

PURPOSE-LED DISCIPLESHIP

ABIDE

A One Day Retreat Experience

Leader's Guide

Remain in Christ. Receive His life. Bear fruit that lasts.

A companion to

Abide: Remaining in Christ, Bearing Fruit for His Glory

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Purpose-Led Discipleship

Welcome to Abide

This one day retreat is an invitation to slow down long enough to notice what is supplying the inner life. It is possible to serve, give, plan, lead, and keep moving while quietly becoming disconnected from the only One who can sustain us. Jesus does not begin with a demand for more fruit. He begins with an invitation: "Abide in me."

This retreat was created as a companion to *Abide: Remaining in Christ, Bearing Fruit for His Glory*. The book offers a fuller biblical journey. The retreat creates space to receive and practice its central truths together. Participants do not need to read the book before attending. The teaching, reflection, prayer, and exercises in these pages are complete enough to stand on their own.

CENTRAL MOVEMENT Surrender opens our hands. Abiding teaches us where to remain. The day moves from receiving Christ's invitation, to recognizing false sources, to staying through difficult seasons, and finally to living from the Vine in ordinary life.

The Saturday Experience

Abide is a focused one day gathering with four movements of teaching, silence, written reflection, honest conversation, and concrete response. The times below are one adaptable planning example. Change the day, starting time, lunch, and breaks to fit the host setting while keeping the movements in order and protecting private reflection, the gospel response, and closing.

Time	Gathering	Purpose
9:00–9:30	Welcome, gospel foundation, worship, and settling	Begin with Christ, arrive honestly, and become present to God.
9:30–10:35	Movement One: Remain Before You Produce	Receive the invitation to relationship before activity.
10:35–10:50	Break	Rest, refreshments, and quiet.
10:50–12:00	Movement Two: What Are You Asking to Hold You?	Name false sources of safety, worth, and control.
12:00–12:45	Lunch	Eat, connect, and let the morning settle.
12:45–12:55	Quiet return	Reenter the day without rushing.
12:55–2:10	Movement Three: When Remaining Feels Hard	Abide through silence, waiting, pain, and uncertainty.
2:10–2:25	Break	Move, breathe, and receive care.
2:25–3:30	Movement Four: Living From the Vine	Build a life of receiving, responding, and bearing fruit.
3:30–4:00	Closing response and commissioning	Receive, release, remain, and return to ordinary life.

What This Day Is Meant to Do

- Help participants understand abiding as an ongoing relationship with Christ, not an emotional state or spiritual achievement.
- Expose the false sources from which people often try to draw safety, worth, control, or identity.
- Give honest language for remaining with God when He feels quiet, the path is unclear, or life is painful.
- Replace anxious striving with faithful dependence, obedience, rest, and return.
- Send participants home with a realistic rhythm that can live inside ordinary responsibilities.

How to Use the Two Guides

The leader guide contains the full teaching direction, timing, transitions, safety notes, prayers, and facilitation language. The participant workbook follows the same movement and gives people enough substance to stay connected while listening. It also provides private space for reflection. No participant should be required to show what they write.

Preparing the Room and the Leaders

Room Setup

- Use small circles or gently curved rows so people can see one another without feeling exposed.
- Provide a quiet reflection area.
- Place a Bible, participant workbook, pen, water, and tissues at each seat.
- Keep refreshments available without making breaks feel hurried.
- If communion will be offered, prepare it simply and follow the practice and oversight of the hosting church or ministry.

Leader Posture

The leader is not the source of another person's spiritual life. Prepare faithfully, speak clearly, attend to the room, and point people to Christ. You need not manufacture emotion, force vulnerability, or create a dramatic ending. God's deepest work may be quiet.

- Never assume that everyone already knows Christ or understands Christian language.
- Invite rather than pressure.
- Allow silence without rescuing the room from it.
- Use testimony to make truth human, not to make your experience the standard.
- Do not diagnose people or interpret their pain for them.
- Honor wise boundaries and recommend qualified support when needed.
- Keep Christ, Scripture, and faithful response at the center.

Safety and Confidentiality

At the beginning, say that sharing is voluntary. Participants may pass, step out, and keep writing private. Honor confidentiality, but never promise secrecy around reported abuse, danger, harm to self or others, or any situation requiring immediate protection.

IMPORTANT Do not call every pain pruning. God can redeem suffering, but do not casually assign abuse, cruelty, betrayal, illness, or loss a spiritual explanation. Never use retreat language to keep someone in danger or replace pastoral, medical, legal, or mental health care.

Materials Checklist

☐ Leader guide and participant workbooks	☐ Tissues and a clearly identified quiet space
☐ Bibles and pens	☐ Optional closing response cards
☐ Name tags if needed	☐ Optional communion elements
☐ Water, lunch, and refreshments	☐ Pastoral and community support contacts

Retreat Foundation

Anchor Scripture

John 15:4–5 (KJV)

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Central Truth

Abiding is the continuing posture of receiving life from Christ and responding to Him with trust, truth, and obedience.

A branch does not visit the vine when it needs help and then return to independent life. It remains. Its strength, nourishment, growth, and fruit all come through connection. Jesus uses this picture to free His disciples from the pressure of becoming their own source.

Abiding is not passive. A living branch receives, grows, bends, endures weather, and bears fruit. In the same way, believers pray, learn Scripture, obey, repent, rest, seek wise community, and serve. These responses matter, but they are not attempts to earn the life of Christ. They are the movement of people who have received Him.

A Foundation for Every Participant

Do not assume that participants have attended another retreat, read a previous resource, or already understand how relationship with Christ begins. Establish the path simply: trust God before the whole road is visible; receive Christ before trying to produce spiritual growth; remain with Him as His Spirit forms a faithful life.

Christian faith begins with Jesus Christ, not with self improvement or a spiritual experience. Every person has sinned and needs God's mercy (Romans 3:23). Because God loves us, He sent Jesus Christ, His only Son (John 3:16–17). Jesus lived a blameless life without sin (Hebrews 4:15), died on the cross for all our sins, and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). On the cross, He stood in our place and bridged the separation our sin created. Jesus alone provides the way to the Father (John 14:6). Salvation is received by grace through faith, not earned by religious work.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (KJV)

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Four Movements for One Day

1. Remain Before You Produce

We begin with relationship. Participants consider whether their life with God has become centered on activity, information, or proving rather than receiving and knowing Him.

2. What Are You Asking to Hold You?

We name the people, outcomes, achievements, routines, and protective patterns that quietly promise to become our source of safety or worth.

3. When Remaining Feels Hard

We make room for waiting, silence, grief, pruning, and uncertainty without pretending that pain is simple or that faith must always feel strong.

4. Living From the Vine

We move toward ordinary faithfulness, Spirit formed fruit, wise rhythms, community, rest, and a simple plan for returning when we wander.

Opening Gathering

9:00–9:30 | Welcome, Gospel Foundation, Worship, and Settling

Minutes	Leader movement
5	Welcome participants and help them settle.
5	Worship or read John 15:1–5 slowly.
8	Establish the gospel foundation and explain that a focused invitation will come at the close.
5	Explain the purpose, safety, and rhythm of the day.
5	Allow the private arrival reflection in the workbook.
2	Pray and transition into Movement One.

Suggested Welcome

"Welcome to Abide. Today is not a test of how spiritual you are, and no previous retreat, book, or church background is required. Some may have walked with Christ for years. Some may be uncertain what they believe. You are welcome to listen, remain quiet, write, or share only what you choose. We will begin with Jesus and let every response remain honest and unforced."

How to Frame the Day

Say: "Abiding describes an ongoing relationship with Jesus, so we will begin by explaining who He is. Some of you may have followed Christ for years. Some may be uncertain what you believe or may be hearing the gospel clearly for the first time. You are welcome to listen, ask questions, and consider what you hear."

Continue: "We will not ask you to make a decision before you understand what is being offered. Near the end of the day, there will be unhurried time to respond honestly to Christ."

Do not lead a decision prayer during the opening. Establish understanding and safety, then let the truth of Christ remain present throughout the day. The focused invitation belongs in the closing response.

Community Agreements

- Share from your own life rather than correcting another participant.
- Listen without fixing, rescuing, or comparing stories.
- Honor confidentiality within the safety limits the leader has explained.
- Give people permission to pass.
- Make room for both words and silence.
- Return every conversation to truth, grace, and Christ.

Arrival Reflection

Ask participants to complete the opening page privately. Invite them to name what they are carrying, what they hope God might meet, and what would help them become present. Do not ask them to share these answers yet.

Opening Prayer

Dear Jesus, quiet what has followed us into this room. We bring You our hurry, weariness, hope, questions, and resistance. We do not want to perform closeness with You. We want to receive Your invitation and tell You the truth. Give us courage to remain. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen.

Movement One

Remain Before You Produce

John 15:4 (KJV)

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Relationship with Christ is not the reward for fruitful living. It is the source from which fruitful living grows.

Purpose

Help participants recognize that Jesus invites them to receive before they produce. Move them from merely knowing truths about God toward an honest, continuing relationship with Him.

Timing | 9:30–10:35

Minutes	Leader movement
5	Introduce the movement and read the anchor Scripture.
25	Teach: relationship, receiving, and returning.
12	Guide the From Proving to Remaining exercise.
10	Allow personal reflection.
8	Invite paired or small group conversation.
5	Lead the prayer response and release for break.

Leader Aim

Do not make abiding sound like a feeling participants must create. Some will feel close to God. Others may feel numb, disappointed, distracted, or unsure. The invitation is not to pretend. It is to remain honestly in the relationship Christ has opened.

Teaching

Jesus Spoke About Abiding Before the Cross

John 15 is not a speech given after the disciples succeeded. Jesus spoke these words as the cross approached. The disciples were about to face fear, confusion, failure, loss, and a future they could not imagine. Jesus did not hand them a strategy for controlling what came next. He gave them Himself.

"Abide in me" was not another burden to carry. It was the place they could remain when everything around them changed. The invitation came from the One who already knew Peter would deny Him, the others would scatter, and none of them would understand the next few days perfectly. Their weakness did not surprise Him.

This matters because many people hear spiritual teaching as another measurement. They assume that if they were truly close to God, they would never struggle, doubt, become distracted, or need to return. But Jesus gave the invitation to people who would need grace. Remaining includes returning.

The Branch Begins by Receiving

A branch does not wake each morning and create enough life to deserve connection. It receives what the vine supplies. Its fruit is evidence of shared life, not independent effort. That picture confronts the belief that everything depends on us.

Before we serve God, we receive from God. Before we speak for Him, we listen. Before we try to produce patience, love, courage, or wisdom, we acknowledge that the life we need is not self generated. Dependence is not spiritual immaturity. It is the design Jesus chose.

1 John 4:19 (KJV)

"We love him, because he first loved us."

Even love begins as a response. We are not asked to create the relationship from nothing. Christ loved first, called first, gave first, and made the way for us to draw near.

Knowing About God Is Not the Same as Knowing Him

Information matters. Scripture gives us truthful language for who God is. Yet a person can collect facts about God while keeping the heart guarded. We can know the right answers and still avoid honest prayer. We can serve faithfully and still be afraid to sit quietly with the Father.

Relationship becomes personal when truth becomes conversation. "God is faithful" becomes, "Father, I am afraid You will leave me here. Help me trust Your faithfulness." "God provides" becomes, "You know what I need today. Show me what is mine to do and what I must release." Abiding brings what Scripture says into the life we are actually living.

Activity Can Hide Distance

Martha was doing something good. She was serving Jesus. The problem was not that work had no value. The problem was that she had become troubled and distracted in the presence of the One she was trying to serve. Activity for Jesus had begun to compete with attention to Jesus.

Luke 10:42 (KJV)

"But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Some participants may need permission to stop. Others may need courage to obey. Abiding is not always doing less. It is refusing to make activity the source of identity, security, or closeness with God.

Come Without Pretending

We often pull away from God until we can bring Him a better version of ourselves. We clean up the prayer, hide the anger, soften the disappointment, or wait until faith feels stronger. Yet relationship cannot deepen around the person we are pretending to be.

Honesty is not irreverence. The Psalms contain fear, grief, confusion, confession, longing, and trust. God is not threatened by the truth He already knows. Abiding means remaining available to His truth while bringing Him ours.

KEY LINE You do not have to become impressive enough to remain. You are invited to bring your actual heart to the actual Christ.

Guided Practice | From Proving to Remaining

Ask participants to complete the workbook exercise silently. Give them enough time to move beneath behavior and name what they are trying to secure.

- Where have I been working for God without making room to be with God?
- What do I fear would happen if I stopped proving, producing, or holding everything together?
- What truth about Christ answers that fear?
- What would receiving look like in this moment?

Small Group Conversation

- What is the difference between receiving from Christ and becoming passive?
- Why can activity feel safer than quiet relationship?
- What helps truth about God become honest conversation with God?
- What does returning without pretending look like?

Prayer Response

Invite open hands. Make clear that the posture is optional. Allow one full minute of silence before praying.

Dear Jesus, we release the pressure to earn what You freely give. Meet us beneath our activity. Show us where we have known about You while keeping our actual hearts at a distance. Teach us to receive Your love, tell You the truth, and return without hiding. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen.

Movement Two

What Are You Asking to Hold You?

Psalm 62:5–6 (KJV)

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved."

A false vine is anything we ask to supply what only Christ can securely hold.

Purpose

Help participants identify the deeper promises beneath striving, control, approval, rescue, distraction, and self protection. Lead them toward surrender without shame.

Timing | 10:50–12:00

Minutes	Leader movement
5	Return from break and read Psalm 62:5–6.
28	Teach: false sources, hidden bargains, and striving.
15	Guide the False Vines Inventory.
8	Use the two circles of responsibility and control.
9	Facilitate group conversation.
5	Lead a releasing prayer and explain the lunch rhythm.

Leader Aim

Keep the tone compassionate and truthful. False sources are not merely bad habits. They are often places people learned to reach for safety. Naming them is not an invitation to shame the younger or wounded parts of a person. It is an invitation to notice what the pattern promises, what it costs, and how Christ meets the deeper need.

Teaching

Every False Source Makes a Promise

We rarely choose control because we love feeling exhausted. We choose it because it promises protection. We rarely chase approval because rejection feels enjoyable. Approval promises belonging. Performance promises worth. Constant activity promises that painful thoughts will not catch us. Rescue promises that if everyone else is okay, we will finally be safe.

The behavior may look different from person to person, but the deeper question is the same: What am I asking to hold me?

A good gift can become a false source. Work, marriage, parenting, ministry, friendship, routines, leadership, and community all matter. The problem begins when a gift is required to become our vine. No person, role, outcome, or practice can bear the weight of being our source of life.

Hidden Bargains Keep Us Striving

A hidden bargain sounds like this: If I do enough, then I will be safe. If I stay useful, then I will not be left. If I understand everything, then I will not be hurt. If everyone approves, then I can rest. If I keep rescuing, then I will be needed.

These bargains are exhausting because the promised finish line keeps moving. There is always one more reaction to manage, one more problem to solve, one more sign of approval to collect, or one more possibility to prepare for.

Christ does not shame us for wanting safety, love, purpose, or belonging. He shows us that the false vine cannot provide them without also demanding our peace. He invites us to receive from Him what we have been trying to force from something smaller.

Self Protection Can Outlive the Season That Formed It

Some protective patterns were learned in real pain. Becoming hyperaware may once have helped someone notice danger. Remaining useful may have reduced conflict. Staying quiet may have felt safer than telling the truth. Taking care of everyone else may have been the only available way to preserve connection.

We do not mock those patterns. We thank God for the ways a person survived, and then we ask whether the same pattern is now keeping them from receiving healthy relationship, wise help, rest, or truth.

CARE NOTE Abiding never requires someone to ignore danger, remain in abuse, abandon wise boundaries, or call harmful control spiritual leadership. Trust in God and appropriate protection can exist together.

Faithful Effort Is Not Anxious Striving

Abiding does not remove responsibility. A branch is alive and responsive. Faithful effort carries what God has actually entrusted to us. Striving tries to control results, timing, people, and meanings that do not belong in our hands.

Faithful effort can rest because God remains God while we stop. It can receive correction without treating correction as proof of worthlessness. It can ask for help. It can take the next clear step without inventing the entire path.

Ephesians 2:10 (KJV)

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Grace comes before good works. We do not work so that God will make us His. In Christ, we belong to Him, and our lives become a response to that belonging.

Guided Practice | False Vines Inventory

Ask participants to choose one current pattern. They will name the source, the promise it makes, what it demands, what it costs, and the truth Christ offers. Remind them that they do not have to choose the most painful issue in the room. They can begin where they have enough safety and clarity.

Two Circles

Have participants draw one circle labeled "What God has entrusted to me" and another labeled "What I have tried to control." Encourage concrete answers. Responsibility might include telling the truth, setting a boundary, completing today's work, asking for help, or apologizing. Control might include another person's response, the timing of an outcome, being understood by everyone, or preventing every possible loss.

Small Group Conversation

- Why do false sources often feel dependable even when they are exhausting us?
- How can a good gift become something we ask to be our vine?
- What is the difference between responsibility and control?
- How can we release a protective pattern without shaming the need beneath it?

Prayer of Release

Dear Jesus, show us what we have asked to hold what belongs in Your hands. We bring You the need beneath the pattern. Where we want safety, meet us with Your presence and wisdom. Where we want worth, remind us whose we are. Where we want control, show us our next faithful responsibility and help us release the rest. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen.

Lunch | 12:00–12:45

Let lunch be warm and unforced. Do not turn every table into another teaching session. Offer one optional prompt: "What truth from the morning do you want to give room to settle?" Protect the final ten minutes after lunch as a quiet return rather than filling them with announcements.

Movement Three

When Remaining Feels Hard

Isaiah 50:10 (KJV)

"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."

Faith is not proven by always feeling God near. Sometimes abiding means staying with Him when the path is dark and the heart has no easy answer.

Purpose

Give participants honest, biblical language for seasons of silence, waiting, grief, pruning, and uncertainty. Teach lament, discernment, and the next faithful step without oversimplifying pain.

Timing | 12:55–2:10

Minutes	Leader movement
5	Return quietly and read Isaiah 50:10.
30	Teach: silence, pruning, lament, and discernment.
15	Guide Name the Season and an honest prayer.
10	Teach and practice the discernment path.
10	Facilitate group conversation.
5	Close in prayer and transition to break.

Leader Aim

Do not rush participants toward a cheerful conclusion. The goal is not to make every painful season make sense. The goal is to show that honest grief, patient trust, wise action, and continued relationship with God can exist together.

Teaching

Silence Is Not the Same as Absence

There are seasons when Scripture feels alive and prayer feels close. There are also seasons when the same practices feel quiet. A person may obey and still not see the path. Isaiah 50:10 speaks directly to someone who fears the Lord and obeys His voice, yet walks in darkness and

has no light. The darkness in that verse is not proof of rebellion. The instruction is to trust and stay upon God.

We often measure relationship by what we feel in the moment. Feelings matter, but they are not the whole truth. A quiet season may expose the question beneath our faith: Will I remain only when I can sense immediate reassurance, or will I stay with the character of God I have come to know?

This is not pretending that silence is easy. It is refusing to let silence write the final interpretation of God's character.

Pruning Is Care, but Not Every Pain Is Pruning

John 15:2 (KJV)

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Pruning removes what drains or limits healthy growth. In a believer's life, God may use correction, conviction, changed priorities, closed seasons, or the surrender of something that can no longer remain central. Pruning can be painful because even needed change involves loss.

But leaders must be careful. Not every loss is a personal lesson God sent. Not every illness, betrayal, abuse, or tragedy should be labeled pruning. Jesus' words reveal the Father's purposeful care; they do not give us permission to explain another person's suffering from the outside.

A safer question is not, "Why did God do this to me?" A safer question may be, "God, where are You meeting me in what has happened? What are You protecting, revealing, strengthening, or asking me to release now?"

Lament Is a Way of Remaining

Lament does not turn away from God. It turns toward Him with what hurts. Psalm 13 begins with "How long?" and ends with trust. David does not skip from pain to praise. He brings the relationship through the whole movement.

- Turn toward God: address Him rather than only rehearsing the pain inside yourself.
- Tell the truth: name what happened, what is missing, and what you fear.
- Ask clearly: request help, wisdom, protection, comfort, or direction.
- Choose the next trust: remember one true thing about God without denying what still hurts.

Lament protects us from two extremes. We do not have to deny pain in order to sound faithful, and we do not have to leave the relationship because pain exists.

A Lamp Is Enough for the Next Step

Psalm 119:105 (KJV)

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

A lamp gives enough light for the ground immediately ahead. It does not reveal every mile. Sometimes we ask for the entire future because trust feels too costly. God may answer by making one responsibility clear while leaving the outcome unknown.

Discernment begins with what God has already spoken in Scripture. The Holy Spirit will not guide us to contradict the Word He inspired, excuse sin, manipulate another person, abandon wisdom, or make someone else responsible for our obedience.

When the path is unclear, slow down when time allows. Examine motives and fruit. Seek wise counsel from people who know Scripture and are not invested in controlling the outcome. Remain correctable. Take the next clear step without inventing the rest of the path.

Guided Practice | Name the Season

Invite participants to name the season without forcing an interpretation. Their words may include waiting, grief, rebuilding, correction, uncertainty, fruitfulness, weariness, or transition. Then ask them to write a four movement lament: turn, tell, ask, trust.

A Discernment Path

- Scripture: What has God already made clear?
- Character: Does this direction reflect the character of Christ?
- Fruit: What is this producing in me and around me?
- Motive: What fear, desire, wound, or outcome may be influencing me?
- Counsel: What do wise and trustworthy believers recognize?
- Time: Is urgency forcing a conclusion that wisdom would let mature?
- Obedience: What is the next clear step that belongs to me?
- Correction: Am I willing for God to redirect me?

Small Group Conversation

- What makes it difficult to remain when God feels quiet?
- How does lament differ from giving up on God?
- Why is it harmful to label every painful experience pruning?
- What does faithfulness look like when only the next step is visible?

Prayer Response

Dear Heavenly Father, meet us in what we cannot explain. Keep us from pretending, hiding, or forcing an answer. Give us courage to lament, wisdom to recognize what is ours to do, and humility to receive correction and help. When we cannot see the whole path, teach us to stay upon You and walk in the light You have given. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen.

Movement Four

Living From the Vine

Colossians 2:6–7 (KJV)

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Abiding becomes visible not through a perfect routine, but through a life that keeps receiving, responding, obeying, resting, and returning.

Purpose

Move the retreat from insight into a realistic way of living. Help participants recognize fruit as the Spirit formed character of Christ and build a simple rhythm that serves relationship rather than performance.

Timing | 2:25–3:30

Minutes	Leader movement
5	Return from break and read Colossians 2:6–7.
25	Teach: fruit, ordinary life, practices, community, and rest.
15	Build the Simple Abiding Rhythm.
10	Allow personal reflection and one next step.
7	Facilitate group conversation.
3	Pray and transition into the closing response.

Leader Aim

Do not send people home with an ambitious plan that becomes a new source of striving. A smaller rhythm that can live inside their actual responsibilities is more useful than a beautiful plan they cannot sustain. Keep the focus on relationship, not scorekeeping.

Teaching

Fruit Is Evidence of Shared Life

Jesus did not tell the branch to tape fruit onto itself. Fruit grows as the life of the vine moves through a living connection. We cooperate with God through obedience, repentance, practice, and truth, but we cannot manufacture spiritual transformation apart from the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22–23 (KJV)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Biblical fruit is not limited to visibility, influence, productivity, or platform. It often looks ordinary: a gentler response, a truthful apology, patience under pressure, integrity when no one is watching, courage to set a wise boundary, willingness to receive help, or peace that no longer depends on controlling another person.

Fruit takes time. Roots may deepen before anyone else can see evidence. A quiet season is not automatically an unfruitful season.

Ordinary Life Is Where Abiding Becomes a Way of Life

Most life is lived in kitchens, vehicles, workplaces, classrooms, waiting rooms, text messages, bills, chores, interruptions, and conversations. We sometimes wait for a quieter season before walking closely with God. The invitation is not to escape our actual lives. It is to learn to walk with Him there.

Abiding may look like pausing before speaking, praying before deciding, confessing quickly, noticing someone who needs care, keeping a promise, receiving rest, asking for help, or doing ordinary work with integrity. Small obedience repeated over time forms a life.

Practices Are Pathways, Not Proof

Scripture reading, prayer, worship, solitude, rest, and community can help turn our attention toward Christ. They become harmful when we treat them as proof that we deserve God's nearness. Missing a morning routine does not mean we have lost access to God for the day. We can return at breakfast, in the car, during a difficult conversation, or while folding laundry.

A healthy practice serves relationship. When a rhythm stops serving relationship, adjust it without abandoning the relationship.

We Remain Personally, but Not Alone

No other person can abide for us, but healthy Christian community helps us remember truth, recognize blind spots, receive encouragement, and carry burdens. Community should point us toward Christ rather than teaching us to depend on a leader as our source.

Healthy community honors Scripture, truth, grace, questions, wise boundaries, repentance, and safety. It does not demand control, force disclosure, excuse harm, or make belonging depend on constant agreement.

Rest and Return Belong in the Rhythm

Rest declares that God remains God while we stop. Return declares that failure does not have to become hiding. Participants will miss rhythms, react poorly, become distracted, or recognize striving again. The answer is not to wait until they feel worthy. It is to confess, receive correction, repair what is theirs to repair, and come back to Christ.

Guided Practice | A Simple Abiding Rhythm

- Receive: What small, realistic space will help me receive Scripture?
- Respond: What ordinary moment will remind me to turn toward God in prayer?
- Obey: What next faithful step has already become clear?
- Walk together: Who can meet me with truth, grace, prayer, and wise boundaries?
- Rest: What will help me release what does not belong in my hands?
- Return: What truth will remind me to come back without hiding?

Ask participants to choose one practice for each category only if it is realistic. They may leave a category open and revisit it later. The plan is a set of reminders, not a contract proving devotion.

Small Group Conversation

- What kind of fruit might God be forming that is easy to overlook?
- Which spiritual practice helps you receive rather than perform?
- Where in ordinary life do you most need a reminder to return?
- How can community walk beside us without becoming our source?

Prayer Response

Dear Jesus, carry this truth into the lives we actually live. Form Your character in us through ordinary obedience. Keep our practices relational, our community healthy, our rest trusting, and our hearts willing to return. We release the pressure to look fruitful and ask You to make Your life real in us. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen.

Closing Response and Commissioning

3:30–4:00 | Receive, Release, Remain

Minutes	Leader movement
3	Explain the closing rhythm and help the room settle.
5	Allow private reflection: receive, release, remain.
12	Explain the gospel, invite a response, allow quiet, and give assurance.
4	Offer communion or an alternate Scripture and prayer response.
4	Invite willing disclosure, pray, and commission participants.
2	Explain follow through and dismiss gently.

Three Closing Questions

- Receive: What truth or grace am I receiving from Christ?
- Release: What have I tried to make my source, control, or carry alone?
- Remain: What simple response will help me stay turned toward Jesus?

Give participants an index card or direct them to the closing page in the workbook. Keep the room quiet. Instrumental music may be used softly, but silence is also enough.

The Gospel and an Invitation to Christ

Say: “Everything we have explored rests on Jesus Christ. God created us to know Him, but every person has sinned, and sin separates us from God. We cannot repair that separation by becoming better or more religious. Because God loves us, He sent Jesus Christ, His only Son. Jesus lived a blameless life without sin, died on the cross for all our sins, and rose again. On the cross, He stood in our place and bore what our sin deserved. He bridged the gap we could never cross. Jesus is the only way to the Father.”

John 14:6 (KJV)

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Continue: “Salvation is God’s gift, received through faith rather than earned by works. To receive Christ is to acknowledge your sin, turn from sin and self rule, believe that Jesus died and rose again, and trust Him alone as Savior and Lord. This is more than having an experience. It is the beginning of a real relationship with the living Christ.”

Romans 10:9–10 (KJV)

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Suggested Invitation and Prayer

Say: “Prayer is a conversation with God. It is the response of faith in which a person acknowledges sin and need for God, confesses Jesus as Lord, believes God raised Him from the dead, accepts His gift of salvation, and receives Christ as Savior and Lord. Prayer does not earn salvation; Jesus saves. If you are ready, speak to Him honestly in your own words or use the prayer in your workbook.” Read the prayer slowly, then allow one or two quiet minutes without filling the silence.

Lord Jesus, I believe You are God's only Son. You lived without sin, died on the cross for all my sins, and rose again. I know I have sinned and cannot make my own way to God. I turn from my sin and trust You alone. Forgive me. I accept Your gift of salvation and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Come into my life and help me follow, serve, and love You. Thank You for giving Yourself for me, standing in my place, and making the way for me to know the Father. In Jesus' name, amen.

Assurance and a Path to Celebration

After the quiet, say: “If you turned from sin and placed your trust in Jesus Christ today, your confidence does not rest in a feeling or in perfect words. It rests in Jesus, in what He has done, and in His promise that the one who comes to Him will not be cast out. You have not merely had an experience. You have begun a relationship with Christ.”

Then say: “Following Christ is personal, but it is not meant to be hidden or walked alone. If you trusted Christ today, please tell me or another leader before you leave. We want to celebrate with you, answer your questions, pray with you, and help you begin well. If you would like to share with the group, tell us; we would be honored to celebrate with you. We will not put you on display or ask for an immediate testimony.”

Leader Guidance

- Present the invitation once, clearly and calmly. Do not prolong it to produce a visible response.
- Do not ask everyone to repeat the prayer aloud or use raised hands, standing, tears, music, or silence as proof of salvation.
- Invite voluntary disclosure. When someone tells you they trusted Christ, celebrate warmly. Ask whether they would like to share with the group. If they do, let them share simply and let the room celebrate without requiring a testimony.
- Ask gently what they understand they have trusted Jesus to do. Clarify the gospel without turning the conversation into a test.
- Help them begin with Scripture, honest prayer, baptism, and connection to a healthy, Bible believing church.

Optional Table of Remembrance

If the hosting church or ministry chooses to serve communion, present it as receiving and remembering, not performing. Participation should be voluntary. Follow the theological practice and oversight of the host. Do not imply that taking communion proves that someone has resolved every struggle.

1 Corinthians 11:24–25 (KJV)

"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."

"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

Suggested Invitation

"This table is not a reward for people who held themselves together perfectly. It reminds us that Christ gave Himself because we could not become our own source. As you receive the bread and the cup, remember the One who loved first, gave first, and opened the way for you to remain in Him. You do not have to force a feeling. Receive, remember, and tell Him the truth."

If Communion Is Not Offered

Read John 15:4–5 again. Invite participants to hold their index card or place an open hand over the workbook. Allow quiet prayer, then move directly into commissioning. The spiritual meaning of the closing does not depend on creating a ceremonial moment.

Commissioning

Invite participants to stand if they are comfortable. Make clear that standing is not a promise of perfect consistency. It is simply a willingness to keep walking with Christ.

"You are not leaving with every answer. You are leaving with the One who remains faithful. Receive His Word. Respond to His voice. Carry what He has entrusted to you and release what belongs in His hands. Let healthy people walk beside you. When the path is unclear, stay with the Shepherd. When you wander, return. Keep abiding."

Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You for meeting us here. Seal what is true, correct what we have misunderstood, and continue the work You began. Let Your Word dwell in us, Your love steady us, and Your Spirit form Your fruit in us. Help us walk faithfully through ordinary life and return quickly whenever we wander. In Jesus' holy name we pray, amen.

Leader Follow Through

Within One Week

- Send one brief message reminding participants that returning is part of remaining.
- Provide a clear path to a healthy church, small group, mentor, or trusted Christian community.
- Follow up privately only when the participant invited follow up or a clear care need requires it.
- Do not publish or share participant stories without explicit permission.
- Keep pastoral, crisis, and qualified professional support contacts available.

One Month Later

Consider a short, optional check in gathering. Return to the six parts of the simple rhythm: receive, respond, obey, walk together, rest, and return. Ask what has been life giving, what became unrealistic, and what needs to be adjusted without shame.

Continue the Journey

Invite participants to continue with Abide: Remaining in Christ, Bearing Fruit for His Glory and the Walking with God companion devotional. The book gives the fuller biblical foundation. The devotional brings that foundation into ordinary days. Neither is required to understand what happened at the retreat, but both can help the relationship continue.

- Read Abide at a steady, unhurried pace.
- Use Walking with God one part at a time.
- Stay connected to healthy Christian community.
- Return to the workbook when striving or distance begins to reappear.
- Prepare for the next movement in the Purpose-Led Discipleship retreat journey: Identity.

Read Abide and Walking with God at purpose-leddiscipleship.com

Closing Word to Leaders

You are not responsible for manufacturing closeness with God in another person. Prepare faithfully, lead humbly, protect the people entrusted to you, and point them toward Jesus. Trust the Holy Spirit to continue the work beyond what you can see.

Surrender. Abide. Keep walking with God.