pruning and fruitfulness in your own section of God's vine?

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6. Focus on verses 9-16. As you notice various uses of the word love in these verses, what all can you know about the kind of love that God gives and expects?

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7. What does it mean to "remain in love"?

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8. What is the difference between a servant and a friend

(vv. 13-15)?

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9. What are the privileges of being a friend of Jesus?

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10. Why do you think Jesus uses the phrases "I have called

you" and "I chose you"?

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***Being Connected* 26**

11. "This is my command: Love each other," says Jesus in

verse17. As you consider again the metaphor of the vine,

why is the presence or absence of love so important?

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12. Mentally take stock of your own place among the

branches of Jesus, the vine. How are you giving and

receiving love?

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*The vine of Christ stretches throughout the world with branches reaching in all directions. Pray for one area*

*of that branch system that you know is currently troubled.*

***Now and Later***

Pencil-sketch a vine with many interconnecting branches. Highlight your section of the branches as they connect

to the vine. Mark those branches with names of people and ministries and sketch your various connections to each.

Include any "fruit" that you are aware of. Consider various weaknesses and strengths in your drawing of branches and revise the shape and size of the branches accordingly. Show

the centrality of the vine and the various interwoven connections of the branches. Prayerfully reflect on what

your pencil-sketch reveals.