

# Remaining Questions

## Way in

Do you think being a Christian is easy or hard? Why? Is it easier or harder today than it was for the first Christians?

## Read **John 15:1-8**

1. In verse 1 Jesus describes himself as the 'true vine'. Take a look at the following passages from the Old Testament - Psalm 80:8-19; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21. From these passages, who is 'the vine' and what do you learn about it? Why is it so significant that Jesus refers to himself as the 'true' vine?

2. According to this passage, the relationship between Jesus and his followers is as close as a vine and its branches (v5). What strikes you about this description? What does Jesus say are the benefits of this relationship, and what are his warnings?

3. What effect might these things have on your day-to-day lives? What do you think it means to 'remain' in Christ?

4. One Sunday, you chat to a friend that you haven't seen at church for a while. After talking for a bit it becomes obvious that they're really struggling in their relationship with God and are thinking of giving it all up. From this passage, what might you say to them?

5. Why is verse 2 an encouragement for Christians? What do you think it means?

6. Verse 7 says something important about the words of Christ and the prayer life of the follower of Christ. How are the two related?

7. How are you doing at 'remaining' in Christ at the moment? In what areas do you need some encouragement? How can you encourage others at the moment? Take some time to pray for each other.

## Quote for **Reflection**

*'The union between the branch of a vine and the main stem is the closest that can be conceived. It is the whole secret of the branch's life, strength, vigour, beauty and fertility. Separate from the parent stem, it has no life of its own. The sap and juice that flow from the stem are the origin and maintaining power of all its leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruit. Cut off from the stem, it must soon wither and die. The union between Christ and believers is just as close, and just as real.'* (J.C. Ryle)

Why not take some time to give thanks for who Jesus is. How can we grow in that 'union' with Christ?

# All is Lost Questions

## Way in

Imagine you were standing up in front of lots of people, and you were presenting some work that you had done, and you discovered half way through that all your work was a complete waste of time. How would you feel? Why? The amazing thing about Paul is that he doesn't try to hide the fact that all he had been building his life on was empty. He wants the world to know.

## Read **Philippians 3:1-9**

1. Look at the three ways that Paul describes what he had built his life on in verses 7-9. What 'profit' had he gained from all this?

2. Paul had been placing his confidence in his family background, his enthusiasm and his morality. What are some of the ways that we can be tempted to put our confidence in these when we are thinking about how God sees us?

3. How did Paul's encounter with Jesus turn him around (see Acts 9). What was it about Jesus that Paul discovered?

4. Three times in verses 7-9 Paul uses the words 'I consider'. This suggests that Paul was captivated by Jesus and wanted to keep on looking to him. What are some of the ways that once you have started as a Christian by putting your trust in Christ, you can then slip back into trusting in your own achievements? How can you avoid this danger?

5. If a friend were to ask you to explain what Jesus had done for you, what would you say?

## Quote for Reflection

*"Look to your perfect Lord, and remember, you are complete in him; in God's sight you are as perfect as if you had never sinned; in fact, more than that, the Lord of Righteousness has put a divine garment upon you, so that you have more than the righteousness of man—you have the righteousness of God." (Charles Spurgeon)*

Once you have identified the things that you are tempted to put your trust in, say sorry to God for the ways that these lead you away from putting your trust in Jesus.