

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## *How to Stay Close to God*

Stand-Alone Sermon

**ICEBREAKER:** What is your most unusual nighttime or morning ritual?

**OVERVIEW:** The goal of the Christian life is spiritual growth — to become more and more like Jesus, loving God and others more and more. On Sunday we learned from Jesus in John 15 that the key to spiritual growth is to stay close. When we stay close, Jesus grows us. Today we will go deeper with the sermon and learn more about what we need to do to grow in Christ.

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain. (Or what was your key takeaway from Sunday's message?)
2. Read John 15:1-2. When we don't grow, God "removes" us. A clearer translation of that Greek word *airo* is "lift up." New branches often fall to the ground where they can't bear fruit. The leaves get covered in dust, and when it rains they get muddy and mildewed. In order to make them fruitful, the vineyard keeper has to lift them up, wash them off, and wrap them around the trellis. Then the branch becomes fruitful. In the same way, we cannot grow in Christ and produce fruit when we fall down into sin. To be fruitful and grow, God has to lift us up and wash us off.
  - a. How does sin keep us from producing Christian fruit?
  - b. What sins has God washed off of you since you've gotten saved, and how has this made you more useful to God?
  - c. Are there currently any sins in your life that God needs to clean up to make you more fruitful for Him?
  - d. What stops Christians from allowing God to clean the sin out of their lives?

3. Read John 15:1-2 again. In order to make us even more fruitful, God "prunes" us. To prune means to thin, or to cut off. Ironically, the secret to spiritual progress is less, not more. God has to lead us to cut away immature commitments and lesser priorities to make room for even more fruit.
  - a. Has God ever led you to cut away immature commitments and lesser priorities so that you can be a more fruitful Christian?
  - b. Are there any preoccupations and activities currently in your life that, while not necessarily sinful, could be keeping you from growing and being more useful to God?
4. Read John 15:5. The key to spiritual growth is to remain, or to stay close to God. What changes do you need to make in your life to make "staying close" your top priority?
5. The sermon mentioned three ways to stay close to God: Sunday worship, Home Group, and a Daily Quiet Time. Why are these sometimes called "Spiritual Disciplines?"
6. Which of the three spiritual disciplines do you need to get better at? Explain.
7. Which of the three spiritual disciplines has made the biggest difference in your life? Explain.
8. What is the biggest obstacle preventing you from consistently practicing these three spiritual disciplines?

**The Last Word:** Stay close and fruit happens.