

## On your marks

The 'I am' statements in John's gospel are a rich source of imagery to draw on when talking with children about who Jesus is. However some of these seem easier to work with than others. Jesus being 'the Good Shepherd' or 'The Door' or 'The Bread of life' is perhaps more readily grasped than some of the other pictures that Jesus uses. In addition there is the fact that these statements are very much tied up with cultural, historical and religious understandings, which aren't that accessible to us today and certainly not for children. The following outline tries to explore the statement 'I am the True Vine' from John 15 with connections to everyday life today that might help your group better work out what Jesus was trying to say.

## Get set

The context for this 'I am' statement is John 15:1 -11

You will need: pictures of trees; a large sheet of A3 paper for your mystery drawing; some seedless grapes, plus possibly raisins and grape juice; pale brown paper; pale purple and pale green paper; colours; scissors; glue sticks.

## Go!

1. Show some pictures of trees from an encyclopedia or examples of trees in clip art.  
How many different types of trees do you know?  
Which are your favourites?  
What do we need trees for? (oxygen, wood, natural beauty, fruits)  
You could turn this into a guessing game/quiz maybe?  
2. Now ask the group to watch carefully as you draw an unusual tree. I wonder what sort of tree you think this is?  
Draw a very squiggly tree, where the trunk and the branches bend and twist in different directions, with hardly any significant, straight bits and also where the 'trunk' isn't really much grander than its branches.
2. I wonder what you could call this sort of tree? In fact it really is a tree but it isn't much good as wood as there are no straight bits; it isn't much good for oxygen as it doesn't have many leaves; and it isn't much good as something beautiful as it isn't very tall and colourful!
4. In fact it is only really good for one thing...its fruit! Any ideas? It is a vine-tree (or stock)...a tree that produces grapes. You may have a picture (or clip art) you could show.  
It may not be very beautiful but it is one of the main trees you find in the warm countries around the Mediterranean and of course in Israel/Palestine.
3. Why not have a brief taste-in? Introduce some black grapes and some green grapes (both seedless) and let the group have some to eat. Which do they prefer? What else can we get from the vine? (You could go on to have some raisins or have some grape juices to share)  
6. Jesus used the vine-tree to say something about himself and us. Read some verses from John 15.  
Listen out for...



who the gardener is,  
who the vine tree is,  
who the branches are,  
what the fruit is,  
and what the sap is that keeps the whole thing growing.<sup>7</sup> Prepare for a grand joint piece of artwork!

You will need to create lots of long twisty branches in pale brown (cut from the pale brown paper) to be the vine and its branches.

You will need lots of largish oval, pale purple or pale green grape-shapes (in proportion to the branches, if possible!)

8. On the main branches write JESUS in large letters on their side, going up the stems.  
On the branches write the names of as many people from your church as can fit;  
On the grapes write the sort of loving things the church or individuals do/could do for God as they 'live'/'abide' in Jesus and he in them.
9. If the children are willing, display their finished artwork so that it can be shared with rest of the church family.  
You could invite others to come and add other words on the grapes!