

Imagine the place you would most like to spend time in God's presence. It might be walking on the beach, driving through the mountains, sitting in a sanctuary or a cozy chair by the fireplace. God delights in you and as you welcome Him into those spaces they become sacred places.

God has designed us uniquely and the best way to abide in God's presence will be unique to who we are. As you consider the practices listed here, consider how you can make each a means of communing with God rather than an item on your "to do" list.

Prayer • Reading the Scriptures • Declaring who God is • Praise & Worship

Observing special times of hosting God's presence helps prepare us to encounter Him throughout our day. Abiding means we remain and don't depart. God's presence is what your mind returns to throughout the day. You can welcome God's presence into every aspect of your life; Eating, walking, driving, working, Jesus is with you wherever you go,

WRAP-UP

Spiritual vitality begins with abiding in Jesus—remaining connected to Him and intentionally hosting His presence in our lives. Just as a branch cannot flourish apart from the vine, we cannot experience spiritual life and fruitfulness without staying connected to Christ. Hosting God's presence means making room for Him, not simply completing spiritual activities. Prayer, Scripture, worship, praise, and quiet moments become ways of welcoming and communing with God rather than items on a checklist. Because distractions and the demands of life can slowly pull our attention away, we must intentionally create spaces where we can encounter His presence and learn to recognize Him throughout our day. As we practice hosting His presence in our homes, our workplaces, our conversations, and our ordinary routines, those moments of abiding become an ongoing awareness that God is with us. His presence becomes the place our hearts continually return to, producing lasting fruit, deeper intimacy, love, and overflowing joy.

MEMORY VERSE

10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. - John 15:10 NIV

Challenge – Find the time and the place in your schedule to spend an unhurried, uninterrupted time hosting the presence of God.

Abide Awake – Week 1

INTRODUCTION

What does it take for us to thrive spiritually? The first half of John chapter 15 focuses on the importance of abiding in Jesus. The word abide (meno in Greek) means to remain, stay or dwell. Jesus uses a familiar metaphor of a vine abiding in a branch. For those who are gardeners, we know it doesn't take long for part of a plant to shrivel up once it is broken off its stem. So Jesus doesn't want to see us drying up and dying because we lose our connection to Him. This week we will consider why it is vital that we abide in Jesus and how to live in a way that leads to ongoing abidance.

Ice Breaker

Do you have a garden and if so what takes the most effort in the garden to maintain?

Key Passage

9 "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other. - John 15:9-17 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Intimacy with God

God invites us into a close, personal, and ongoing relationship with Him. Yet we often treat time with God as another obligation—an inconvenience

or interruption in our busy schedules—and miss the priceless gift He offers us.

39 "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! 40 Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life. - John 5:39-40 NLT"

The Pharisees had become so focused on reading the “signposts” that they missed their destination. We might similarly feel like we are doing pretty good if we attend services on Sunday, a mid-week Bible study and listen to a Christian playlist or occasional podcast. But is our vine still attached to the branch? Are we making a direct contact with the source of life or, like the Pharisees, are we settling for knowing about God rather than knowing God personally?

Describe how time spent in direct contact with God is different from time spent doing things for God? How does it change your attitude? thoughts? state of mind?

If you are married but spend all your time earning a living and maintaining a home, your relationship will suffer. There needs to be a personal investment in time with your beloved. God loves you and delights in dwelling with you and in you. Bible study, serving and church attendance isn't bad, but it is no substitute for time spent immersed in God's loving presence.

2. Remaining is a Battle

The enemy of your soul is out to steal, kill and destroy. From his first appearance in the Garden, Satan sought to keep us from walking closely with God. He will use any foothold he can gain to lead us away from communion with God.

8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith.. - 1 Peter 5:8-9a NLT

Peter tells us the devil is looking for those he can swallow up and destroy. We are not at war over territory, wealth, or power. This battle is for the souls of God's people. And while this can happen in the epic moments of your life (loss of a loved one, disaster or failures), Satan also whittles away in the mundane moments (everyday irritations, disappointments, or temptations).

When have you found it most difficult to stay close to God? What would you say are some of the common moments you find that your resolve to abide in Him is tested?

Unfortunately, some of us draw from other sources rather than Jesus, the true vine. To maintain a strong connection to Him, we may need to disconnect from competing sources we've drifted into dependence on.

What types of things might we draw from for our source of life that compete with Jesus? How can you loosen its grip on your time and attention and refocus on the presence of God?

34 He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." ... 38 Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak." - Mark 14:34, 38 NLT

When Jesus went to Gethsemane, He asked His disciples to remain with Him (meno) as He agonized in prayer. And when He found that they had drifted off to sleep Jesus knew that their spirits were willing, but their bodies were weak.

Abiding won't come naturally. In the Garden Jesus told his disciples to watch and pray so they wouldn't give in to temptation.

Take a moment now to ask God for His strength as you battle to abide in Him.

3. Moments of abiding lead to ongoing abiding

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. - Jeremiah 29:13 NIV

God wants to be found by us but too often our attention is divided, and we are surrounded by distractions. What does it take to seek God with all your heart? One place to start is by creating a welcoming environment for the Holy Spirit. If you were expecting an important guest, you would prepare your home in a way that makes them feel comfortable. Our time with God is not an obligation, it is an expression of affection. When we invite God into our space, we are hosting the presence of God.

What are some of the things you can do to make the space you invite God into a welcoming environment?