

Lesson 9 • The Kingdom Within and Among Us

Guiding question: How does life under God's reign become visible in a community?

Central understanding: Jesus calls His disciples to abide in Him, love one another, and let their light shine. God's kingdom calls for an inward response and becomes visible in faithful relationships and service.

Prepare and gather

Prepare worksheet and Scripture-reader copies, pens, and a place to record observations. Read the guide in advance. Invite participation without requiring personal disclosures.

Class readings: John 15:1–12; Luke 17:20–24; Matthew 5:14–16.

50-minute flow: Welcome and opening prayer, 5 minutes; Scripture and teaching, 25 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes; weekly response, 5 minutes; closing prayer, 5 minutes.

Learning aims

- Describe the dependence pictured by the vine and branches.
- Read Luke's kingdom saying in its setting.
- Choose a practical expression of love that points others toward God.

Opening conversation

Recall the Spirit's work in Lesson Eight. Ask: "What makes a group of people more than a collection of individuals?" Invite examples of care, shared purpose, or trust.

Teach and explore

Branches receive life from the vine

Read: John 15:1–8.

Jesus names Himself the true vine and His Father the husbandman. The branches bear fruit by abiding in Him. Their usefulness depends on a living relationship with Him, and the Father tends them so that they bear more fruit.

Abiding includes receiving Christ's words and remaining in dependence on Him. Prayer belongs within that relationship. The promise about asking should be read with His words abiding in the disciples, rather than as a guarantee that every wish will be granted.

Ask: What does the image teach us about the source of fruitful service?

Receive the kingdom in the presence of Jesus

Read: Luke 17:20–24.

The Pharisees ask when the kingdom of God should come. Jesus challenges the expectation that it can be identified by people pointing here or there. The KJV renders His statement "the kingdom of God is within you."

The expression is also understood as "among you" or "in your midst," which matters because Jesus is speaking to Pharisees. Do not use this verse to claim that every person already possesses God's indwelling presence. Read it with Jesus' presence and authority, and with His warning to the disciples about misleading reports concerning the Son of man.

Ask: How does remembering Jesus' audience help us read this saying carefully?

Lesson 9 • Teaching and response

Love makes abiding visible

Read: John 15:9–12; 1 John 3:16–18.

Jesus connects abiding in His love with keeping His commandments. He speaks of joy and commands the disciples to love one another as He has loved them. Obedience grows within His love and takes its direction from His example.

First John brings love into ordinary material circumstances. Seeing a brother in need while closing our compassion contradicts the love we profess. Love in deed and truth asks what help is actually needed and how we can respond faithfully.

Ask: What might love in deed and truth look like in this class?

Light directs attention to the Father

Read: Matthew 5:14–16.

Jesus calls His disciples the light of the world. A lamp is placed where it gives light to the house. Good works are to become visible so that people glorify the Father in heaven.

The aim is service that helps others recognize God's goodness. A congregation can practice this through hospitality, honest dealing, patient care, and attention to neighbors who are overlooked. Visibility serves the neighbor and honors God; it does not require turning every act into publicity.

Ask: How can we make help available while preserving a neighbor's dignity?

Discussion guide

1. Why can a branch not bear fruit by itself? — Possible response: Its life and fruit depend on remaining in the vine; disciples depend on Christ.
2. Why should Luke 17:21 be read with its surrounding conversation? — Possible response: Jesus answers Pharisees, then warns disciples about claims concerning His appearing.
3. How does First John describe love in practice? — Possible response: Compassion responds to real need through deeds and truth.
4. What is the intended result of the disciples' light? — Possible response: People see good works and glorify the Father.

This week's response: Choose one need the class can meet this week. Ask the person or organization what would help, agree on a manageable task, and assign a willing point of contact. At the next meeting, reflect on what you learned about listening and serving.

Closing prayer: Father, keep us close to Your Son. Let His words shape our choices and His love shape our relationships. Show us whom we can serve, and receive the glory for any good that grows among us. Amen.

Continue the journey: Lesson Ten examines how words can nourish life or cause harm.

Lesson 9 • Scripture reader

King James Version (KJV) • Complete assigned passages

Word help: Husbandman means one who cultivates the vineyard; abide means remain or continue; observation here concerns watching for an outwardly identifiable arrival; bowels of compassion refers to tenderhearted concern.

Class readings

John 15:1-12 • KJV

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Luke 17:20-24 • KJV

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

Matthew 5:14-16 • KJV

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Supporting reading

1 John 3:16-18 • KJV

16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Before Lesson Ten

James 3:1-12 • KJV

1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Proverbs 15:1-4 • KJV

1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.