

INTRODUCTION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ABIDE?

Abide. It's a word that doesn't normally come up in casual conversation, at least for those of us in southeast Texas. But the people who *abide* in southeast Texas get the gist of what the word means in phrases like:

- "Let's *abide* by the rules."
- "I cannot *abide* that kind of language."
- "They sought daily to *abide* by the vows they had made to one another."
- "She no longer lives in Texas, but a love for the Lone Star State *abides* within her."

In general, the word *abide* means *to dwell, to reside, to stay, to remain, to continue, to stay connected, to endure*. This can refer to a location or a place, but it can also characterize a frame of mind, a state of being, or perhaps a relationship.

Note how Jesus uses the word *abide* (or as some translations render it, *remain*) here in the Gospel of John:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 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 (John 15:4-5 ESV).

To abide in Jesus is to stay connected to Him, and to depend on Him as a branch depends on a vine. I like how The Message translation conveys it:

Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me (John 15:4 MSG).

I love the idea of dwelling with Jesus, being joined to him in such a way that his presence, peace, and power are dwelling in me. Elsewhere, Jesus says:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything

heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG).

Uh ... yes, please! There is nothing attractive or life-giving about a religious performance treadmill. Instead, we are invited to an unhurried way of living. Jesus knows that you and I long for a pace of life that doesn't feel frantic - like we are actually living the way we were created to live.

Even though this life with Christ could be described as "unforced" and "not ill-fitting," that doesn't mean it comes naturally. It's a learned, intentional way of living - but it is the life we were made for.

To abide in Christ, to walk with Him at his pace, requires intimate connection with Him on a daily basis. That relationship, like any other, is cultivated over time, and Jesus shows us how it's done throughout the scriptures. So, we ask the Holy Spirit for help, and let the Scriptures be a catalyst to help us say 'yes' to Jesus' invitation to abide and live a life in step with Him.

It's one thing to know about Jesus, to go to church every week, read your Bible every day, and even pray every night. It's altogether different to know Jesus, to walk in step with Him on a daily basis. It can be challenging to learn how to do that because it's most natural to walk at our own pace and move when and where we desire.

I remember a time earlier in our relationship when my husband, Jason, and I took a trip to New York City. If you've been to NYC, you know how fast everyone moves. People are always on the go, and you often have to move aggressively lest you get pummeled as you get on and off the subway or navigate the crowds in Times Square.

The fast pace is perfect for me. I love it! Jason ... not so much. I would often hear him saying things like "Wait, don't rush into the street! Do you see that car coming? Easy, Laura. Slow down!"

We didn't die, but we were treated to some hand gestures and colorful language from a few of the drivers.

The truth is we all like to move at our own pace. But while my natural bent may be different from Jason's, over time we have learned how to better appreciate and benefit from keeping in step with one another. God has used Jason to help me slow down, and Jason would tell you he's grateful to God for the richness brought into his life by his beloved Enneagram 7. Right, Jason? Sure.

To sync up our pace with the pace of another can sometimes be very difficult. It's one thing to have Jason telling me to slow down, or even grabbing my arm to keep me from injury or death in the oncoming traffic. But imagine learning to pace your life with Jesus' life - learning to listen to His voice, to discern the nudging of the Holy Spirit, and to move with Him as He leads you. This is what it means to abide.

Okay! Sounds good! I want to abide! I want to remain connected and stay in step with Jesus!

But ... how exactly do I do that?

LECTIO DIVINA.

When strengthening our relationship to Christ, one of the most important things is connecting with him in scripture when we read it. This may sound intimidating at first, but there are approaches to scripture that for centuries have proven to be helpful for people who are seeking to grow in their relationship with God.

One of these is known as “Lectio Divina,” which is Latin for “divine reading.” The process of Lectio Divina views reading God’s Word as entering into it (and, perhaps, letting it enter into you) rather than dissecting it. There is a needed place for study and for dissecting a passage of scripture, but think of Lectio Divina more as a way of praying through a passage of scripture.

**If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,
and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**

John 8:31-32 ESV

The steps of Lectio Divina are **1) reading, 2) meditation, 3) prayer, and 4) contemplation.** As you read through a given scripture, dwell on it and gain a prayerful sense of what the Holy Spirit is prompting in your heart. When allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your heart and mind, you are able to develop a more profound relationship with God and pray about how He wants you to apply what He is showing you to your life and relationships.

In Lectio Divina, the Spirit is leading you to discern the inner message of Jesus - to view Christ as the key to the meaning of the passage - and to say yes to Him. He is the Vine, we are the branches. As 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, “The yes to all of God’s promises is in Christ, and through Christ we say yes to the glory of God.”

What is sourced in the Vine shows up in the branches. Through this process, the fruit that grows in our lives is primarily *Christlikeness*. John Stott noted this in the very last sermon he preached:

I want to share with you where my mind has come to rest as I approach the end of my pilgrimage on earth, and it is: God wants His people to become like Christ. Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God. (*John Stott, "The Model: Becoming More Like Christ." Sermon delivered at the Keswick Convention July 17th 2007.*)

Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” God’s Word can “illuminate” our mind and lead us in the path that He desires. To walk in that path is to abide with Christ. When you pray with scripture, follow the Holy Spirit’s prompting, and apply in your life what you are shown, you are abiding with Christ.

SOME TIPS AS YOU GET STARTED.

There can be great benefit in reading longer portions of scripture, or for doing a deeper study on a word or passage in scripture to gain a better understanding.

While you are welcome to do that, that's not the primary goal of this study. In fact, *this is less of a study and more of an invitation* - an invitation to meet with God as you prayerfully engage with scripture. Truthfully, this guide is pretty stripped down. There isn't a lot of content to wade through. It is basically presented as, "Here's the passage, and here are some tools to help you engage with God as you prayerfully read the passage. Go for it."

It's arranged simply, not so you can just fill in the blanks, check it off your list, and get on with your life. The hope is that this simple, stripped down approach will help you make regular space to meet with God through the prayerful reading of His word - to read the scriptures in such a way that the scriptures read you. The goal is that more and more you are abiding in Christ so that you can experience more and more the life, freedom, and fruitfulness that Jesus has in mind for you.

My hope in this approach is that you will respond to God's invitation to meet with Him in the pages of scripture - to meditate on the passage as I have taught or referenced it in the video, and prayerfully discern what God is saying to you about your life and your relationship with Him and others.

Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of your time with the LORD:

- **Select a place** and time of day that allows you to create an environment that is free from distractions - a place where you can get still and be fully present.
- **Silence notifications** on your phone, or even leave it in another room (I sometimes read the Bible on my phone or another device, but it's so tempting to wander into social media or check messages. If you find yourself doing the same, get an old school printed Bible and set the electronics aside).
- **Grab a notepad** to jot down anything that comes to mind so you can capture it and get re-focused (a work email you need to send, details about carpool, something to add to the grocery list, etc.).
- **Turn on the tunes.** Music may help you focus ... or it may distract you or put you to sleep! If you do use music, something instrumental may help you focus on the scriptures you are reading rather than the hook in the song. But do whatever works for you.
- **Write.** Write down the thoughts, the questions, the observations, the feelings. Capture what is stirring in your mind and in your heart.
- **Share your experience.** You don't HAVE to share this experience with others, but doing it together with a few other people can be so rewarding as you share your learnings (and questions) with one another. Spiritual community is actually part of God's design for fully abiding with Him.

OK! It's time to get started! Make a commitment now to show up for the next six weeks - to accept the LORD's invitation and discover His heart for you. Say "Yes!"

ABIDE.

Week One

One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!” But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

(Luke 23:39-43 NLT)

Lectio Divina (on your own):

- Pray. Ask God to meet with you and speak to you through the scriptures.
- Read the passage and circle or underline anything that pops out at you. Don’t analyze, just do it.
- Read the passage again, asking God why He is highlighting that particular part for you.
- Read the passage again. Ask God how He wants you to take it and apply it in your life and in your interactions with others.

Small Group Questions:

- We’ve talked about “abiding” in Jesus. What does that practically look like for you in this season of life?

- When Jesus was on the cross, there were two criminals crucified on either side of him. one of these men recognized Jesus as the Messiah, whereas the other one mocked Jesus. what was it that enabled one of these men to recognize Jesus’ true identity, and to be saved in an instant?

Notes:

ABIDE.

Week Two

By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them. As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared! They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”

(Luke 24:28-32 NLT)

Lectio Divina (on your own):

- Pray. Ask God to meet with you and speak to you through the scriptures.
- Read the passage and circle or underline anything that pops out at you. Don’t analyze, just do it.
- Read the passage again, asking God why He is highlighting that particular part for you.
- Read the passage again. Ask God how He wants you to take it and apply it in your life and in your interactions with others.

Small Group Questions:

- An ‘ah-ha’ moment is when you have a fresh realization of something – maybe a new truth, or a fresh recognition of someone. It is seeing something or someone in a fresh, new way, that brings greater clarity. Describe an ‘ah-ha’ moment you’ve had in your life. It can be about anything!

- Now think about an ‘ah-ha’ moment in your spiritual life. Has there ever been a time when Jesus made clear His presence and/or love to you? How did this happen?

Notes

ABIDE.

Week Three

Right away a woman who had heard about him came and fell at his feet. Her little girl was possessed by an evil spirit, and she begged him to cast out the demon from her daughter. Since she was a Gentile, born in Syrian Phoenicia, Jesus told her, “First I should feed the children—my own family, the Jews. It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.” She replied, “That’s true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are allowed to eat the scraps from the children’s plates.” “Good answer!” he said. “Now go home, for the demon has left your daughter.” And when she arrived home, she found her little girl lying quietly in bed, and the demon was gone.

(Mark 7:25-30 NLT)

Lectio Divina (on your own):

- Pray. Ask God to meet with you and speak to you through the scriptures.
- Read the passage and circle or underline anything that pops out at you. Don’t analyze, just do it.
- Read the passage again, asking God why He is highlighting that particular part for you.
- Read the passage again. Ask God how He wants you to take it and apply it in your life and in your interactions with others.

Small Group Questions:

- Do you see yourself as a “scrappy” person – as someone who will fight for what you want? Or, do you tend to be a bit more passive, and let things come and go without putting up a fight? Neither is inherently right or wrong, but if something were to get you fired up, what might it be?

- What do you think about this woman who is contending with God? Is it wrong to “wrestle with God”? Why or why not?

Notes:

ABIDE.

Week Four

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. But Jesus said, “No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been.” So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them.

(Mark 5:18-20, NLT)

Lectio Divina (*on your own*):

- Pray. Ask God to meet with you and speak to you through the scriptures.
- Read the passage and circle or underline anything that pops out at you. Don't analyze, just do it.
- Read the passage again, asking God why He is highlighting that particular part for you.
- Read the passage again. Ask God how He wants you to take it and apply it in your life and in your interactions with others.

Small Group Questions:

- It's incredible how a life touched by Jesus can change in an instant. Is there anyone you have prayed for but might be feeling like he/she will never change, never be healed, or never trust Jesus?

- Have you ever felt like trusting and obeying Jesus felt like saying yes to “Plan B” in your life (not what you imagined, harder than you thought, etc.)?

Notes:

ABIDE.

Week Five

But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!" Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

(Matthew 14:27-31 NLT)

Lectio Divina (on your own):

- Pray. Ask God to meet with you and speak to you through the scriptures.
- Read the passage and circle or underline anything that pops out at you. Don't analyze, just do it
- Read the passage again, asking God why He is highlighting that particular part for you.
- Read the passage again. Ask God how He wants you to take it and apply it in your life and in your interactions with others.

Small Group Questions:

- Have you ever experienced a stormy season of life when you really needed Jesus to show up and help you? If so, you can relate to the disciples, especially Peter. Have you ever sensed that the LORD was asking you to do something that felt as crazy/risky as walking on water?

- Do you feel like you're sinking right now? Have you become fearful, or maybe you feel you've taken your eyes off Jesus? If so, take heart! God is not disappointed in you. Consider sharing your experience with the group and allow them to pray for you and encourage you.

Notes:

ABIDE.

Week Six

If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

(Matthew 10:39 NLT)

Lectio Divina (*on your own*):

- Pray. Ask God to meet with you and speak to you through the scriptures.
- Read the passage and circle or underline anything that pops out at you. Don't analyze, just do it.
- Read the passage again, asking God why He is highlighting that particular part for you.
- Read the passage again. Ask God how He wants you to take it and apply it in your life and in your interactions with others.

Small Group Questions:

- What comes to mind when you think about the word "surrender"? Does it seem like losing, or losing control? Why or why not?

- Giving up control can be really tough. Sometimes the way of Jesus can seem to be the very opposite of what feels natural to us, but Jesus promises blessing on the other side of obedience. What is He asking you to surrender to Him right now?

Notes:

Laura Seifert

AUTHOR • TEACHER
SPEAKER • PODCAST HOST



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ABOUT YES. MINISTRIES

This is about drawing all women closer to Jesus through teaching His truth and sharing our lives.

- *Yes. ministries*

Laura Seifert is a Bible teacher, author of *Forgive. Freedom is Worth It*, and founder of Yes. ministries.

Laura and her team lead women closer to Jesus by saying YES to God's promises and trusting Him during seasons of the unknown through in-person and online Bible studies, retreats, podcasts, speaking engagements, and more.

Laura is a featured keynote presenter at numerous events including women's retreats, conferences, and Bible study settings. She has a passion for teaching women and helping them access the profound truths of God's word.

In Laura's Words...

Hi there!

Thank you for taking a minute to stop-by. Let me first introduce myself. I'm a wife to Jason, and mom to Ben and Beth and our super chill pup, Jesse. I get most excited about sharing the hope I've found in the Lord.

On a typical day you will find me grabbing an iced tea from our local coffee shop, jetting to a basketball game, and using that time in the car to make the most of the sweet relationships in my life!

But, that's not where I started! I started in corporate America when I felt God calling me to leave my window office for a ministry job in a trailer (seriously). I've now been involved in ministry for more than twenty years, serving in various roles, but I've always loved working with women the most.

I call Friendswood, Texas, "home" but have quickly fallen in love with the people of Rwanda. Yes. ministries has a beautiful partnership with [Africa New Life](#), an organization that seeks to transform the lives of the Rwandan people through preaching the Gospel and acts of compassion. I'd love to tell you more about it and bring you with me to this gorgeous country one day!

Let's Stay In Touch

Have a question? Would you like Laura to speak at your church or conference? Visit us online and fill out the "connect" form, we will get back to you quickly!

<https://www.yesministries.net/connect>

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Please contact Sherrill Garland at LauraSeifertYes@gmail.com with any questions.