

## SAC Small Groups Discussion Guide – Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026

This guide comes with the expectation that even if someone has missed the Sunday service, they have watched the sermon before coming to their small group.

### Fellowship Time

Make sure to have time where people can chat and catch up. This section could include a dinner together, having a potluck, preparing snacks, etc. The key to this section is make people feel welcomed and seen.

### Read the Scripture & Overview Aloud Together

This section contains the text and a brief summary of the sermon that was preached on Sunday. It will have the main point explained as a way to help those remember the sermon. This is not an in-depth overview because the expectation is that everyone will take the time to listen to the sermon. Make sure to read this aloud for everyone to hear.

#### **Text**

*John 15:1-17*

*1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

*5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

*9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 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. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: 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 servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.*

## Overview of Sermon

*This week we continued our series in the book of John and leaned into the theme from the text of the Holy Spirit, the promised and present one. In chapter 15, Jesus invites his followers into a beautiful picture of intimacy that is experienced with him. The Greek word for remain or abide (depending on your English translation) is *meno* which refers to dwelling in shared space. This is the promise that Jesus laid before His followers is that they would share in the presence of Jesus as the Father does the work of transformation in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. If disciples are to bear fruit in this world by means of transformation, they must remain in Christ who is the vine. As we love Jesus and remain obedient to His commands, all of this points glory back to the Father. Jesus describes this relationship using the language of friendship. "I no longer call you servants," He tells His disciples, "Because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Friends who are known and loved. This is the relationship Jesus offers—not distant deity to unworthy subject, but friend to friend, life shared together.*

*What does it look like to abide in Jesus? Abiding in Jesus can look like a set of practices or rhythms designed to help us place ourselves before God so that He can transform us by the power of the Holy Spirit. This set of practices can be understood like a trellis which provides structure for a vine to grow on. A well-designed trellis should result in a healthy plant that yields a healthy abundance of fruit. The ancient monastic community referred to this structure as a Rule of Life, a set of spiritual practices that their community lived by to place themselves in the presence of God. Each of us are being formed by our daily rhythms and habits whether we are aware of it or not which helps us to grow close to God or away from Him.*

## Discussion Questions

These questions are prompts to help the group have meaningful dialogue over the sermon this past weekend. Do not feel the need to ask all these questions. You are more than welcome to create your own questions or mix the questions together.

### Connection to Other (Icebreaker/Light)

- What is an activity, rhythm, or routine (something you do on a daily or weekly basis) that is an essential part of your life?

### Connection to Head (Study/Knowledge Questions)

- What does this passage teach us about God?
- What does this passage teach us about humanity?

### Connection to Heart (Deeper Engagement)

- How does the image of God as a gardener who prunes branches challenge or comfort you, especially when considering difficult seasons in your spiritual journey?
- Read Gal. 5:22-24. Which of the Fruit of the Spirit do you desire more of in your life?

- Jesus in this passage describes his relationship with His followers in terms of friendship instead of servanthood. How does viewing Jesus as your friend shape your relationship with Him? How might that be challenging to you?

### Reflect and Discuss the Practice and Prayer.

This is an opportunity for accountability and formation in your group. Accountability to ensure people are practicing the practices and formation because we believe that these practices will shape and form us into the people that God intended us to be. Take time to practice this together and reflect on each person's experience of these practices.

#### **Practice:** Create, design, or craft a Way of Life

- Consider these three tips as you think about crafting a Rule of Life.
  - Choose something not everything.
  - Curiosity not rigidity.
  - Intentional evaluation.
- Another tool to use is the Rule of Life builder on the Practicing the Way website:  
<https://www.practicingtheway.org/ruleoflifebuilder>

**Prayer:** Father, I invite you to attend to my life connected to Jesus. Help to open myself up to the work of the Holy Spirit and experience His regenerative and transforming work. Grant me the ability and strength to live with faithful obedience and to live for Your glory. Amen.

### Prayer Together.

Take some time to pray with each other. This is not a time for gossip or to be cynical, this is an opportunity to share with each other our burdens, to celebrate and praise God together, and to pray expectantly that God would move.