



**Praying  
The  
Scriptures**  
John 15:1-11

# **Praying the Scriptures, April 20-26th : John 15-1-11**

You are invited to an optional opportunity to discuss this week's scripture online with Pastor Forrest and others on Thursday, April 23 at 1:30 p.m. via Zoom. If you would like to participate please please click on [Praying the Scriptures Thursday, April 23](#) a few minutes before 1:30 p.m. The meeting identification number is 975-8973-2062 To find out more about Zoom, please visit [How to Connect with](#)

St. Stephen's Using Zoom. To take part in the meeting via your phone please call 1-301-715-8592. The meeting's ID is. 975-8973-2062.

Please note : This meeting will utilize Zoom's Waiting Room feature, a virtual staging area that prevents people from joining a meeting until the host is ready. This is also serves as a security feature that helps the meeting's moderator maintain a safe and polite meeting environment. To find out more about Zoom and about other ways you can keep in touch with your church during the COVID-19 situation, please visit [Stay](#)

[Connected with St. Stephen's](#) You will also find some Zoom directions below today's guide.

Before we enter God's word, I encourage you to find a place where you can observe nature. Then take at least one minute or more of silence to center your mind before praying. This can be by admiring nature's beauty, clearing your mind, or taking four concentrated deep breaths, to name a few ways.

Now I encourage you to practice this time of centering as long or as many times as needed before moving on to the prayer below and our passage. You may wish to repeat the prayer several

times, until you experience your spirit opening to the Lord's Spirit.

PRAYER: Loving and Almighty God, let us be moved to truth by the promises in your Holy Word. Reveal deeper in ourselves how we are to follow in your commandments. Restore us and show us your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

## **John 15:1-11**

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes[a] to make it bear more fruit. 3 You have already been cleansed[b] by the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become[c] my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my

love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

We know love for God first loved us (1 John 4:19). To love God is to follow the commandments set out before us. It not only brings us joy in life but glorifies God. We are told we can do all things through God who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13), and we must remember our passage here. That we must follow Jesus, abiding in his love and commandments in order for us to grow and be nurtured. Take time to reflect on a particular word or phrase that stood out in your mind. Truly focus on this for a few minutes pondering it and praying over it before moving on.

### **Discussion and Reflection:**

This passage comes in the middle of Jesus talking to his disciples about the Holy Spirit. The great Comforter and Advocate that will come and guide them while Jesus is gone from this world. Our passage today even though it may not say it aloud is all about the involvement of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit is not just a comforter but an integral part of the Holy Trinity that gives us power. Also in talking about the Holy Spirit Jesus says in John 14:22 when in talking with his disciples about

his death and resurrection and the Holy Spirit to come, "Very truly I tell you the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and in fact will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father." For our faith to grow we must be willing to be pruned or disciplined by God. A rebellious heart does not belong to the Lord. Jesus lays out here that we are made clean by him in verse 3, and that by following God's commands we will grow in love and glorify God.

The hardest part of this passage for us can be the standard which we are held to in our relationship with God. We are called to bear fruit in the Lord by following God's his commands and following Jesus who laid down his own life in our place to repair our broken relationship with God.

By abiding in Jesus and following his commandments we learn through the Bible that this path leads to joy. Realizing this we know that departing from God's commandments brings pain and sadness which is the opposite of joy.

Following God's commandments leads to joy and love, "if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (10). We do not know real love, Christ like love, without knowing his commandments. By studying the scriptures, praying over them, talking about them and then

living them out with others, we understand love that is given to us and we are always to give to others. So where are you feeling the tug of conviction or joy to serve the Lord in a new area in your life? Knowing that you are already made clean through Jesus's sacrifice and can do all things through Jesus should be an encouraging force for change in our lives. Knowing that it is not all on our own will power, but it is about being filled with the Holy Spirit equips us. We are called to bear fruit in love by following God's word, Jesus. So today and hereafter be filled with the powerful Holy Spirit that guides you to bear fruit and sustains you in times of God's pruning. Read the scripture one more time out loud. Take a moment to reflect on what Jesus is calling us to do.

### **Questions to ponder :**

How are you abiding in God's commandments and love?

What are areas God is trying to show you to grow in today? As uncomfortable and even painful that it may be, now can be the very time of pruning or cutting back that the Lord is leading you to that is necessary for your growth.

What emotions does this passage stir up? Whether good, bad, or in between? Enter into prayer to give God control to try and understand. This helps us to go to God in times of fruitfulness and times of

barrenness, , then end by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Almighty God I ask you to continue to fill me with the Holy Spirit. Call me into more times of fruit even though it means I must be pruned. Guide me in the barren times to seek you further and open your word to reveal truth to me.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

## **Tips on Using Zoom meetings :**

1. You do not have to sign up for Zoom to use it. You will receive email invitation from most Zoom online meetings organized by St. Stephen's. When you receive an invitation all you need to do to take part is click on the meeting link at the scheduled time of the meeting.

2. You do not have to be on video to take part in a Zoom meeting. Some folks are understandably camera shy.

When using Zoom, there is an option to share your voice and audio only.

3. To be able to easily access both the video and audio portion of a Zoom meeting, the best web browser to use is Chrome, a browser which is free and easy to download if you currently do not use it.
4. Most Zoom meetings also have a phone in option, if you do not have internet access or do not wish to use your computer.

If you would like to set up an appointment with St. Stephen's staff to get help on using Zoom, please call the church office at 703-978-8724.

To read instructions on how to use Zoom, you can view a video on how to join a Zoom meeting by clicking

**Zoom Video Tutorial.** To learn more about St. Stephen's United Methodist Church, please visit our website at [www.ststephensfairfax.org](http://www.ststephensfairfax.org).