



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Community Group Material:

*Bible Reading: John 15:1-8*

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“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.”  
(John 15:1-8 CSB)

**SUMMARY:** Does the Bible address the Israel/Gaza conflict? Most US Evangelicals support Israel, citing Abrahamic promises and unfulfilled prophecies. However, John & Paul’s New Testament writings challenge this stance. In John 15, Jesus declares, “I am the true vine,” signaling a paradigm shift. The vine & vineyard represented OT Israel in the Promised Land, linked with just adherence to Moses’ Law. The Prophets condemned Israel’s fruitlessness. In the New Testament, Jesus redefines Israel; he, with his followers, constitute a new Israel. Rejecting Jesus excludes one from true Israel which fulfills OT Israel’s role. Do New Testament teachings support Standing with Israel today? According to John, the promised blessing to Abraham extends not to national Israel but to the ‘true Israel,’ Jesus and his followers. Thus, US Evangelicals’ staunch support for the State of Israel seems misguided, as the blessing is directed to Jesus and his believers, not to ethnic Israel.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Evangelical Christians in the US are among the strongest supporters of Israel. A few years ago, surveys reported that “A whopping **86%** of US white evangelicals said they felt warmly toward Israelis — more than any other Christian group. By comparison, only **58%** of US Black Protestants felt warmly toward Israelis (the same as those with ‘No religion’).”

- a. If you are from (or aware of) other countries, how do you think the numbers in those places compare with the US?
- b. What do you think are the underlying reasons for US evangelical Christians’ strong support for Israel?

2. Consider the quotes from two leaders among US Evangelical Christians concerning Israel:

- “For America to be on the right side of Israel is the same as being on the right side of history and the right side of God” — Robert Jeffress (First Baptist Church of Dallas TX., US)
- “Israel has a Bible mandate to own & possess the land of Israel forever. That mandate cannot be amended by the UN. It cannot be revoked by Hamas or Hezbollah...It cannot be amended by the President of the US... It belongs to the Jewish people now & forever.”—John Hagee (Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, TX., US)
- How would you evaluate these claims in the light of the New Testament? Discuss.

3. Jesus’ assertion “I AM the true vine” (15:1) read against the OT symbols of Vine & vineyard, raises the questions: “*Who is the true vine? Who is the genuine Israel? The answer, by implication, is: only Jesus.*” In effect, Jesus is claiming “I am the true Israel.” What are the implications of this for

- a. Jesus’ disciples, like Nathaniel, “a true Israelite” (Jn. 1:47)?
- b. for Jews considering Jesus’ claims, how can they join this new/true Israel?
- c. For Jews like Judas Iscariot &/or Caiaphas the High Priest – what’s their destiny according to Jesus’ metaphor?

4. If Jesus is the “true Vine, the true Israel,” what about the Jewish nation/State of Israel? How should we view Israel:

- a. Are they the legitimate heirs to all God’s promises to Abraham & his descendants? What do John (& Paul) say?
- b. Does the State of Israel have a Biblical warrant to possess the “Promised Land”?