



# ABIDE

A 30-day devotional to help you  
spend time with Jesus

ministry to  
 youth



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Written by Tim Levert  
Edited by Anne Snyder  
Layout by Kaeli Hearn

Ministry to Youth LLC  
1596 North Coast Highway 101 #1034  
Encinitas, CA 92024

[www.ministrytoyouth.com](http://www.ministrytoyouth.com)



Howdy.

A lot of people pick up a daily devotional (what a book like this is called) and wonder what to do with it. Instead of crossing our fingers and hoping for the best, we thought we'd just tell you what you're getting yourself into.

First, the overall theme of all the devotions is **abide**. To abide means to remain or stay or continue. It means that we remain focused on Jesus, we stay aware of His presence in our lives, and we continue to live in response to the things He leads us to say or do. It's a pretty small word with a pretty big meaning.

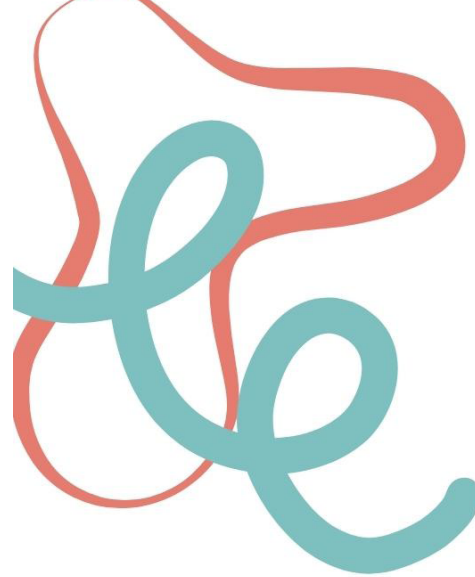
Second, each day you'll see four headings. Here's what they're about:

**Refocus.** Life is busy . . . and distracting . . . and stressful. Most of us could use some help slowing down our brains and clearing our heads enough to hear God's voice. Each day of this devotional, we'll begin with a short, centering prayer to help us focus our attention on the remarkable reality that God wants to spend time with us.

**Read.** We believe God is present when we read the Bible, and one of the main ways God's people have abided in Him throughout history is reading and meditating on His Word. Each day, we'll share a short Bible passage for you to read in a variety of ways.

**Reflect.** When the biblical writers encouraged us to meditate on God's Word, they were encouraging us to think deeply—or reflect—on the biblical texts. Each day, we'll throw out some questions to ponder as we consider 1) what God is revealing about Himself and His ways, and 2) how it applies to our lives.

**Respond.** In James 1, we're encouraged to not only hear the word, but also to *do* what it says. Each day, we'll offer a few thoughts on ways you can respond to whatever amazing thing God just said to you.



Oh, one more thing. Sometimes we get excited about God and commit to doing a devotion like this every day. And sometimes we miss a day (or three) and start to feel guilty. Don't! God loves us, and He wants us to spend time together because we want to, not because we feel bad if we don't. Whatever's going on in your brain to make you feel like God's going to zap you if you miss some days, stop it! God delights in you, so take a deep breath, smile, and jump back in when you can.



# DAY 1

# Refocus

Jesus, thank You for these moments together. Help me put aside all distractions and focus on what You want to say to me today.

# Read

*Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. John 15:4*

Read today's passage again, but this time read it out loud. Change the words "me" and "I" to "Jesus." Focus on how Jesus is with you, He is for you, and He loves you.

Have you ever used a water hose and gotten a kink or a bend in it? The water flows well, but then it abruptly slows or stops.

God designed us to be in relationship with Him—to abide in Him. When we do that, God produces fruit in our lives. (If you're curious what this fruit is, check out devotion #15 in this book.) But just like the broken water hose, when we disconnect from Jesus, the fruit stops flowing in our lives.



# Reflect

Why does a branch that is mostly broken and barely connected to a tree begin to turn brown? Why can't a branch like that produce fruit? How is this broken branch like a follower of Jesus who isn't abiding in Jesus?

# Respond

Thank God that He wants to bring fruit into your life.  
Commit to abiding in Him today.

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# DAY 2

## Refocus

Jesus, may Your Holy Spirit guide me to seek Your presence more and more. I know that it's in You that I find true peace and rest.

## Read

*Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5*

Read today's passage again. Then handwrite it in the margins of this page. Underline the phrase "produce much fruit."

As followers of Jesus, we are connected to a source of love, joy, compassion, peace, and power that is beyond our understanding. We can't force those things to show up in our lives (or in anyone else's lives), but if we abide in Jesus, God brings those things to us.

Disconnect from Jesus, and we have frustration. Stay connected to Jesus, and we have hope.



## Reflect

How do you typically respond to pressure-filled situations? What does it do in you to learn that Jesus said our only job is to abide (or remain) in Him, and if we do He'll bring fruit into our lives? How can that take the pressure off of you to be perfect all the time?

## Respond

Thank God for the way He loves you and the way He brings fruit into your life. Ask God to help you abide in Him today.

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# DAY 3

## Refocus

Jesus, I pause for a moment and think of the love that You shower on me. Help me focus on You and Your goodness in my life.

## Read

*And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Colossians 2:6*

Read today's passage a few more times to yourself, slowing down and paying super-close attention to the words "accepted" and "continue."

Sometimes we confuse our spiritual life by thinking that saying yes to following Jesus is our finish line.

According to Paul, it's actually the starting line of our new life of trust in and obedience to God. We say one big yes to begin following Jesus, but we say a whole bunch of little, everyday yeses to continue following Him. The one big yes gets a lot of attention, but it's the little, everyday yeses that show our hearts how to abide in Jesus.



## Reflect

Why is it important to say your one big yes to following Jesus? Have you said that yes yet? Why is it important to say your bunch of little, everyday yeses to continue following Him? What are some little, everyday yeses in your life right now that Jesus is inviting you to say?

## Respond

Thank God that He invites everyone to follow Him—to say both the one big yes and the bunch of little, everyday yeses. Ask Him to help you trust Him not only for the big yes but also for the little, everyday yeses as you abide in Him.

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# DAY 4

## Refocus

Jesus, I know You are with me. Help me focus on Your presence in my heart, soul, and mind.

## Read

*Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Colossians 2:7*

Read today's passage again a few times. Then write a one-sentence prayer of response to the passage in the margins of this page before you keep reading.

If a big tree had tiny, shallow roots, it would fall over the first time a little wind blew. It would be like a really tall person having little newborn-baby-sized feet. Plus, tiny, shallow roots wouldn't allow enough water and nutrients to wick up from the ground into the tree to keep it hydrated and healthy. It's like trying to drink a thick milkshake with a tiny, coffee-stirring-sized straw. Roots are important for stability and for nourishment.

If trees have good roots that grow deep down into the soil, those trees will be healthy, stable, and fruitful.

If followers of Jesus have good roots that grow deep down into their relationship with Jesus, they'll be healthy, stable, and fruitful too.



## Reflect

How can having deep roots in Jesus help His followers be healthy people, be stable when times get tough, and be fruitful with their lives? What are some things you can do to grow deep roots in Jesus?

## Respond

Thank God for the invitation to say yes to Him through our relationship with Jesus. Ask Him to help you develop the discipline you need to grow deep roots as you abide in Him.

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# DAY 5

# Refocus

Jesus, I know Your presence is in me and around me.  
Help me embrace that You are with me now and  
always.

# Read

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. Romans 8:14*

Read today's passage again. Then use your phone and look it up in at least two or three other Bible translations. (If you're stuck, try NIV and The Message.)

When we say that first big yes to begin following Jesus, God gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit to live within us. The Holy Spirit is God's presence abiding in us, so we can choose to respond and abide in Him. God's Spirit teaches us truths, reminds us of the truths we've learned, and points out the sin in our lives, all so we can make the changes He wants us to make.

The Spirit helps us abide in Jesus and live the life God dreams for us.

We don't earn (or lose) God's love by obeying (or not obeying), but as we abide in Him by saying a whole bunch of little, everyday yeses, our trust in Him deepens and our lives look more and more like God wants. And that's the best life we can live.

# Reflect

Kids look like their parents. What parts of your life look like God? What changes is the Holy Spirit saying you need to make to look more like God?

# Respond

Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit to help you live the best life possible—the life God dreams for you. Ask God to show you areas where you can deepen your trust in Him as you seek to abide.

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# DAY 6

# Refocus

Jesus, may my heart find rest in Your love. Help me live each day with Your love in the center of my life.

# Read

*But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. 1 John 2:5*

Read today's passage again. Then write it out in the margins of this page, putting it in your own words.

When you love someone, you show it in a variety of ways. Maybe it's through the kind words you speak, or the gracious things you do, or the thoughtful gifts you give. You don't do these things out of obligation or fear, but out of love.

As followers of Jesus, we show God that we love Him by obeying Him. Not out of obligation or fear, but out of love. The reason we obey is that we trust Him. We trust that He knows us best and wants what's best for us. Our trust in God leads to our obedience to God, which reveals our love for God as we abide in Him.



# Reflect

What are some areas of your life you can point to where you know you are obeying God? What are some areas you know you're not obeying?

# Respond

Thank God that everything He says for us to obey is best for us. Ask God to help you show your love for Him by allowing His Holy Spirit to help you obey in areas you're struggling.

[illegible]

# DAY 7

## Refocus

Jesus, help me to be fully focused on Your presence. Wrap me up in Your love. Let my heart become one with Yours.

## Read

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! 2 Corinthians 5:17*

Read today's passage again, but this time read it out loud, emphasizing the words "anyone," "new person," and "new life."

In the Bible, we see lots of contrasts between the ways of God's kingdom and the ways of popular culture. God's kingdom is filled with love, hope, peace, and life. Our world is filled with hate, despair, jealousy, and death. Every person is born into this world, and God invites every person also to be born into His kingdom.

When we choose to say our one big yes to Jesus and begin following Him (see devotion #3), we are born into God's kingdom. When we're born into God's kingdom, we're made new, and the old things that used to hold us back are gone.

This doesn't mean that we won't still struggle. It just means we won't struggle alone.

As we abide, God's Holy Spirit helps us say a whole bunch of little, everyday yeses to continue becoming the people God dreams for us to be.

## Reflect

Think back to the moment or season in your life when you said your one big yes to begin following Jesus. What's that story? (If you haven't yet said that one big yes, reach out to someone from your church to talk about it.)

## Respond

Thank God for the gift of becoming new. Ask God to help you say your one big yes (if you haven't already) and continue to say a whole bunch of little, everyday yeses as you live your new life and abide in Jesus.

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# DAY 8

## Refocus

Jesus, I come to You today longing for Your presence. Help me love You as You love me.

## Read

*If you love me, obey my commandments. John 14:15*

Read today's passage again. Then handwrite it in the margins of this page. Underline the word "obey."

Humans are fiercely independent people. Hardly anyone wants to be told what to do. There's usually two reasons people obey authority: One, they're afraid of the consequences. They think, "If I don't obey, I'll get in trouble, so even though I don't like it, I'll do it." Two, they want to win the approval of their authority. They think, "If I obey them, they'll like me more, and good things will happen if they like me."

Jesus flips this logic on its head by connecting obedience to love. We don't obey God because we're afraid that He's going to punish us if we disobey. And we don't obey God because He's going to love us more if we do obey (or less if we don't).

We obey to reveal that we love and trust God, because we believe His ways are best for us and for everyone around us.

## Reflect

Why do you choose to obey God when you don't understand the why behind it? How does obedience reveal your love for Jesus? How are trust and obedience related?

## Respond

Thank God for the commands He gives us, because they're all best for us and rooted in His love for us. Ask God to shape your heart so you'll obey as an overflow of your love for Him and trust in Him as you choose to abide.

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# DAY 9

## Refocus

Jesus, I want to connect with You today. Help my thoughts turn to You today, for in You I find peace and contentment.

## Read

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.*  
*John 14:16-17*

Read today's passage again a few times to yourself, paying super-close attention to the last sentence in the passage.

Jesus' death and resurrection accomplished a lot of amazing things. Jesus broke the power of death for all humanity, giving us the opportunity to reconnect with God and experience eternal life with Him one day. Jesus also broke the power of sin in our individual lives, giving each of us the freedom to live obediently, because sin no longer has power over us.

Jesus also knew we were forgetful people, so His ascension into heaven made the way for His Holy Spirit—the Advocate He mentions in today's passage—to live in every one of His followers.

The Holy Spirit teaches, reminds, and empowers us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength . . . and love our neighbors as ourselves.

## Reflect

If you're a follower of Jesus, how have you personally experienced the Holy Spirit in your life? What questions do you have about how the Holy Spirit works in your life today?

## Respond

Thank God for the gift of His Spirit. Ask Him to help you learn to recognize the Spirit's work in your life and commit to paying ridiculous attention to what the Spirit says.

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# DAY 10

## Refocus

Jesus, I know You are with me right now. Help me quiet my thoughts and become aware of Your loving presence.

## Read

*But as for me, how good it is to be near God! I have made the Sovereign LORD my shelter, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do. Psalm 73:28*

Read today's passage again a few times. Then write a one-sentence prayer of response to the passage in the margins of this page before you keep reading.

All the things you really want in life are found in all of their fullness in God's kingdom.

Throughout the Bible, being in God's presence meant you would experience love, joy, and peace—all markers of God's kingdom. And not just you, but the people around you would experience those things as well because of God in you. That's one of the coolest things about God's kingdom . . . when you abide in Jesus, it's best for you AND for everyone around you.

On the flip side, being outside of God's presence meant you were probably looking for those same things—love, joy, peace, etc.—but you were only finding cheap, imitation, temporary versions of them.

And the people around you were experiencing the fake versions as well.

When you abide in Christ, you stay in God's presence and experience the things of His kingdom. And you end up telling people all about it, because it's really good news.

## Reflect

When have you been in God's presence and experienced love, joy, peace, and a bunch of other really significant things? Who can you tell about the wonderful things God does?

## Respond

Thank God that when you abide in Him, you find everything you really want in life. Ask Him to help you live out the reality of His kingdom and share it with others.

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# DAY 11

## Refocus

Jesus, thank You for these moments together. Help me put aside all distractions and focus on what You want to say to me today.

## Read

*And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. 1 John 4:13*

Read today's passage again. Then write it out in the margins of this page, putting it in your own words. Underline the word "proof."

Everyone feels distant from God at some point in their lives. Sometimes it's because of our own sin, sometimes it's because the world is broken, and sometimes we're not really sure why. In all of those examples, God is near to us. There's nothing we or anyone else can do to make God withdraw or turn His back on us.

Even if we know God is real and our feelings are lying to us, they can still be pretty convincing. And God isn't surprised that we struggle with these feelings, so He's given us His Spirit to help us walk through them.

When you feel alone, God's Spirit whispers in your spirit, "I'm with you."

When you feel like your world is falling apart, God's Spirit says to your heart, "You're going to be okay."

When you're facing a task that seems impossible, God's Spirit nudges you, "You can do it."

If you're a follower of Jesus, God's Spirit is that voice inside you that reminds you that God is with you, God is for you, and God loves you. As you abide in God, He abides in you.

## Reflect

When has God's Spirit interrupted your unhealthy thoughts and replaced them with His truth? What were some of those truths?

## Respond

Thank God that He is with you, He is for you, and He loves you. Ask God to help you identify when your feelings are lying to you and remind you of what's really true about you and about God.

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# DAY 12

## Refocus

Jesus, may Your Holy Spirit guide me to seek Your presence more and more. I know that it's in You that I find true peace and rest.

## Read

*Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Revelation 3:20*

Read today's passage again. Then write it out in the margins of this page, putting it in your own words.

God has been at work in the world since the moment He created it. (Actually, God has never NOT been active, but let's just focus on Genesis 1:1 until now.) God created humanity because God is a creative God, and His love overflowed into the creation of Adam and Eve, continued to your creation, and will continue for all eternity.

When God created humanity, we were given essentially unlimited freedom. God has always wanted a relationship with humanity.

And because God is love, each individual has a choice to respond to this invitation or not. Even for those who deny God's existence or reject His love, God wants a relationship.

No matter what you have done, are currently doing, or one day will do, God loves you and wants to be in relationship with you. No matter what the people in your life have done, are currently doing, or one day will do, God loves them and wants to be in relationship with them too.

## Reflect

What are some ways God has pursued a relationship with you throughout your life? How have you experienced God's love when you've responded?

## Respond

Thank God for His continual pursuit of a relationship with you and the people you know. Ask God to help you always respond to His invitation with a yes.

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# DAY 13

## Refocus

Jesus, I pause for a moment and think of the love that You shower on me. Help me focus on You and Your goodness in my life.

## Read

*Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.  
Colossians 3:10*

Read today's passage again a few times out loud. Each time, slow down and emphasize the word "renewed."

Every human is unique, but every human shares parts of the same spiritual journey.

God created humans to experience oneness with Him, with one another, and with creation. At some point, every human chooses to reject God and His design, and something in us breaks. God wants to restore that brokenness in every human—a restoration only made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection. When you say your big yes to Jesus (see devotion #3), something radical happens in you. Your old, selfish self is remade into a new, loving self.

Part of this transformation is immediate (your big yes), but part of it takes a lifetime of little, everyday yeses as you learn to love, trust, and obey God.

God calls this lifelong process a renewal because He's restoring His original dream for your life—perfect oneness with Him, with others, and with creation. God wants to reteach you how to love like He loves, how to give like He does, and how to live freely like He does. As you abide in Jesus, God's Spirit teaches you these things, and you experience the best life you could imagine.

## Reflect

How have you seen God renew people in your life?  
How have you experienced God renewing you?

## Respond

Thank God for never giving up on anyone, but renewing us to be more like Him and to experience the life He dreams for us. Ask Him to help you abide in Him and learn to trust and obey Him in your everyday life.

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# DAY 14

## Refocus

Jesus, I know You are with me. Help me focus on Your presence in my heart, soul, and mind.

## Read

*Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.*  
1 John 3:24

Read today's passage again. Then handwrite it in the margins of this page.

If you haven't yet noticed in the previous devotions, there's a rich connection between abiding in Jesus, trusting and obeying His commands, and being in tune with God's Holy Spirit.

God loves us . . . always . . . no matter what . . . period. But we experience God in a unique way as we demonstrate our trust in Him by obeying what He says. Our obedience seems to unlock something in our relationship with God, freeing God up to act in powerful ways. It's not that we're conjuring up something by our efforts, but rather that our obedience demonstrates to God that we trust Him.

It opens the door for God to move in and through our lives.

Our trust (another word for faith) invites God to do things that we can't do on our own, so the results are more significant than we could achieve on our own, and the credit obviously goes to God because He's the one at work in us.

Once you experience God's Spirit in these ways, you'll want it more and more, so choose to say those little, everyday yeses to continue to abide in Him.

## Reflect

When have you experienced God's Spirit at work in your life? When have you seen God do something that is beyond what any person could do on their own?

## Respond

Thank God for His desire and willingness to do supernatural things in our lives. Ask Him to help you trust and obey Him more so you can experience His Spirit in these ways and share those experiences with others.

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# DAY 15

## Refocus

Jesus, I know Your presence is in me and around me. Help me embrace that You are with me now and always.

## Read

*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Galatians 5:22-23*

Read today's passage again a few times to yourself, paying super-close attention to every word in the passage.

The list of things we read in this passage reflects the things we all want in life.

- Love is a genuine care and affection for others.
- Joy is a deep hope and excitement about life
- Peace is a relaxed sense of wholeness.
- Patience is a willingness to stick with things and people
- Kindness is a sincere sense of compassion.
- Goodness is a positive belief in all things because God is creator.
- Faithfulness is being loyally committed.
- Gentleness is not needing to push to get our own way

- Self-control is the capability to focus our efforts wisely.

These things reflect the graciousness of God and the reality of His kingdom, and they can only be found in fullness in God's kingdom as an overflow of His presence in our lives as we abide in Him.

## Reflect

What images come to mind when you read the list of love, joy, peace, etc.? How do you see these things present or absent in your own life?

## Respond

Thank God that because of His deep love for us, He wants us to experience all of these things in our lives. Ask Him to help you trust Him and abide in Him, even (and especially) when things are difficult.

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# Refocus

# Read

Sometimes we try really hard to act better, thinking God cares more about our behaviors than our heart. God's approach is inside-out: He changes our hearts, and our behavior follows. When people see the change in our lives and ask us about it, we can explain that God is working in us—it's not us, it's God.

## Reflect

# Respond

Thank God for His love for us and His work in our lives.  
Ask Him to help you pay ridiculous attention to how  
He's changing you from the inside-out.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DAY 17

## Refocus

Jesus, help me to be fully focused on Your presence. Wrap me up in Your love. Let my heart become one with Yours.

## Read

*I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. John 15:9*

Read today's passage again. Then use your phone and look it up in at least two or three other Bible translations. (If you're stuck, try NIV and The Message.)

If you've read any of the gospels (the first four books of the New Testament in the Bible), you can see a pretty unique relationship between God the Son (Jesus) and God the Father.

Jesus spent a lot of time with God the Father in prayer. God the Father said some really profound things about Jesus: "I'm pleased with Him," "listen to Him," etc. Jesus also said some profound things about God the Father: "I only do what I see the Father doing," "I and the Father are one," etc.

The relationship between God the Father and God the Son (and God the Spirit too, but this verse is about the Father and Son) reveals a deep and overwhelming love between them. And we're invited into it.

The love between the Father and Son is the most powerful force on the planet, and we can experience it and share it as we abide in it.

## Reflect

Why should it be powerful to us that Jesus invites us into His love? How can the love between God the Father and Jesus be a powerful force in your life? What about in our culture today?

## Respond

Thank God for His love and for inviting us to share in it. Ask Him to help you trust and yield to Him and His love in your everyday life.

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# DAY 18

## Refocus

Jesus, I come to You today longing for Your presence. Help me love You as You love me.

## Read

*When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. John 15:10*

Read today's passage again. Then write it out in the margins of this page, putting it in your own words.

God the Son and God the Father have a very unique relationship that perfectly reflects love and trust. Even though Jesus is 100 percent God, while He was on earth—still 100 percent God, but now also 100 percent human—He yielded to the will of God the Father and obeyed His commands.

Can you see how significant that is? Jesus obeyed the Father as an act of love, and Jesus tells us that we need to obey Him as an act of love. Jesus modeled for us exactly the way we should understand and act out our love for God and obedience to God.

God's love for us doesn't stop if we stop obeying Him, but we experience God and His love and His work in our lives in unique ways as we choose to abide in Him.



## Reflect

How can obeying God lead us to experience Him and His love and His work in our lives? What is something God wants you to do (or not do) that could open up this experience in your life?

## Respond

Thank God for the example He set for us in the relationship between Jesus and the Father. Ask Him to help you understand it more deeply and trust and obey it more fully as you abide in Him today.

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# DAY 19

## Refocus

Jesus, I want to connect with You today. Help my thoughts turn to You today, for in You I find peace and contentment.

## Read

*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20*

Read today's passage again, but this time read it out loud, emphasizing the words "crucified," "loved," and "gave."

When we say our big yes to Jesus (see devotion #3), something changes in us. The part of us that was selfish and mean and arrogant is killed—just like Jesus was crucified on the cross. But that "old self" tries to stick around and die a slow death. That old self will remind us of things we want to forget. It will accuse us of things God has forgiven us of. It will lie to us and tell us that the old things we used to do will still make us happy.

If we're not willing to say a whole bunch of little, everyday yeses to Jesus, that old self will stick around a long, long time.



And the more of the old self we allow to hang around, the less of Jesus we allow into our lives. But if we abide in Jesus and keep saying our little, everyday yeses to Him, our old self will get smaller and smaller and smaller, until there's nothing left in us but Jesus.

## Reflect

How are you doing saying no to your old self and saying yes to Jesus? What can you do to allow more Jesus in your life?

## Respond

Thank God for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and for His invitation to allow your old self to die with Him. Ask Him to help you continue to die to your old self and abide daily in Jesus.

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# DAY 20

## Refocus

Jesus, I know You are with me right now. Help me quiet my thoughts and become aware of Your loving presence.

## Read

*We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. 1 John 3:16*

Read today's passage again a few times to yourself, paying super-close attention to every word in the passage, especially both times the phrase "gave up" appears.

If you look up the word "love" in a dictionary, you'll find a lot of different definitions, and a lot of examples that illustrate the differences in the definitions. For example: I love my mom. I love pizza. I love the mountains. I love my BFF. I love sleeping in. I love playing soccer. All of those words mean "love," but the "real love" we read about in today's passage is something different.

Real love means giving and sacrifice. Real love means wishing the best for someone and doing whatever you can to help them experience it. Real love means celebrating with someone when things are great and grieving with them when things are bad.

Real love means sticking around when someone makes a mistake and forgiving them when they hurt you.

Real love is amazing, and Jesus showed us exactly how to do it. The way that Jesus showed love to people is what He wants us to do. If we abide in Him, we can actually do it.

## Reflect

What are some ways you've experienced real love from Jesus? From others? How can real love change things in our society? Who can you show real love to this week?

## Respond

Thank God for loving us the way He does. Ask God to help you receive His love fully and share it with others freely.

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# DAY 21

# Refocus

Jesus, thank You for these moments together. Help me put aside all distractions and focus on what You want to say to me today.

# Read

*There is no greater love than to lay down one's life  
for one's friends. John 15:13*

Read today's passage again. Then handwrite it in the margins of this page. Underline the phrase "lay down one's life."

From the earliest chapters of the Bible, God has desired an intimate relationship with His creation (us) so we could experience the fullness of the kingdom of God. But that's not the end of the story. Throughout history, God's plan has been to bless His people so that they could be a blessing to the world.

Because God loves us, He wants to bless us—His people. Because God loves the world, He wants to bless the world through us—His people. That’s been God’s plan since Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

Jesus fleshed out God's plan by laying down His life as a blessing to the world, and we should do the same. We abide in Jesus and experience His love so we can share His love with everyone around us.

# Reflect

Who was the first person who shared with you about God's love? How have you experienced the blessing of sharing God's love with others?

# Respond

Thank God that He is a giving God, always choosing to bless His people. Ask Him to help you receive His blessings and understand His love so you can share them freely with others.

[illegible]

# DAY 22

# Refocus

Jesus, may Your Holy Spirit guide me to seek Your presence more and more. I know that it's in You that I find true peace and rest.

# Read

*Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91:1*

Read today's passage again a few times. Then write a one-sentence prayer of response to the passage in the margins of this page.

The world is broken, and we all experience pain and hurt. Sometimes it's because of our own bad decisions, sometimes it's because of bad decisions by our family and friends, and sometimes it's because someone we don't even know made bad decisions. Jesus never said His followers would be immune from the consequences of brokenness, but He promised that God would be with them to help them.

No one can escape sadness and heartache, but when we abide in Jesus, we experience God in unique ways, even during seasons of suffering. We can't avoid the brokenness of the world, but we can find peace and rest because we know God is with us as we abide in Him.

# Reflect

How have you experienced God's presence in the midst of difficult times? How can God's presence be even sweeter when we're going through challenging seasons?

# Respond

Thank God that He abides in us no matter what pain we experience. Ask Him to help you deepen your trust in Him when you go through difficult times.

[illegible]

# DAY 23

## Refocus

Jesus, I pause for a moment and think of the love that You shower on me. Help me focus on You and Your goodness in my life.

## Read

*Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." John 3:3*

Read today's passage again. Then use your phone and look it up in at least two or three other Bible translations. (If you're stuck, try NIV and The Message.)

God is always moving, always pursuing intimacy with us, always nudging us to share love and grace and compassion with others. As we abide in Jesus, God responds by accomplishing great things in us and through us—things too great for us to take credit for ourselves.

If you think about it like a math formula, it might look like this: God acts + we respond in faith = God acts in a supernatural way. The dynamic in our relationship with God is unique. God is the source and sustainer, but He waits patiently for us to respond to His action by trusting and obeying Him.



Most people want to experience this, but it takes the right eyes to see it, and the first step is to say a big yes to beginning a relationship with Jesus by being born again.

If you haven't said your big yes to following Jesus, talk to someone from your church that you trust. You won't regret it!

## Reflect

If you've already done so, what led you to say your big yes to Jesus? If you haven't, what are you hoping to see or experience before you do?

## Respond

Thank God for inviting all people to be born into a new relationship with Him. Ask God to help you deepen your trust in the truths of His kingdom as you continue to say yes to Him.

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# DAY 24

## Refocus

Jesus, I know You are with me. Help me focus on Your presence in my heart, soul, and mind.

## Read

*So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father.*  
1 John 2:24

Read today's passage again. Then write it out in the margins of this page, putting it in your own words.

For a lot of people, it's helpful to think about our relationship with God in two ways.

First, once we say our big yes to Jesus (see devotion #3), we are born into God's kingdom. ("Born again," to use Jesus' words.) The relationship that begins at that moment is an eternal relationship that doesn't go away, in the same way that your siblings will always be your siblings, no matter what.

Second, our intimacy with God is nurtured by a whole bunch of little, everyday yeses as we continue abiding in Him.

The way we trust and obey God shapes the way we sense our closeness with God, in the same way that we feel close or distant from our siblings by how much we talk or text or spend time with them.

God never moves away from us, but we can feel closer or more distant by abiding or not abiding in Him. Choose to abide by trusting and obeying God, and your closeness with God will be a deep comfort no matter what's going on in life.

## Reflect

What are some things that make you feel closer to or more distant from God? How can you make daily abiding a priority in your life?

## Respond

Thank God for the wisdom of the things He's taught you. Ask Him to help you continue to trust and obey His words as you abide in Him.

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# DAY 25

## Refocus

Jesus, I know Your presence is in me and around me. Help me embrace that You are with me now and always.

## Read

*I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Ephesians 3:16*

Read today's passage again, but this time read it out loud, emphasizing the phrases "glorious, unlimited resources" and "through his Spirit."

Today's passage includes several parts, so let's unpack it piece by piece.

First, God is a God of plenty and of flourishing. God never runs out of love, grace, peace, joy... anything. God's resources are unlimited, and they are available and accessible to Christ-followers.

Second, as followers of Jesus abide in Him, God fills us with the desire and the strength to obey and endure. Life is hard, and we'll face challenges.

But Jesus has overcome the world through His death and resurrection, and we have access to the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (see Romans 8:11).

Third, God's design is to work in us from the inside-out. God changes our hearts, and that change overflows out into our lives. The strength that God gives us comes from His abundance of strength, so He never runs out. This means if we abide in Christ, we never run out of strength.

## Reflect

What does it mean that God has unlimited resources? How has God sustained you through a challenging season?

## Respond

Thank God that His resources are never-ending and that He gives them to His followers without holding back. Ask God to help you stay in tune with His Spirit as you abide in Him.

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# DAY 26

## Refocus

Jesus, may my heart find rest in Your love. Help me live each day with Your love in the center of my life.

## Read

*Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. Ephesians 3:17*

Read today's passage again. Then handwrite it in the margins of this page. Underline the phrase "grow down." Doodle-draw some tree roots beneath the passage if you're artistic.

More than anything else, God wants to be in relationship with you. In fact, God created you out of an overflow of love so He could be in relationship with you. God wants you to experience the best life imaginable, and He wants to be deeply connected with you throughout your life. Through Christ, God wants to make Himself at home in your heart.

As you abide in Jesus by trusting Him and the ways of God's kingdom, He makes His home in your heart. As you abide in Jesus, God's love for you and His purposes for your life become the roots of who you are.

Life is hard, but as you abide in Christ and root your life in Him, God's Spirit keeps you strong, no matter what situation you're in.

## Reflect

How can you know if your roots have grown down into God's love? What will be different about your life if Christ is at home in your heart?

## Respond

Thank God for wanting to be in relationship with you. Ask Him to help you always be responsive to His love as you abide in Him and He strengthens you.

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# DAY 27

## Refocus

Jesus, help me to be fully focused on Your presence. Wrap me up in Your love. Let my heart become one with Yours.

## Read

*And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. Ephesians 3:18*

Read today's passage again a few times to yourself, paying super-close attention to the words "wide," "long," "high," and "deep."

In our English language, we have one word for love, whether it's the way we love our moms, our friends, or pizza. In the language of Bible times, there were lots of words for love, depending on the kind of love it was. God's love is different than all the rest because it's not dependent on God receiving anything for it—it's unconditional. God's love is pure and right and has no strings attached.

God's love is more than we can understand. More than we can explain. More than we can . . . anything. And the only thing we can do with it is receive it. As we abide in Christ, we experience God's love personally. To understand how wide, long, high, and deep His love really is.

And as we experience God's love, we begin to understand how wide, long, high, and deep His love really is.

## Reflect

How does it feel when you realize God's love is more immense than you can understand? When have you experienced God in a way that you really couldn't fully understand? What does that tell you about God's love?

## Respond

Thank God that His love is beyond our human understanding. Ask Him to help you respond to His love with gratitude.

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# DAY 28

## Refocus

Jesus, I come to You today longing for Your presence. Help me love You as You love me.

## Read

*May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Ephesians 3:19*

Read today's passage again a few times. Then write a one-sentence prayer of response to the passage in the margins of this page.

Being committed to right beliefs—orthodoxy—is really good. But if we reduce God to a set of ideas, we're missing the point.

Being committed to right actions—orthopraxy—is really good. But if we reduce God to a set of behaviors, we're missing the point.

Both right beliefs and right actions are really good. But if we reduce God to a checklist of "Am I doing this right?" questions, we're missing the point.

God wants us to abide in Him so we can experience Him. And when we abide in Him by trusting and obeying Him, wholeness and rightness begin to develop in our lives.

We experience the power of God at work in our lives—to love like He loves, to give like He gives, to forgive like He does. It's too much to really understand it, but it's exactly what we experience when we abide in Christ.

## Reflect

How is God's love different than other things you don't fully understand? How have you experienced God in ways that are beyond understanding?

## Respond

Thank God that even though He is the Lord and creator of all things, He is near enough for us to experience intimately on a moment-by-moment basis. Ask God to help you pay more attention to experiencing Him as you abide in Him in your day-to-day life.

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# DAY 29

## Refocus

Jesus, I want to connect with You today. Help my thoughts turn to You today, for in You I find peace and contentment.

## Read

*Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings.” John 8:31*

Read today's passage again. Then use your phone and look it up in at least two or three other Bible translations. (If you're stuck, try NIV and The Message.)

Any follower of Jesus would love to hear Jesus say they're doing life right. It would be a gift to anyone for God to acknowledge their faithfulness.

In today's passage, Jesus is talking to His followers—the people who've put their trust in Him and chosen to follow Him. He uses the word "disciple" to describe them. "Disciple" means "student," so Jesus is saying that His followers demonstrate that they're His students by trusting and obeying the things Jesus said.

The way a follower of Jesus demonstrates their commitment to Him is by abiding in Him—by trusting Him and being faithful to the things He said. When we choose to live this way, God notices. And He says, “You are truly my disciples.”

## Reflect

When have you sensed God was proud of you for your faithfulness? Why does Jesus define our faith commitment by our trust in and obedience to Him?

## Respond

Thank God for giving us commands that teach us how to live in a way that gives us the best life possible. Ask Him to help you continue to abide in Him by trusting in Him and obeying His words.

[illegible]

# DAY 30

## Refocus

Jesus, I know You are with me right now. Help me quiet my thoughts and become aware of Your loving presence.

## Read

*Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.*  
*Colossians 3:12*

Read today's passage again a few times. Then write a one-sentence prayer of response to the passage in the margins of this page.

God's plan has always been to bless His people so they could be a blessing to the world by sharing God's blessings. From Genesis to Jesus to today and tomorrow, God wants His people to be blessed to be a blessing to others.

The way we bless others looks different for everyone. Maybe you're good at sports, so the way you bless others is by helping them get better at sports too. Or maybe God has walked with you through some difficult times, so you bless others by sharing about God's faithfulness through pain.

Your story will shape how you share God's blessings with others.

But there are some things that all of God's people should have in common as they bless others: compassion, grace, humility, and so on. As we abide in Him and live out these beautiful values, we put on the "clothes" of God, people see our faith, and they want it for themselves. The biggest blessing you can give is walking someone into the kingdom of God. And in typical God-is-awesome fashion, that experience becomes your own biggest blessing.

## Reflect

Why is it so important to show mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience to others? How can that help them enter the kingdom of God?

## Respond

Thank God for the blessings He gives you. Ask Him to help you always be committed to giving away His blessings to others rather than keeping them all to yourself.

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## About the Author

Tim Levert is a writer, speaker, worship leader, and most recently a high school English teacher while he and his family are planting a church in south Louisiana. Tim earned his PhD in adolescent spiritual formation and has been in ministry since 1992, serving churches and seminaries in California, Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, and Ohio.

Tim believes the kingdom-of-God-life is the best life you can live, and he hopes you'll give it a try. He and his wife, Tasha, have three beautiful daughters and a curmudgeonly dog named Tabasco.

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