

The Balanced Christian Life

A simple wheel that shows how a healthy follower of Jesus rolls forward

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

JOHN 15:5

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	A healthy Christian life is like a wheel: Jesus at the center (abiding), four spokes that keep it strong (prayer, teaching, fellowship, service), and a rim that touches the world (witness). Leave one out and the ride gets wobbly.
SCRIPTURE	John 15:5 · Acts 2:42-47 · 2 Corinthians 5:11-21
LENGTH	About 20 to 25 minutes
BEST FOR	Middle school and high school; a good kickoff for a new year or a new group
YOU WILL NEED	A whiteboard or poster with the wheel drawn ahead of time (hub: <i>Abide</i> ; rim: <i>Witness</i> ; spokes: <i>Prayer, Teaching, Fellowship, Service</i>)

Start here: ever ridden a bike with a bent wheel?

If a bike wheel has a broken spoke or a bent rim, it wobbles. You can still ride it for a while, but it's harder, slower, and eventually something gives. A lot of Christians are riding through life on a wobbly wheel. They love Jesus, but something important is missing, and they can't figure out why following Him feels so hard.

Here is a simple picture of a balanced Christian life. Christians have used a drawing like this for many years; Dawson Trotman and The Navigators made a version called "The Wheel" famous. Let's build ours piece by piece.



A The hub: abide (alone with God)

Everything on a wheel turns around the hub. If the hub is loose, nothing else works. Jesus said, "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). To *abide* means to stay, remain, and make your home in Him.

How do we abide? Four simple habits, done one-on-one with God:

Pray to God

Talk to Him honestly about everything: thanks, worries, confession, requests.

Read the Bible

Let Him talk to you. Even one chapter a day adds up fast.

Meditate on His Word

Chew on a verse through the day. Think about what it means and how it applies (Psalm 1:2).

Obey

Do what He shows you. "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me" (John 14:21).

B The spokes: meet together

The spokes connect the hub to the rim and hold the wheel in shape. The very first church shows us four of them:

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." **ACTS 2:42**

- **Prayer and praise.** We pray and worship together, not just alone. Something powerful happens when believers pray as a group.
- **Teaching.** The early Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." We need to keep learning the Bible from faithful teachers.
- **Fellowship.** Real friendships with other believers, where we train together, encourage each other, and are honest about life. "Iron sharpens iron."
- **Service.** The first believers sold what they had and shared "as anyone had need" (Acts 2:45). Serving others out of love is worship in action.

Notice that you can't do these spokes by yourself. A Christian who tries to follow Jesus without the church is like a wheel trying to hold its shape without spokes.

TRY THIS

Have everyone rate each part of the wheel from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong) in their own life right now. Ask: "If your wheel looked like your scores, would it roll smoothly or wobble?" Don't make anyone share numbers; just let them see where the bent spoke is.

C The rim: witness

The rim is the only part of the wheel that touches the road. In the same way, our witness is where our life with Jesus touches the world. Paul says, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Witnessing isn't only preaching on a street corner. It has four parts:

1. **Living a good life.** "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).
2. **Sharing about God in your life.** Tell what He has done for you. Be "ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).
3. **Inviting friends.** When Nathanael doubted, Philip simply said, "Come and see" (John 1:46). Invite friends to youth group, church, or a Bible study.
4. **Leading friends to Jesus.** When a friend is ready, you can explain the gospel and pray with them.

FOR THE LEADER

Students often think the Christian life is mostly about the rim (behaving well in public) or mostly about the spokes (showing up to youth group). Keep pointing them back to the hub. A strong hub produces strong spokes, and strong spokes give a true, steady rim. If time allows, share honestly which part of your own wheel God has been strengthening lately.

Keep it simple

Here are four short sayings that sum up the whole wheel. Write them under your drawing:

- **The key is to be like Jesus.**
- **Know Him and make Him known.**
- **Love Him by loving others.**
- **Get between your friends and hell.**

TALK IT OVER

1. Which part of the wheel is strongest in your life right now? Which one is weakest?
2. Why do you think Jesus is the hub and not one of the spokes?
3. What happens to a Christian who tries to follow Jesus alone, without the "spokes" of the church?
4. Which of the four parts of witnessing is easiest for you? Which one stretches you?
5. What is one simple change that would help your wheel roll more smoothly this month?

TAKE IT HOME

Draw the wheel in your Bible or journal. Circle the weakest spoke, and choose one small step to strengthen it this week (for example, read one chapter a day, text a Christian friend to pray together, or invite someone to youth group). Check back next week and see if the ride feels smoother.

Know Him, and make Him known.

From fifty years of youth ministry by **Ron Whittam**. Share freely with your students and leaders. · The Youth Ministry Living Room · qrprogramming.com/livingroom

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