

The Pruning Of Trees

UPPER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN

Theme: If we want to bear Jesus' fruit, we must abide in Him. Fifth Sunday of Easter

Scripture: John 15

Memory Verse: I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

The Children's Sermon

Today we're going to talk about something really cool that Jesus said. Imagine you're in a beautiful garden. There are flowers, fruits, and all sorts of plants. In this garden, there's a gardener who takes care of everything. Jesus tells us that God is like that gardener. And we are like the plants in His garden. This story is about "Pruning for Fruitfulness."

Now, pruning might sound a bit scary. It's when the gardener cuts parts off the plants. But why would the gardener do that? It's because cutting off the parts that aren't healthy or are taking too much energy helps the plant grow even better. It can make more flowers or fruits. So, when we talk about "Pruning for Fruitfulness," we mean God helps us grow better by sometimes taking away things that aren't good for us.

Sometimes, we might not understand why God is pruning us. We might think, "Why is this happening?" But remember, just like the gardener knows what's best for the plants, God knows what's best for us. Jesus tells us, "You did not choose me. I chose you to go and bear much fruit. The kind of fruit that lasts forever."

Now, let's imagine what it means to be fruitful. Being fruitful isn't just about growing fruits or flowers. For us, it means doing good things, like being kind, helping others, and spreading happiness. Every time we do something good, it's like we're growing a beautiful flower or a tasty fruit in God's garden.

But sometimes, to help us grow these beautiful things, God needs to prune us. That might mean changing something in our lives, like learning to share better or being more patient. Even though it might be hard, it's all part of "Pruning for Fruitfulness." It's how we grow into the best versions of ourselves.

You know, plants don't grow beautiful flowers or fruits overnight. It takes time and care. The same goes for us. Growing into kind, loving, and fruitful people takes time. We might make mistakes, but that's okay. God, the gardener, is always there to help us get back on track.

Let's think about the fruits we can grow in our lives. Love, kindness, joy, peace, and patience are just a few. Every day, we have the chance to grow these fruits by the choices we make. When we choose to be kind, to share, and to listen, we're growing beautiful fruits that make the world a better place.

Sometimes, when God is pruning us, it might feel lonely or sad. But remember, just like a plant needs water and sunlight, we need God's love and our friends and family to help us grow. We're never alone in the garden. We have each other, and we have God, who loves us very much.

Now, let's imagine our garden filled with all the beautiful fruits and flowers we've grown by being kind, patient, and loving. It's a colorful, happy place where everyone is

welcome. This is the garden God wants us to grow together, a garden of "Pruning for Fruitfulness."

Before we finish, let's pray once more. Dear God, thank you for loving us and taking care of us. Help us to understand when you're pruning us and to remember it's because you want us to grow beautiful fruits. Help us to be patient, kind, and loving, so our garden is full of joy and happiness. Amen.

So, next time you see a gardener pruning a plant, remember how God prunes us for fruitfulness. And every day, let's try to grow a little more love, kindness, and joy in our garden.

Bible Memory Verse

John 15:5 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'

You Will Need:

- Green, brown, and various other colors of construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Markers or crayons

Get Ready:

- Cut the brown construction paper into strips to make 'branches'
- Cut the green paper into leaf shapes and other colors into fruit shapes

Do This:

1. Have each child take a piece of brown construction paper and glue it onto a larger sheet to create a 'vine'.
2. Ask the children to write the memory verse on the 'branches' with markers or crayons.
3. Let the children glue the green 'leaves' and colored 'fruit' onto their branches, discussing how staying connected to Jesus helps us bear fruit in our lives.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A large branch with multiple smaller branches (real or crafted from materials like paper or fabric)
- Paper leaves (enough for each child to have several)
- Markers or pens
- String or yarn
- Tape or glue
- Scissors

Get Ready:

- Prepare the large branch by ensuring it's stable enough to hang paper leaves from. If using a real branch, place it in a large vase or pot for stability.
- Write or print John 15:5 on each leaf.
- Cut the string into pieces, each about a foot long.

Do this:

1. Begin with a group reading of John 15:1-17, focusing on the importance of abiding in Jesus to bear fruit.

2. Discuss what it means to "abide in Jesus" and how we can bear fruit in our daily lives (e.g., showing love, kindness, and obedience to God's word).
3. Hand out the paper leaves and markers to each child. Ask them to write or draw on one side of the leaf an example of a "fruit" they want to bear or a way they can abide in Jesus.
4. Once they've finished, help them attach their leaves to the branch using the string or yarn. They can either tie the string around the branch or use tape/glue to attach their leaves.
5. Gather the children around the completed branch and reflect on how each leaf represents their commitment to abiding in Jesus and bearing fruit. Close with a prayer asking for God's help to live out what they've written/drawn on their leaves.

Snack Activity: Fruit of the Spirit Edible Trees

You'll Need:

- Pretzel sticks (large)
- Various fruits (grapes, blueberries, strawberries, etc.)
- Cream cheese or peanut butter
- Plastic knives
- Plates

Get Ready: Wash all the fruits and set them out on plates. Make sure the cream cheese or peanut butter is at room temperature to make it easier to spread.

Do this:

1. Have each child take a pretzel stick. Explain that this pretzel represents us, and just like the branches in John 15, we need to be connected to Jesus to bear fruit.

2. Use the plastic knives to spread a thin layer of cream cheese or peanut butter on one end of the pretzel stick. This represents how Jesus nourishes us and helps us grow when we stay connected to Him.
3. Pick different fruits and stick them onto the cream cheese or peanut butter end of the pretzel. Each piece of fruit represents the fruits of the Spirit that we bear when we abide in Jesus, like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
4. Once their fruit tree is complete, encourage the children to share which fruit of the Spirit they want to grow in their lives and why. They can enjoy eating their edible creation as they discuss.

Game Activity: Vine and Branches Tag

You'll Need:

- A large open space, preferably outdoors
- Several long pieces of green ribbon or yarn
- Safety pins

Get Ready: Before the game, read John 15 together and discuss what it means to abide in Jesus and bear fruit. Explain how the branches need the vine to live and bear fruit. Then, prepare the green ribbons or yarn by cutting them into lengths that can be pinned onto the backs of shirts, resembling branches.

Do this:

1. Designate one child as the 'vine', who stands in the middle of the play area. The vine holds onto the end of one green ribbon, representing Jesus as the vine. The rest of the children are 'branches' and they each pin a green ribbon to the back of their shirt.

2. When the game starts, the branches run around the play area while the vine tries to tag them. Once tagged, a branch must freeze and stand still, symbolizing a branch that is not abiding in the vine and thus cannot bear fruit.

3. To be 'reconnected' to the vine and unfrozen, another branch must come and tie their ribbon to the frozen branch's ribbon, symbolizing the importance of community and supporting one another to stay connected to Jesus. The game continues until all branches are either frozen or the time runs out. The goal is to have as many 'fruitful' branches as possible by the end of the game.

Craft Activity: Vine and Branches Mobile

You'll Need:

- Green and brown construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- String or yarn
- Hole punch
- Markers or crayons
- A stick or dowel rod

Get Ready: Collect all materials and prepare a workspace with enough room for crafting.

Do this:

1. Read John 15 together and discuss what it means to 'abide in Jesus' and how we can bear fruit in our lives.

2. Using the brown construction paper, cut out a thick branch shape to represent Jesus as the vine. Then, cut out several smaller branch shapes from the green paper to represent us.
3. On the green branches, have each child write or draw different ways they can stay connected to Jesus and bear fruit (e.g., prayer, kindness, obedience).
4. Punch holes at the top of the brown vine and the top of each green branch. Use the string or yarn to tie the green branches to the brown vine, showing how we are connected to Jesus.
5. Attach the completed branches to the stick or dowel rod with string, evenly spaced, to create a mobile.
6. Hang the mobile in a place where the children can be reminded daily of the importance of staying connected to Jesus.

Prayer Activity: Abiding in the Vine: A Prayer Garden

You'll Need:

- A small potted plant or vine for each child
- Decorative items (e.g., stickers, markers, ribbons)
- Prayer request cards

Get Ready: Before the class, prepare a space where children can work comfortably with their plants and decorations. Ensure each child has a small potted plant or vine and access to the decorative items.

Do this:

1. Begin by reading John 15 together, focusing on the importance of abiding in Jesus to bear fruit. Discuss what it means to abide in Jesus and how we can show love to others as Jesus loves us.

2. Encourage the children to decorate their potted plants or vines while thinking about what it means to be connected to Jesus, the true vine. As they decorate, ask them to think of a prayer request that relates to how they can bear fruit in their own lives by abiding in Jesus.

3. Once they have finished decorating, gather the children in a circle with their plants. Have each child share their prayer request, then pray together, asking God to help them abide in Jesus and bear fruit in their lives. Encourage them to place their decorated plant in a spot where they'll see it daily as a reminder to stay connected to Jesus.