



ESSENTIAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICES



SIMPLE HABITS.
A DEEPER LIFE.



Sunday
November 22, 2026

Psalm 1
John 15:1-17
Revelation 1:9-20

Example Teaching Rhythm

Welcome and Connect: 10 Minutes

This helps people feel connected and more comfortable participating in the study and discussion.

Look Forward: 5-10 Minutes

Share any important church events, service opportunities, or upcoming group plans. Keep this brief but clear.

Look at Scripture: 25-35 Minutes

This is the main focus of Community Groups. Read the selected scripture together and guide the group through discussion questions and observations.

Prayer: 10 Minutes

Invite members to share prayer requests and praises, then pray together as a group. This is a time to support one another.

Explaining the H.E.A.R Method

The acronym **HEAR** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond**. Each of these four steps aims to cultivate an atmosphere to hear God speak.

Highlight - After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, read the passage of scripture, and highlight each verse that speaks to you.

Explain - Explain what the text means. Ask questions like:

- Who wrote this, to whom, and why? What does this reveal about God? What do the key words actually mean? What did this call the original audience to, and what does that reveal for me?

By asking questions, with the help of God's Spirit, and by using helpful study resources, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

Apply - Application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, work to uncover the significance of these verses and the implications they have. Ask questions like:

- What does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or the world that you need to embrace or sit with? Does this passage challenge an attitude, assumption, or habit that needs to change? Is there something to do? Is there someone to love?

Respond - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. Ask: Is there something to pray? - Let the passage shape your prayer, not just inform it. Use the "Five Daily Prayer Prompts" to guide you in your response.

Practicing His Presence Consciously abiding in Christ.

Introduction

If you knew you had one evening left with the people you love, you wouldn't waste it on small talk. You'd say the thing that matters most, and you'd say it twice.

Jesus had that evening. Judas has slipped into the night, the cross is hours away, and eleven frightened men are watching him. He could say anything. What he keeps saying is one word: remain. "Remain in me, and I will remain in you." He says it so often that it starts to sound like the whole point.

It is. For three weeks we've looked at practices: hearing from God in Scripture, depending on him in prayer, following him in service. John Mark Comer, in *Practicing the Way*, says an apprentice of Jesus does three things in order: he is with the master, becomes like him, and does as he did. We love to jump to the third. Today we go back to the first, because without the with, the rest becomes a self-improvement plan with a Bible verse attached. It is exhausting, and it never makes anyone love God more.

Even the name points here. Early believers were simply called people of "the Way," and Jesus had said "I am the way" on this same night (John 14:6; Acts 9:2).

We'll follow one man through it. In John 15, John hears the word remain the night before the cross. Decades later, in Revelation 1, he is exiled on an island, and he sees the face of the one who said it. Psalm 1 stays in the background as the picture of a rooted life and its opposite.

So carry one question all day: when I do good things, am I doing them with Jesus, or just for him?

Discussion Questions + Illustration

Select a question or two below to open up discussion.

- Think of the last time you spent an hour with someone and lost track of time. What was it about that person?
- How can you tell when someone is in the room with you but not really with you? What gives it away?
- Think of a conversation right before a big goodbye, like a move, a deployment, or a hospital room. What did you say, or wish you'd said?
- What most pulls you away from the people you love: your phone, your to-do list, your own worries?
- Finish this sentence and compare around the room: "I feel closest to God when..." Notice how many answers involve doing something.

In the 1600s, Nicolas Herman, a wounded French soldier, entered a Carmelite monastery in Paris. As Brother Lawrence, he spent his life in the kitchen, a lay brother with no title, scrubbing pots while people shouted ten orders at once. After he died, a priest gathered his letters and conversations into *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Lawrence claimed he met God as fully in that clatter as in the chapel. It didn't come easily. His mind wandered for years, and his whole method was to notice and turn back, without scolding himself.

- Filmed on an ordinary Tuesday, which moment of yours would be hardest to picture Jesus standing in? Why?

Highlight | John 15:1-17, Revelation 1:9-20

Psalm 1 stands behind both passages: a tree planted by streams, and chaff the wind blows away.

In John 15, Jesus calls himself the true vine, his Father the vinedresser, and the disciples the branches. The Father removes fruitless branches and prunes fruitful ones, and the disciples are already clean because of Jesus' word. His command: remain in him. A branch can't bear fruit on its own, and one that doesn't remain is gathered and burned. To remain is to stay in his love by keeping his commands, as he keeps the Father's, so his joy is in them. That love flows outward: love one another as he loved you. Then the line that should undo us: "I no longer call you servants... I have called you friends." They didn't choose him; he chose them, to bear fruit that lasts.

Decades later, John is on Patmos, a partner in tribulation, kingdom, and endurance, all "in Jesus." In the Spirit on the Lord's Day, he turns at a loud voice and sees seven lampstands and, among them, one like the Son of Man: white hair, eyes like fire, a sword from his mouth, a face like the sun. John falls at his feet like a dead man. Then a hand reaches down and touches him. "Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last, the Living One. I died, and look, I am alive forever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades."

- Circle every "remain" in John 15:4-10. Who is it said to?
- In John 15:1-17, underline what the Father does, what Jesus does, and what the disciples do. What surprises you?
- In Revelation 1:17, what does Jesus do first: speak or touch?

Explain | Consider the Context

Psalms 1 is the Old Testament picture of abiding: a person planted by streams, delighting in God's word "day and night," set against rootless chaff. Israel was meant to be that planting, but kept bearing wild grapes (Isa. 5:1-7). So when Jesus says "I am the true vine," the life God always wanted has finally arrived, and we get grafted into it.

"Remain" is the Greek *menō*: to stay, to make your home. It is union, not just companionship, since the Spirit "remains with you and will be in you" (14:17). The Spirit rests on the Son. First: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love" (v. 9). We don't abide to earn that love; we stay where it already is. Obedience is the evidence of remaining, not its price.

Pruning is gentler than it sounds. In verse 2 the Father "prunes" (*kathairei*) fruitful branches, and in verse 3 they are already "clean" (*katharoi*), the same word family.

Revelation 1 shows where this leads. John's "endurance" is *hypomonē*, "remaining under," built on the same root as *menō*. On an island of exile, the risen Christ stands among the lampstands.

- When you picture the Father pruning you, do you see a judge or a gardener? Why?
- How does knowing the Father loves you as he loves the Son change how you hear "remain"?

Apply | Discuss as a Group

The vine tells us about God before it tells us about ourselves. Jesus is the source of the life we're trying to live, not just an example of it, and the Father prunes because he expects a harvest. The one who calls us friends is the one John fell before. If you've never come to him, hear his answer to the first two who asked where he was staying: "Come and you'll see" (John 1:38-39).

Most of us drift into one of two ditches. In the first, the practices become the point. We chase the Bible-reading streak until Jesus is the reason we started, not the one we're with, and by evening we're short with the people we love. In the second, we say we're abiding while nothing in our week shows it. A trellis can't make a vine grow, but a vine without one sprawls. The practices are the trellis, and Jesus is the vine.

Jesus warned the church at Ephesus about the first ditch. He knew their toil and endurance, then said: "You have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:4). You can do everything for Jesus and miss him completely.

When something is cut from our lives, we assume he has left. John on Patmos could have thought so, yet Jesus stood among the churches. A closed door is not proof he has gone.

- Was your last week more for Jesus or with him? Rate it 1 to 5 and say why.
- Which ditch do you fall into more easily, and what does it look like in your week?
- Think of a door that closed in your life that you later realized he was in. What was he doing that you couldn't see?

Respond | How should I live/pray?

Think of this week as one long apprenticeship day, with Jesus in all of it. Start the morning by reading John 15:5 aloud and telling him, “I’m staying with you today.” Name the one or two things you expect to handle in your own strength, and hand them over on purpose.

Then carry it into the ordinary. Pick three moments, like your first coffee, the drive to work, or the dishes, and say a short sentence each time: “You’re here.” You won’t feel something every time. The practice is turning back when you notice you’ve wandered, as Brother Lawrence did for years, without beating yourself up.

Choose one person this week and one concrete act of love for them: a call, a meal, a note, an apology. Fruit in John 15 is love, so do it as someone who has been loved, not as one more task.

Somewhere in the week, ask the Father, “What are you cutting, or what should be cut?” Look honestly at your schedule, a habit, or a grudge, because a packed life leaves little room to be with anyone. This isn’t self-punishment: he prunes the branches he intends to keep (Heb. 12:11).

Then ask for the thing underneath it all. First love can’t be manufactured, so pray, “Lord, I’d rather have you than my usefulness to you. Give me back the love I had at first.”

- Which of these practices would you most resist doing this week, and what does that resistance reveal about where you’re still relying on yourself?
- What’s one thing on your calendar or in your heart that you suspect he’s been waiting for you to put down?
- If the people closest to you described your week, would they say you were with Jesus or just busy for him? What would they point to?

Response Tool: Five Daily Prayer Prompts

As you leave today, let these five questions carry the weight of your response into the week ahead – not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation with God. Introduce the five daily questions as a simple spiritual practice that can help us intentionally live out our faith in our workplaces, homes, families, and communities.

- God, where do you want me to go?
- God, who do you want me to see?
- God, what do you want me to say?
- God, what do you want me to pray?
- God, how do you want me to serve?

After this time of reflection, transition into a time of prayer requests. Allow time for members to share and, if appropriate, allow others in the class to pray for each other.

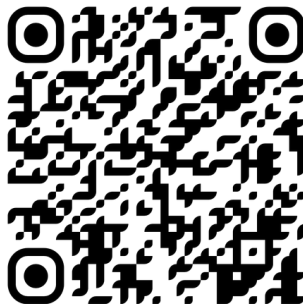
Additional Commentary

- menō (μένω, “remain, abide,” John 15:4-10): to stay, dwell, endure. John uses it for the Spirit remaining on Jesus (1:32-33), the disciples asking “where are you staying?” (1:38), the Father and Son making a “home” (monē) with believers (14:23), and the Spirit who “dwells with you” (14:17).
- hodos (ὁδός, “way”): “I am the way” (John 14:6). Early believers were called people of “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23). In Ps. 1:1, 6, Hebrew derek frames the psalm.
- mathētēs (μαθητής, “disciple”): from manthanō, “to learn,” so a learner or apprentice. Compare Matt. 11:28-30 (“learn from me”), Luke 6:40, and Mark 3:14, where the Twelve are appointed “that they might be with him.”
- John 15:6: Three readings are common: (a) a nominal follower like Judas (13:30), (b) a believer who loses fruit or reward, (c) a believer who loses salvation. Ezek. 15:1-8 supplies the background. Baptist and Reformed readers usually take (a) or (b).
- philos / doulos (φίλος/δούλος, 13-15): Jesus moves the disciples from douloi to philoi (“friends”) because he has made known all he heard from the Father. Compare Abraham (Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23) and Moses (Exod. 33:11).
- mots (ψῆλον, “chaff,” Ps. 1:4): the husk separated at threshing and carried off by wind (Hos. 13:3; Isa. 17:13; Job 21:18). Compare Matt. 3:12.
- kyriakē hēmera (κυριακὴ ἡμέρα, “Lord’s Day,” Rev. 1:10): only here in the New Testament. Compare Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2.
- Rev. 1:13-18: the imagery draws on Dan. 7:9, 13; 10:5-6; Ezek. 1:24-28; 43:2; the sword is from Isa. 49:2. “The first and the last” echoes Isa. 44:6, “fear not” echoes Isa. 41:10, and the touch echoes Dan. 10:10-12. For the keys, see Rev. 3:7.
- Lampstands and stars (Rev. 1:12, 20): the lampstands echo Exod. 25:31-40 and Zech. 4:2-6, and Christ is “in the midst” of them (en mesō; 2:1). The “stars” are angeloi, debated as heavenly or human messengers.

Community Group Resource Page

Visit our website to view our **leadership resources**.

From Community Group training and resources to Discipleship Group starter guides, we want to equip you to make disciples.



Additional Study

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Overview

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