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# ABIDE

21 DAYS OF PRAYER

READINGS, CONFESSIONS, AND PRAYERS  
TO PRACTICALLY **ABIDE** WITH JESUS

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this 21 day Abide Devotional. One of our Spring Creek values is God's Presence. We value His Presence by making intentional space for His work in our lives both personally and corporately. Abide is our 2022 theme as we together understand and appreciate the necessity of practicing His Presence. We do that by engaging in the spiritual habits that encourage personal time with Jesus. Abiding in Jesus is the baseline for spiritual growth, God experiences, and enabling for the Christ-life. The pages ahead will assist in leading you into daily time with our Lord. The readings, confessions, and prayers will provide ways to practically abide with Jesus. Praise God for the opportunity to draw close to Him.

**Happy abiding!**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Darren". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darren Pilcher, Lead Pastor  
Spring Creek Assembly

## **Readings**

The daily paragraphs and additional Scripture readings will provide opportunity for right thinking around what it means to abide with Jesus. Be encouraged to read slowly with ample time to reflect on what you've read by journaling or highlighting in your Bible.

## **Confessions**

Spoken confessions are part of the ancient church's practice. These words will serve as a declarative way of agreeing with God about who He is, what He's doing and how we cooperate with Him. Feel free to read them aloud.

## **Prayers**

The provided prayers will give kindling for the fires of your prayer times. They are meant to be the beginning of how you might consider praying into the day. Consider using the ACTS of praying – adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication.

*\*All Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version unless noted otherwise.*



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HOME IN HIS PRESENCE



# PART 1

HOME IN HIS PRESENCE

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# WELCOME HOME

House is an object; home is an environment. During the holidays, many of us went to houses or homes based on the relationship and good-feelings. John 15:4 says, "Abide in me, and I in you..." The Greek word for abide is *meno* which is translated from Latin as lodging, staying or remaining. If you are anything like me, you don't stay where you don't feel welcomed. When we are welcomed home in God's Presence, we are wanted there based on His loving invitation and the relationship He has initiated for us. And, if we are in Christ, it comes with all the good feelings of knowing that we are family with the God-head. We don't have to come in regret or fear, but in respect, admiration and appreciation with expectation that God will always meet us. And He will always say, "Welcome Home!" **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 91; 2 CORINTHIANS 6:16; REVELATION 21:3-4

## CONFESSION

I'm welcomed home in God's Presence because of what Christ has done for me. This is my privilege to enjoy as a child of God. So, I come into His Presence without regret or fear and in admiration, celebration and appreciation with expectation that God is here with me now. I receive the blessings of being home with God.

## PRAYER

Father God, teach me what it means to enjoy your Presence and live at home with You. Thank you for making it possible through Your Son. Help me to know you as a gracious Father who wants to bless and strengthen me by being with You. And lead me in benefiting from a daily and ongoing schedule with You. I pray this in the life-altering name of Jesus Christ.

AMEN.



## STAY AWHILE

Hot tea seems appropriate for this time of year. But those who drink it know that when you sip on a warm cup of tea, being in a hurry is not how you enjoy it. Similarly, in order for sipping to be enjoyed, steeping has to occur. In other words, taking the tea bag out of the hot water and back in again in a repeated fashion is not the way to make a good hot tea experience. The tea bag has to sit in the hot water for some time. John 15:5 says, “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” No steeping, no sipping. No abiding, no abundance. When we come to be at home with God in abiding, we are meant to stay awhile. Don’t just “make hot tea.” Don’t rush the experience. Stay awhile and enjoy what it means to steep and sip in His Presence. **That’s abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 84; ISAIAH 40:28-31; PHILIPPIANS 3:8-11

## CONFESSION

Waiting in God’s Presence is where my strength is found. I’m not in a hurry with God. Everything for my day is in the waiting, slowing down, and enjoying. I reflect on God’s goodness and faithfulness in my life. My assignment is tied to my abiding.

## PRAYER

Father God, help me to enjoy You as you enjoy me. I receive the strength from waiting in Your Presence. Slow me down. Engage my heart in what I’ve read, confessed, and what You are doing in and through me. I pray this in the all-powerful name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## JESUS, THE HOST AND GUEST

When I was growing up, it was a regular occurrence to have my grandmother (my mom's mom) come to stay for extended periods of time. She was our guest, but she also became the host. How? She voluntarily (and sometimes by request) made her famous moist buttermilk biscuits for everyone in our family to enjoy. In Luke 14, Jesus was an invited guest who ended up teaching as the host. He said to the man who had invited him as a guest in his home as He saw so many of the other guests choosing places of honor around the table: "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind..." The typical host and guest serve completely different roles. The host is the giver and the guest is the recipient. When it comes to being welcomed home in God's Presence, Jesus is the inviter and the invited. There wouldn't be a party without Jesus. He's responsible for our connection to the Divine but He's also blessed by our presence. We can't give anything to God that He doesn't already have. Jesus is always the guest of honor, but we wouldn't have an environment without Him being there. Let's graciously welcome Him to do His beautiful work. For He is the Host and Guest as we are welcomed home in God's Presence. **That's abiding.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 16:11; LUKE 14:1-14; PHILIPPIANS 1:6; 1 THESSALONIANS 5:19

### CONFESSION

I invite Jesus to do His work in and through my life today. He is the host and guest of my heart. The Holy Spirit makes His work real in me. I believe that He who is welcomed is working. I am the temple of the Holy Spirit, and He who began a good work in me is faithful to complete it.

### PRAYER

Father God, I invite your Spirit to work in and through me today. Help me to entertain the Holy Spirit and not quench His fire in me. May I make space for Jesus as the guest of my heart and the host of His wonderful work. I pray this in the gracious name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**





## WASH UP FOR DINNER

I can still hear those parental instructions as a child. My boyhood experiences included a lot of outside adventures – riding my bike on ramps and dirt paths, pushing my miniature cars through wet mud, climbing high up in the trees and playing quarterback for our neighborhood team. Dust and sweat were almost a guarantee coming into dinner time. So, mom wasn't playing when she said, "Wash up." Jesus says in John 15:3, "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." Of course, I didn't get clean as a boy because of something good inside of me. Rather, it was the water and soap applied. Jesus told his disciples that they were clean already because they heard, received and believed the words He spoke to them. So it is with us. Hearing the Word of the Lord, receiving it as God's Word, and believing its authenticity and application makes us prepared for further spiritual growth. Let's feast on that Word as it prepares and nourishes us. **That's how we abide in Christ.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 119:1-16; 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

### CONFESSION

I take God at His Word by reading it, receiving it and believing it. It is strong enough to heal me, prepare me, and strengthen me for all that this day means. I walk prepared and nourished by the Words of the Lord.

### PRAYER

Father God, Your goodness comes to me by Your Word. Prepare me for present and future growth. Give me a heart and hunger for Your Word. By Your grace, I choose to receive and believe it as nourishment to guide my attitudes, appetites and actions. I pray this in the all-wise name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## SUPERNATURAL SUPPER

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Dear branch of the vine, you cannot produce any fruit without the sap of the vine!” That’s supernatural supper, lunch, breakfast. It’s supernatural because this kind of life doesn’t come to us naturally. There is nothing we can do to gain the strength that is manifested in fruitfulness except come to the table. It’s amazing how fast our children grow into adulthood. Frankly, it’s the meals that are doing it – one after another. And, because of those meals, they grow and reach potential that would otherwise be more difficult for them. And we as parents want that for our children. Jesus says in John 15:8, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” Do you want to be effective, make a difference, be a loving member of society? Come to the supper of the supernatural. Don’t underestimate what our connection to the vine produces for us and through us. The sap of the Vine to the branches is supernatural. **That’s abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 34:8-10; JOHN 21:1-14; 1 PETER 2:1-3

## CONFESSION

I stay connected to the Vine because apart from Him, I’m malnourished and weak, but connected to Him, I am strong and supernaturally equipped for every good work. I feast on my connection to Christ. Nothing else satisfies.

## PRAYER

Father God, enable me to stay connected to the Vine. Help me to see how my abiding equips me to live fruitfully. May Your grace cause me to take full advantage of that supernatural connection. I pray this in the awesome name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## COME OFTEN

I fondly remember the trips we would take to visit my dad's parents. As we would depart, my granddad would cry. And my little grandmother almost couldn't handle it when we would walk out the front door after a brief stay during the holidays. She would say in a cute but emotive voice, "Please come back soon. It won't take you long to spend a couple of weeks with me." Do you know how similar that heart is to our Master's heart? This ongoing connection to the Vine, as we intentionally spend time with Him, is not only life-giving, but is such a large expression of this holy relationship. I guess it could be described as not leaving and coming back often at the same time. Psalm 1:1-2 say, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." It's the "day and night" kind of lifestyle. There is no life apart from Christ, and yet coming often is about the relationship that has been afforded to us, by His own initiative. So, come often. Consider during this 21-day journey to meet with Him three times a day: as you start your day, a continuing moment during midday, and closing your day with Him. Life gets busy, I know. But remember the heart behind why we come. It's desire, not duty. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 1:1-6; DANIEL 6:10-11; HEBREWS 10:19-22

## CONFESSION

The Father welcomes me to come again and again. I come boldly in the name of Jesus with reverence and gratitude. This is a privilege and I eagerly take advantage of it. My heart is stilled, my mind is steadfast, and my spirit is alive to His Words.

## PRAYER

Father God, give me the desire to come often into Your Presence. Coming in duty will make this more transactional. Return me to my first love in You. Fill me with the understanding and value of what it means to come often in your presence. I pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## COME EARLY

How many times have you heard a friend or family member say that it's okay to come early? There's the set time for the gathering, but the argument is why wait until then if you want more or even personal time with them. The food is fresh, the environment is clean and the hospitality is ready. Psalm 5:3 says, "O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch." We are always welcome home in His Presence. So, coming early is not only a part of the invitation but it is very much the expectation of Father God. He is ready to hear from you at the start of every day. You are fresh, the environment is ready and He is anticipating your arrival. Early is the invitation and the expectation. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 57:1-11; MARK 1:35-39; 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

## CONFESSION

I am always welcome home in Father God's Presence. Early is good for me and Him. I find freshness and energy from time spent with my Father at the beginning of each day. He who never sleeps or slumbers is ready to work in and through my life for His glory.

## PRAYER

Father God, glory to Your name. Thank you for welcoming me morning, noon or night. May I find fuel for the day as I spend time with you at the start of each day. Give me the energy to make that choice and help me to see the benefits. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



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# PART 2

THE VINE, THE VINEDRESSER,  
& THE VINEYARD

ABIDE | 21 DAYS OF PRAYER

## THE WORD PICTURE

I recently learned that in the United Kingdom, in a location among the greater London area called Hampton Court, there is a grapevine that is reported to be the oldest living vine. It is over 250 years old. According to particular sources, this grapevine has a base that is 13-foot in diameter with some of the branches that reach over 120 feet in length. Despite its age, the average crop of black dessert grapes from this vine is over 600 pounds each year with a high of almost 850 pounds in one year which was the best crop ever. Although some of the branches are 120 feet from the main root, they still bear the sweet and delicious fruit because they are connected to the vine. Jesus said in John 15:1, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser." The brilliance of Christ's ability to get a truth across to us is used time and again throughout His teachings. This word picture conveys the nonnegotiable necessity of our connection to Him and what His life provides in our lives. He is making it crystal clear for us so we can benefit as He intended. Lean in, listen, and lock in with bigtime attentiveness to this truth. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

ZECHARIAH 8:11-13; JOHN 15:1-11; GALATIANS 5:22-23

## CONFESSION

I hear, listen, and receive the Word of the Lord today. My mind comprehends the good things God has for me. The Spirit is making alive the truths in Scripture. I am being changed and renewed by what I believe and receive.

## PRAYER

Father God, You are speaking from Your Word to me. May I see it as a personal word. Give me the strength to assess it and apply it in Your will for me. Thank you for making it understandable and fruitful in my life. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## KEY PLAYERS

At the summer Olympic games of 1992, a group of key players with household names was put together to create the ultimate basketball talent. That group was called the Dream Team. Members such as Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson and Larry Bird made them seemingly indispensable. The Vinedresser, the Vine, and the Branch are a winning combination. And it has nothing to do with the branch. John 15:5 says it all: "I am the vine; you are the branches." All we have to do is abide. These Key Players – the Vinedresser and the Vine – will do the rest. Can I mess it up? Sure. My cooperation is needed. The assumption cannot ever be that my part doesn't matter. But the professionals are at work. God is well qualified and tremendously able to make us more like His Son. And we can trust the outcomes all along the way as we remain in Christ. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

EXODUS 3; JOHN 16:12-15; JUDE 1:24-25

## CONFESSION

God is at work in me. He is fully able to make me more like Christ by His Holy Spirit at work in me. I cooperate with Him. And, by my cooperation, I intend to glory the Father all along the way.

## PRAYER

Father God, continue Your good work in me. You are able. So, help me to trust Your gracious and faithful work in my life. May my cooperation and obedience bring you glory. Let me see evidence of my abiding in Your Son in the days ahead. I pray these things in the matchless name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**

## VINEYARD VITALITY

I remember clearly the words of my dad after having to register me for the embarrassing experience of a ninth grade summer school session: “You have far more potential than this.” How much potential do vineyards actually possess? Well, that’s really found in the work of the Vinedresser and the Vine. My dad was challenging me to think in terms of what he saw in me as well as to know it for myself. And that’s what our Father God wants us to see too. Jesus says in John 15:8, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” Our potential as branches connected to the Vine and owned by the Vinedresser is pounds and pounds of fruit. We need to be reminded of our potential. Father God has big plans for your branch. Don’t settle for just existing. Fruitfulness is your potential. And, when we abide in Christ, the vitality of the vineyard begins to be seen. **That’s abiding.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

1 SAMUEL 16:6-13; PSALM 139:13-16; EPHESIANS 1:15-23

### CONFESSION

I am filled with potential. By Gods’ grace, I am fruitful branch in His vineyard. My life is connected to His and His strength is flowing through me. I bless others with my words and deeds. My life matters because I am growing in the goodness of God.

### PRAYER

Father God, I receive the flow of Your goodness in my life. Thank you for making me fruitful with good deeds. May I grow in deeper surrender to you as I abide in Your Son. Glorify Yourself in me. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**





## LET HIM LIFT YOU

The word picture continues with these potentially concerning words from Jesus in John 15:2. He says, “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” Bruce Wilkinson, in his book *Secrets of the Vine*, describes it like this: “A clearer translation of the Greek word *airo*, rendered in John 15 as ‘take away,’ would be ‘take up’ or ‘lift up.’ When the branches fall into the dirt, God doesn’t throw them away or abandon them. He lifts them up, cleans them off, and helps them flourish again.” Here’s the encouraging point of this analogy: We do not have to fear the hands of the Father on our lives. He is working wellness, lifting you up in the sunlight of His Presence to bring abundance in and through your life. Let’s let him lift us up. **That’s abiding.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

NUMBERS 6:24-26; PSALM 27:1; 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

### CONFESSION

I’m encouraged in the Lord. God is my strength and the lifter of my head. He positions me for fruitfulness and I trust His way of positioning me. I will not fear, be anxious, doubt or worry. God is lifting me today.

### PRAYER

Father God, help me to deepen my trust in You. I know you are a good God. You don’t want harm for me. So, give me the ability to trust You in the process of making me more fruitful. You are always good. Thank you for being so trustworthy. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## THE SOURCE

A few years ago, I ran out of gas on an overpass in Springfield, Missouri. There's absolutely nothing good about running out of gas anywhere. A crowded overpass made it that much more complicated. Fortunate for me, I was within walking distance to a gas station. John 15:5 is the magna carta of the Christian faith. Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." The Source is always in whisper distance from where we are located. We don't have to live on empty. The fueling of our spirit man is found in the abiding. It's the flow of spiritual sap from the Vine to the branch. There's never an emergency situation that can't be remedied when the Source is always so available to us. And there's never a dry season that can't be soaked by His nearness. He's leaning towards you. Lean towards Him. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 42; ACTS 3:19-21; PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13

## CONFESSION

God is my strength and portion forever. Everything I need is found in my abiding in Christ. No need in my life is too big for my God to supply. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I am refreshed in the Father's Presence.

## PRAYER

Father God, You are worthy to be fully trusted. Help me when I am tempted to doubt Your ability to provide for me. Strengthen my resolve to keep believing even when I don't feel or see the answer. Thank You for the opportunity to place my confidence in Your direction. You are my Source. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



# STOP THE STRIVING

I've never seen an apple tree working up a sweat, yelling out, "Come on, red and juicy. Red and juicy." I guess you could say that they are just abiding - resting in their root system and the work of nature that God instituted for them. The same would be for us. But we are prone to strive. So, the reminder is found in Apostle Paul's words. Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is..." This same phrase could be said this way: But the result of the Spirit's work is... We are tempted to read the list that follows that phrase which consists of love, joy, peace, and so on, and think that we need to work on producing such character traits in our life. However, that's bad theology and wrong practice. The Gospel that declares there is nothing we can do to earn salvation is also the same Gospel that applies to everyday life. We don't work on loving more or being more at peace. The result of the Spirit's work is allowing Him to work that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and so on. Our consistent time in the Father's Presence makes us more loving, kind, joyful, patient, faithful. As we cooperate with God, His Spirit works the nature of Christ in us. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 127:1-2; MATTHEW 11:28-30; ROMANS 8:1-6

## CONFESSION

Today I walk in rest. This is a privileged position of the believer. I do not have to strive for a peaceful life. My peace comes abiding in Christ. God is for me, I am loved, and His strength is flowing in my life.

## PRAYER

Father God, I sometimes feel like I need to earn something to receive from You. Teach me the grace life. Broaden my understanding of who You are in my life. And strengthen my resolve to trust your supply and not my own. Thank You for your unfailing love towards me. I pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**

## BRANCHES TO BASKETS

I have specific Scriptures I pray over my immediate family members daily. This is a practice I've had for many years. It brings me great joy to pray the promises and purpose of God over them on a regular basis. And it has been an increased joy to see those prayers work. One prayer I pray is Ephesians 2:10. Apostle Paul says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." We were created for good works, to do good deeds. The fruit that Jesus talks about in John 15 is deeds that glorify God. So, our union with Christ produces fruitful living. And the branch of our life is meant to be heavy with the fruit of good works. Actually, the more we abide in Christ and surrender to the work of the Vinedresser, baskets full of fruit are the result. **That's abiding.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

ECCLESIASTES 9:10; TITUS 2:11-14; JAMES 1:22-27

### CONFESSION

By God's grace, I am a fruitful person. I'm not just listening to the Word of God but I'm obeying it. Compassion and good deeds are a part of my everyday life.

### PRAYER

Father God, I do want to live a fruitful and productive life. Help me to see where I've not surrendered to You. May my life reflect the love of Christ to others. Direct me into a more selfless attitude. I accept the help of the Holy Spirit today. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



HABITS AND BASKETS



# PART 3

HABITS AND BASKETS

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## BE HIS APPRENTICE

Dallas Willard, in his book *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, wrote: “True Christlikeness, true companionship with Christ, comes at the point where it is hard not to respond as he would.” One of the Greek translations for disciple is apprentice. The Oxford Dictionary defines apprentice as “a person who is learning a trade from a skilled employer.” Mark 3:14 says, “And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach.” The idea behind abiding is to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus, and to do what Jesus did. Discipleship is found in learning from the skilled life of Christ. When we abide in Christ, we intentionally learn more about how He lived on this earth – in His solitude, His slowed pace, His sleep patterns and His social interactions. As apprentices, we are becoming more than we are beginners, because, though we might be further down the road in our apprenticeship with Christ, we are still becoming. **That’s abiding.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

2 KINGS 2:1-18; MATTHEW 8:18-27

### CONFESSION

I am learning to be with Jesus, become like Jesus and do what Jesus did. God’s grace is my enabler. The Holy Spirit is my guide. I’m connected to the life-source of the Vine. Everything I need to be more like Jesus is found in my abiding.

### PRAYER

Father God, thank you for giving me the perfect example of godliness in the person of Your Son. May I surrender more deeply to the Spirit’s work as He makes me more like Jesus. Help me to embody the practices of Christ in my daily living. I pray this in the life-changing name of Jesus Christ.  
AMEN.



## HOLY HABITS

Spiritual disciplines have been known for centuries as the practices of the Christian life. I like to call them holy habits, because these habits form us. And, they don't just form our schedules, they form our souls. Anne Dillard, in her book *The Writing Life*, said, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing. A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor with both hands at sections of time." Spiritual formation begins with a framework of habits, the sacred scaffolding of our lives. These habits describe and define in many ways how we abide. Apostle Paul tells his son in the faith in 1 Timothy 4:7-8, "Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." Three words that come to mind when I think of my habits: intentional - what needs to be set aside; functional - what needs to be close; spiritual - what is God saying. Enjoy the rhythm of practicing some of these holy habits - reading, confessing, and praying. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

JOSHUA 1:1-9; MATTHEW 6:5-6; COLOSSIANS 3:16

## CONFESSION

Spending regular time with God is where I find strength for the roles and assignments of my days. I take full advantage of the privileged access provided by Christ. I am the chosen and called of God.

## PRAYER

Father God, You are the initiator of all things spiritual and good in my life. Thank you for calling me close. Help me to take full advantage of being home in Your Presence by practicing habits that lead me in abiding. Enable me to be faithful. And thank you for being faithful even when I'm not. I pray this in the beautiful name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## PRESENT IN HIS PRESENCE

Confession time: I've had my share of being present but not really there. I don't know if you can fully relate. But it is not something I'm proud to confess. I find my mind going in many different directions at any given moment. And I have to train myself to be fully present. Tony Reinke, in his book *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, writes: "We check our smart phones about 81,500 times each year, or once every 4.3 minutes of our waking lives." He surveyed 8,000 Christians about social media routines. More than half of the respondents (54%) admitted to checking a smart phone within minutes of waking. When asked whether they were more likely to check email and social media before or after spiritual disciplines on a typical morning, 73% said before. Luke 10:41-42 reveal the answer to a very distracted Martha. "But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.'"

Being present is a challenge in any setting these days. Abiding, however, is very much about the intentional time we set aside to be at home in His Presence. But without our being present in His Presence, we miss the benefits. Lay the distractions aside and listen as He speaks to you. By the way, He is speaking. Listen closely. **That's abiding.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 23; LUKE 10:38-42; JOHN 14:16-18

### CONFESSION

The Lord is my Shepherd and I have all that I need. Abiding in Christ reminds me that He is always with me. I choose to focus on Jesus. I set my mind on things above and not on earthly things. Therefore, my thinking is pure, positive and productive.

### PRAYER

Father God, I tend to get distracted. And sometimes those distractions lead to traps that are set by the devil. Renew my mind in abiding. May my focus be on Christ and what He's provided for me in His life. Thank you for heavenly thinking. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**





## DON'T RUSH IT

Positions of prayer have been an historical study. From early on, people have knelt, laid face down, stood, walked, sat, and even crawled. In a recent trip to Costa Rica, I saw that very gruesome position of crawling seekers all the way down a long aisle in a large Catholic church. Biblically speaking, God honors positions of prayer and seeking that reflect honor for Him and the grace that's offered in a relationship with Christ. Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 3:14-16, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being." Some positions convey a hurried life while others reflect a more holy, unrushed posture. Abiding requires waiting and worshiping. Actually, for me, I've adopted a practice as of late: sitting on the floor with my legs crossed. It's my way of saying that it's about getting ground level with God. Grounded faith is found at the ground level in my relationship with God. Regardless of what position you choose in time spend at home with the Father, don't rush it. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 73; EPHESIANS 1:3-11

## CONFESSION

I am not rushed today. It is good for me to slow down and think about what I possess by being at home in the Father's Presence. I am blessed in the slower pace. And peace belongs to me.

## PRAYER

Father God, there's so much to get done and seemingly so little time to do it. Help me to slow down in Your Presence. Enable me to see the value of what it means to stay in Your Presence longer than normal. Give me a rhythm that is marked by a time of waiting with You. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## TRYING VERSUS TRUSTING

*Put your entire weight on the ropes*, he told me. That was how my first experience in rappelling began. Leaning off the steep cliff was not my idea of pastime fun. But since my then middle-school son had already showed me how it's done multiple times, I couldn't imagine how my man card would be impacted if I didn't follow the instructions of the guide and go for it. So, leaving the heavy lifting to the one holding the rope (the belayer) and the rope itself, I stopped trying and started trusting. I leaned off the ledge and skipped off the side of the cliff all the way to the bottom safely with the good experience that made me want to go again. Proverbs 3:5-6 declare the familiar truth, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." How much of us try to get more spiritual? That kind of trying focuses more on the need for control while reflecting less surrender. Trusting, however, means that my efforts and understanding are insufficient for deeper faith. Hey, let's join in on the adventure of scaling and skipping off of mountains in this journey we call faith. **That's abiding.**

## SCRIPTURE READING

ISAIAH 26:1-8; ROMANS 8:31-39

## CONFESSION

I trust in God. My faith in God is strong because God is strong in me. He is always working good in my life. He is leading me along straight paths. There's no need for me to be stressed. So, I rest in God's ability to take care of me.

## PRAYER

Father God, I place my faith in Your ability to take care of me. Lead me in this adventure of trusting You with my past, present and future. My days belong to You. Grant me the peace that comes from fully surrendering to Your care. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## ABIDING AND ABOUNDING

When I met Dr. Gordon MacDonald, the modern-day spiritual director whose influence has impacted United States presidents and cabinet members, a goal was forever reached for me personally. I've never been more excited to pick him up from the airport and then share time around a Johnny's hamburger before taking him to his hotel for the night. But one of the greater joys was introducing him to others so they could enjoy the benefits of who he is and what he said. Pardon the use of words like abiding and abounding that we may not use much in our everyday conversations, but these descriptions do mean much to the Christ-life. One is what we do and the other is what happens because of what we do - the cause and effect of the Christ-life. And it's meant to happen just like God's Word tells us. John 15 establishes the truth of abiding and the abundance of fruit because of our abiding. 1 Corinthians 15:58 tells us to always be abounding in the work of the Lord. It's the spiritual practice of generosity that comes from our abiding. We abide in Christ and, therefore, the work of Christ will abound (overflow) in our lives. But the abounding experience is also what Christ does through us for others. Stay connected to Jesus and watch the generosity of His goodness flow. **That's abiding.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 78:71-72; LUKE 10:1-2,17-20; EPHESIANS 5:15-16

### CONFESSION

My heart is wide open to God today. My eyes are wide open to the needs around me. I'm ready for God to use me to bless others. My life is not my own. I'm abounding in the work of the Lord.

### PRAYER

Father God, You are working powerfully in me to make me a blessing to others. Sensitize me to the needs around me. Make level paths for my feet. Anoint my connections. Give me the openness from others to share Your love. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



## THE VINEYARD COMMUNITY

Charles Spurgeon, the great British orator, once said, “The social element is the genius of Christianity.” Consider that crowded vineyard in Christ’s word picture. Branch after branch is heavy with fruit established as a community of the Vinedresser’s doing. Oh, how much commonality is shared by every one of those branches. The lifting, the pruning, the positioning, the producing – all the work of the same, loving Vinedresser and life-giving Vine. We come together because we are together in this vineyard community. Apostle Paul lays out the admonishment in Hebrews 10:24-25, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Interestingly, we are never meant to abide alone because we aren’t alone in a growing vineyard. And it’s crowded for a reason: we help each other carry the purposes of God. We are impacted by the fruitfulness of others. We live among the work of the Father as He works in us. Thank God for you. Your fruitfulness encourages mine. Let’s keep stirring each other up to deeper levels of fruit-bearing. Let’s keep meeting together. Let’s make it a habit of abiding in community. Let’s enjoy our small groups, our corporate worship gatherings and our opportunities to serve together. **That’s abiding.**

### SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 133; ACTS 2:42-47; 1 CORINTHIANS 13

### CONFESSION

Your vineyard family blesses my life. I find joy in relationships that stir my faith and encourage my journey. My community blesses others because of the life that flows from Christ to each other. And I am an encourager in that vineyard.

### PRAYER

Father God, praise You for how You have planted me in this local vineyard. I am grateful for the opportunity to grow with the fellow branches around me. Enable me to be a faithful encourager to others in this vineyard by how I abide in the Vine. I pray this in the powerful name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**



