

Get to Know Each Other: (5 min.)

-Where did you go on your last road trip and what was your favorite part?

Dive Deeper: (30-40 min.)

Read John 15:1-11.

Jesus' words create a bit of a conundrum for those who would follow Him. On the one hand, He says that His disciples *must* bear fruit and prove to be His disciples or the Father will take them away (v. 2, 8). On the other hand, He says that His disciples *cannot* bear fruit on their own (v. 4-5). So, *Jesus demands from us that which we are unable to do ourselves*. If we are to bear fruit, prove to be Jesus' disciples, and avoid being gathered up and thrown into the fire with the withered branches, we *must* abide in Jesus and allow Him to do *in* and *through* us that which we cannot do on our own.

Rather than straining to bear fruit according to our own discipline, knowledge, power, or self-righteous ambition, we are to apply our effort and energy *first* at abiding (i.e. continuing, staying, enduring, waiting) in the grace and truth of the Gospel and the presence of Christ. Abiding in Jesus means that His Word abides in us (v. 7) and we keep it (v. 9). We must stay connected to the Vine in order to continually draw upon His life and bear the fruit of good works in the world.

This biblical truth creates a pattern of life for the follower of Christ that necessarily involves rest and work, abiding and fruit-bearing, being and doing. If we were to sketch this out graphically, we might end up with a half-circle, like the one below. Our lives, represented by the pendulum, move consistently and steadily between periods characterized by rest in Christ to periods characterized by work in Christ, like the pendulum of a clock.

Discuss the following questions:

- Reread verses 4-5. What are the implications as you think about your spiritual growth and the ministry opportunities God has entrusted you with? How might your focus need to shift?
- How does our culture define and prescribe "rest"?
- How does Scripture define and prescribe "rest"?
- From a biblical perspective, is it possible to be both busy and rested? What does that look like?
- What are some ways you can practice a pattern of resting in Christ the rest of this semester?
- Reread verse 11. How do rest, work, and joy all fit together?

