



ABIDE

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

ministry to
 youth



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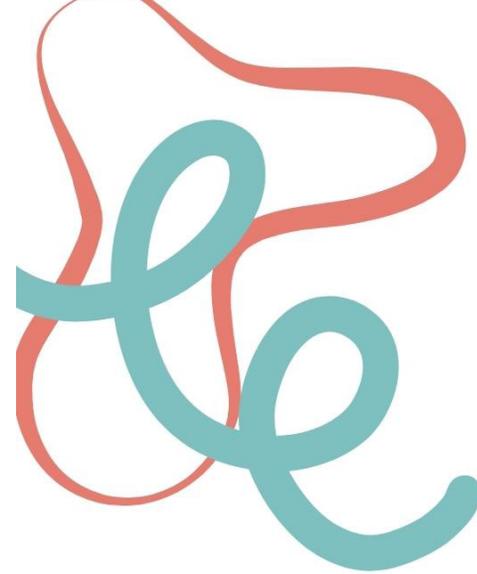


Howdy.

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
