



This is the final week of our *Juicy Fruit* series. The goal of this series has been to challenge each of us to examine ourselves and to allow the “fruit” our lives are producing spur us to grow closer to God in order to bear the kind of fruit He wants us to bear. This week, we set our sights on a long-term commitment to being fruit-bearing Christ-followers . . . We have a lot to discuss as we wind up the series, so let’s dive right in:

- **READ:** *John 15:1-7*. On Sunday, Eric gave us four benefits of abiding/remaining in the love of Christ:
- **Growth:** Last week we discussed how God is “pruning” us to make us more fruitful. We discussed specific decisions/choices/activities we need to implement in our lives to allow God to prune our lives and make us more fruitful.
  - **How have you done this past week in those decisions/choices/activities we discussed last week?**
  - **Has God revealed anything new to you this week to raise the bar on your spiritual Growth?**
- **Clean:** This passage teaches us that simply being a Christ follower makes us clean.
  - **What do you think it means to be made clean by the word of Christ? (Verse 3)**
  - **In what ways has your life experienced a “cleansing” as a result of following Christ?**
- **Productive:** The goal of this entire series has been to challenge us to be fruit-bearing followers of Christ. The evidence of God’s fruit in our lives is the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22-23*). *John 15:4-5* speaks of “abiding” or “remaining” in Christ as a requirement for being productive.
  - **Would you say that you feel “close” to God, or more like you are actually “a part of Him”? How would you say these two are different? What steps do you need to take to move to being “a part of Him”?**
  - **In what ways has this series challenged you to draw closer to God?**
- **Security:** The more we learn to become “a part of Christ,” the more we can lean on Him for our strength, confidence, direction, etc. Rather than focusing our efforts on bearing fruit, we should focus our lives on being “in Christ.” When we do, He bears the fruit in us. We don’t have to worry about it, it’s His fruit when we are “in Him.”
  - **How does knowing this truth help you/encourage you in your walk with God?**
  - **What steps are you taking to connect to Christ and to allow Him to bear fruit in you?**



**Growth Groups  
Leaders' Travel Guide  
Week of October 5-11, 2008**

Hey Growth Group Leaders!

In case you missed the mid-week email I sent this week, there are a few changes coming to Growth Groups in the coming months. Here's the text of that email reprinted for you:

This is a mid-week update to let you know some new information about Growth Groups at Journey Church:

- We have updated the Childcare Reimbursement policy to the following. This increases the original policy by adding a \$5 base per event. Hopefully this will be a significant help to several of our families. If you or someone you know would be interested in providing childcare, let us know so we can create a file of available folks, and can get background checks done ahead of time when applicable.
- **Growth Groups Childcare Policy:**
  - Each Growth Group is responsible to work out its own childcare as needed.
  - Any person over the age of 16 providing childcare will need to be approved by the church via an official background check.
  - Childcare reimbursements are available at a rate of \$5 plus \$2 per child per Growth Group meeting for children up through those completed the 5th Grade.
  - Childcare reimbursements for Growth Group activities outside of regular meeting times must be approved by the church prior to the event.
  - Childcare for special-needs children will be considered on a case-by-case basis with the church leadership.
  - When several children are being cared for, multiple childcare people is encouraged, but the reimbursement will remain \$5 plus \$2 per child, regardless of the number of childcare personnel.
  - Growth Group families with children receiving childcare are strongly encouraged to supplement the reimbursement with at least \$1-\$2 per child for the childcare provider.
- As most of you know, Emily and I have been planning on moving to Baltimore to plant a new church. These plans are now moving forward and we are planning to relocate in January. As a result, you can expect the following changes in the coming months:
  - I will be continuing to develop and provide the Travel Guide through our next message series, which extends through the week of November 9. Eric and I will plan some other form of Growth Groups material for the rest of November and December. In January, we will launch our Spring semester of groups with new leadership. If you or anyone you know would be a good fit for helping us with Growth Groups, let us know so we can get them ready before I leave.
  - I will be handing off most of my non-Growth Groups leadership responsibilities before the end of October, particularly Sunday Morning responsibilities, so I can have more freedom to travel in preparation for moving.
  - I may be in-and-out of town taking trips to Baltimore and to potential supporting churches. I will miss being at Journey, but have to take some steps to get the ball rolling in Baltimore.
  - If you hear anyone say anything negative or question my motives for being out, disconnecting, or leaving . . . please inform them that I have the utmost respect and appreciation for Eric and Journey Church. If God was not calling us elsewhere, we would stay. The things Emily and I have learned and the friendships we have developed during our time at Journey have been immensely valuable and will help us as we move forward. There is nothing negative about Emily and I leaving. It is a great victory for Journey Church, as the influence of the church will increase and the availability for others to step up and fill our roles, allowing Journey to multiply its leadership.

As always, I appreciate your leadership in our Growth Groups ministry here at Journey Church. I also appreciate your prayers during the next few months of transition. I am still here to help you to make your group the best it can possibly be. Please continue to provide feedback each week following your Growth Group meeting. We need some great stories of Life Change so we can use them as a catalyst for groups in the future.

Thanks for your prayers and your service!  
Andrew

We are closing out the Juicy Fruit Series this week. As you prepare to lead the discussion this week, be sure to think back to the discussions your group has had over the past two weeks. Be prepared to review some of the "Next Steps" your folks came up with. Use this discussion to follow up with them to encourage them and keep them accountable to follow through.



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- **How have you done this past week in those decisions/choices/activities we discussed last week?**

Last week, we closed with the question: "*What decisions/choices/activities do you need to implement in your life this week to open up an opportunity for God to prune your life and increase the health of your spiritual fruit?*" This question is an opportunity to follow up and to encourage follow-through from last week.

- **Has God revealed anything new to you this week to raise the bar on your spiritual Growth?**

Perhaps someone in your group made a decision to spend more time studying the Bible or praying, etc. Perhaps the results of implementing something in their life was having a new perspective on something in their spiritual life. This question is not only a follow-up from last week, but an opportunity to move forward and to celebrate life change and victories. **I want to hear stories from this question, so email me!**

- **Clean:** This passage teaches us that simply being a Christ follower makes us clean.
- **What do you think it means to be made clean by the word of Christ?** (Verse 3)

Try to be careful where the discussion goes with this question. The point we are trying to make with this question is that we don't need to be overly focused on cleaning up the "stuff" in our lives. If we are genuinely IN CHRIST, He has already cleansed our spirits and made them pure. Taking care of the "stuff" comes in time as a by-product of living life IN CHRIST. You may want to reference *Ephesians 5:25-27* to help in this discussion.

- **In what ways has your life experienced a "cleansing" as a result of following Christ?**

With our goal for the previous question in mind, some folks may be able to share how God has taken care of some of the "stuff" in their lives. Others may be able to describe inner attitudes and life perspective changes that may not result in clear outward changes, but DOES result in a changed life deep down. Again, here's an opportunity for stories of Life Change. **I want to hear these stories!**

- **Productive:** The goal of this entire series has been to challenge us to be fruit-bearing followers of Christ. The evidence of God's fruit in our lives is the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22-23*). *John 15:4-5* speaks of "abiding" or "remaining" in Christ as a requirement for being productive.
- **Would you say that you feel "close" to God, or more like you are actually "a part of Him"? How would you say these two are different? What steps do you need to take to move to being "a part of Him"?**

Abiding in Christ is more than just knowing *about* Him. It is more than just knowing Him *personally*. It isn't just

being close to Christ, either. Abiding in Christ means losing ourselves in Christ and finding our identity through who Christ has made us. **Abiding means being so stuck to Jesus that we become one with him.**

- **In what ways has this series challenged you to draw closer to God?**

What can I say – I WANT TO HEAR STORIES!

- Security: The more we learn to become “a part of Christ,” the more we can lean on Him for our strength, confidence, direction, etc. Rather than focusing our efforts on bearing fruit, we should focus our lives on being “in Christ.” When we do, He bears the fruit in us. We don’t have to worry about it, it’s His fruit when we are “in Him.”
- **How does knowing this truth help you/encourage you in your walk with God?**

1 - We don’t have to beat ourselves up when we fall short of what we think God wants us to be.

2 - We shouldn’t focus on the “DO’s and DON’T’s” of being a Christ-follower.

3 - We should focus on being as much like Jesus as we possibly can. And even this is focusing on Him more than ourselves.

4 - When we focus on Christ, we’ll find our own interests will shift and change away from the things that make us less Christ-like.

- **What steps are you taking to connect to Christ and to allow Him to bear fruit in you?**

Here’s our NEXT STEPS question. Throughout this discussion we’ve had opportunities to share the steps we’ve already taken. Here’s an opportunity to look forward and set up steps for continuing Growth in our spiritual lives. Not only do I want to hear stories of successes completed, but I want to hear stories of current conviction and life change.