ABIDE

Everyday practices for staying close to Jesus

through prayer



Book 1

Why Abide?

Sometimes, it seems like there's a huge disconnect between our daily lives and the radical claims of the Bible. Jesus said he came to give us abundant life, that our joy would be full. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter because he sustains us through grief. The Bible is packed with statements about the Father's never-ending love and affection for us, and it says we have everything we need for life and godliness. However, we often go about our days as if none of this is true.

Ever exercise after skipping a meal or two? Without water? How about while holding your breath? It's tough to run on empty. Our bodies can't make it long without the nourishment of food, water, and air. It's less obvious, but we need nourishment in our spiritual lives, too. Jesus said in John 15 that he is the vine and we are the branches—he nourishes us. His command to us is, "Abide in me." We are to live in Jesus, make our home with him, remain, stay connected, and as a result, we experience joy, love, and fruitfulness. Jesus also says in that passage, "apart from me you can do nothing." Yet so often we try to live our daily lives apart from him and his love. You see, we must abide in him to abound in life.

That's why this series is called Abide. These guides are about the foundational, everyday practices that keep us close to Jesus—prayer, Scripture, and slowing down. They are how branches stay connected to the vine. Whether you are brand new to following Jesus or have walked with him for decades, these practices never expire; we simply grow deeper into them. This guide works well on your own, and

even better together—in your DNA group, in your Missional Community, and as a whole church family.

Imagine what it might be like if we all press in and learn to abide in Jesus more and more. Jesus never promised his disciples an easy life (in fact, the opposite), yet more of Jesus means more love, more joy, more peace, more confidence, more humility, more faith, more hope...

Jesus is faithful and always keeps his promises. So, Soma family, let's lean in and abide in him, spurring each other on, expectant that Jesus will nourish our souls.

How to use this guide

This little booklet is your guide for the next four weeks. Keep it with your Bible, write down what you are learning, and bring what you're hearing into your conversations with the church family.

Three practices, two journeys

The Abide series is six small books—three everyday practices for staying close to Jesus, each visited twice:

	Prayer	Scripture	Slow Down
First Journey Books 1–3	**Book 1 — *this book*** Meditation & the 3Rs of prayer	**Book 2** The Gospel of John—Observe, Interpret, Apply	**Book 3** Silence & fasting
Second Journey Books 4–6	**Book 4** The Circles & Cycles of prayer	**Book 5** John again—the I-am statements	**Book 6** Sabbath & solitude

Read the books in order and you'll walk through all three practices twice. Want to focus on one practice? Follow its column. If you're new, any book in the First Journey row is a good place to start. And remember, these practices never expire—coming back to any of these books, any time, is simply growing deeper.

Every morning

Even if you are not a "morning person," there is something significant about putting the Father first in the morning just like we see Jesus often doing in the gospels. You'll probably need to set your alarm a tad earlier. Starting in

Week Two, grab a Bible—a real, physical, paper Bible is ideal. Our phones and computers come with many distractions that we can avoid by going old-school. Have a pen handy. You may also want a journal or notebook if you prefer writing there, write prolifically, or want to offload a distracting thought so you remember to deal with it later.

On your own or together

This book works on its own—just you, a Bible, and a few minutes each morning. But discipleship is a community project, so it's even better with others.

Each week ends with conversation starters for a DNA group and for a Missional Community. If you're going through the book with either one, use those pages when you gather. And if you're on your own, don't skip them—let them prompt your journaling, or borrow one for a conversation with a friend who loves Jesus. These practices are personal, but they were never meant to be private.

However you go through it, bring what you're learning when the church family gathers. Stories of God meeting people in these practices encourage the whole body.

DNA groups

DNA stands for Discover, Nurture, Act—it's a very small group of men or women (usually three or four) who discover Jesus together through the Bible, nurture one another with the gospel, and help each other act in ways that line up with Jesus' teaching. If you'd like to join one, talk to your Missional Community leaders or one of the elders.

Missional Communities

Missional Communities are the primary way we follow Jesus' command to make disciples, living out what it means to be a good family of brothers and sisters, to serve like Jesus served, and be missionaries to our neighborhoods. If you're not yet a part of one, ask an elder or whoever you know best in the church to help get you connected.

We hope you use this guide every day.

Week One

We're starting off with a small step, just 2–5 minutes each day. We can easily slip into doing spiritual things for the wrong reasons: duty, obligation, to earn favor, etc. But our heavenly Father loves us more than we can imagine and invites us to start the day hearing his voice saying, "I love you." Spending a few minutes getting our hearts and minds aligned with that reality is an antidote to all those wrong reasons and one of the best ways to start the day with a gospel-centered perspective. This is an ancient practice mentioned in the Bible, and God's people have meditated on his love through Scripture for thousands of years. Below you'll find an excerpt from the one-pager titled "Win the Morning" in the Soma Discipleship Toolkit. Follow that each day this week. Of course, 2 minutes is a starting point; if you want to keep meditating, praying, reading the Bible, etc., go for it.

Meditation?

When the Bible uses the word meditation, it's talking about thinking deeply. It's the difference between merely reading Scripture and really absorbing it. Often, when we take the time to think deeply and mull over God's Word, we gain insight into God's character, we are moved by his actions, and we experience his presence. Communing with God and musing on his Word revives our hearts. Meditation is an act of worship. There's no formula or one-size-fits-all approach, but we'll try some different methods over the next few weeks to see what resonates. While thinking deeply, sometimes you might want to close your eyes, sometimes writing out your thoughts is helpful, the passage might make you think of an image you want to draw, a song to sing, etc.

On some days, you'll see a section labeled "Try it" with a suggestion for a way to meditate. As you find ones that help you think deeply, use them again on other days—we've intentionally left many opportunities to repeat a method you like. It takes time and practice to meditate, and the better you know the Bible and the character of God, the more connections you see. It's not the verse or the way you meditate on it that will be new and fresh over your lifetime. God himself is inexhaustible—experiencing him and gaining insight into his ways is what is exciting and renewing about the spiritual practice of meditation. It's less about what you do and more about who you are with—Jesus!

Win the Morning

The struggle begins when you wake up. C.S. Lewis says that is when, "All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals." Let's shove them back by listening to the Father's voice instead.

Your heavenly Father loves you more than you can imagine and invites you to start the day hearing his voice saying: I love you.

The fact that God loves us can seem simple or cliché, yet it is the foundational truth of the life of a disciple of Jesus. Revel in his extravagant love for you expressed in the gospel. We must abide in his love before we can abound in life with Jesus.

Abiding in his love

Spend at least five minutes each morning reminding yourself of his great love in the gospel and allowing the Father to express his love to you. Let the words of Scripture speak of his love to you as you learn to listen to the Father express his unconditional affection and acceptance to you as his child.

You don't have to read all of these verses every day. You might pick just one to meditate on or rehearse the gospel story in your mind. When your mind inevitably wanders, don't beat yourself up for it, just come back to prayer. Rereading a verse can often help you refocus. Later, tell others what you are hearing from God to encourage them and help discern that it is indeed from him and in line with the Bible. This could be your spouse, DNA partners, Missional Community, leaders, etc.

[The Toolkit one-pager lists several verses here—you'll see them all (and more) during the next four weeks in this booklet.]

Day 1

Read this verse and meditate on it for two minutes. Think deeply about it and ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Your mind will probably wander; it's OK, just come back to the verse and read it again and resume pondering it.

> **Romans 5:5**
>
> *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Try it: One good way to meditate on a verse is to repeat it, emphasizing a different word each time.

> ***God's*** *love has been poured into our hearts...*
>
> *God's* ***love*** *has been poured into our hearts...*
>
> *God's love has been* ***poured*** *into our hearts...*

Jot down a thought or insight you had while meditating on this verse.

Day 2

Ask the Father to illuminate this verse to you and meditate on it for at least two minutes.

> **2 Corinthians 5:21**
>
> *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Try it: Especially for stories, meditation can involve imagining yourself in the story. What would it have been like? Think about the experience through all your senses. Think about the story from the perspective of various people there. For this verse, the one who had no sin and was made to be sin is Jesus, and the moment that happened is on the cross. Engage your imagination to put yourself into the story at that moment. If all you know is that Jesus was nailed to a cross for our sin, that's enough...

Write down some thoughts you had as you imagined and pondered. Having some notes will help you share with your DNA and MC.

Day 3

Let's meditate on another passage from Romans today. In it you'll find the word "Abba." This is the Hebrew word that both kids and adults use to address their fathers. Can't you imagine a baby saying it? A pretty close equivalent in English is "Dad." Whether your earthly dad was abusive, absent, average, or amazing, let's allow our heavenly Abba to be the one who defines what it means to be a good dad.

> **Romans 8:15–16**
>
> *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*

Try it: Another good way to meditate (think deeply) is to consider the implications of the passage. Ask yourself, if I really believe this is true, what does that mean for me? ...for my Missional Community? ...for our church? Engage your imagination to dream about what might change if we really, truly believe it. You might pray like the man in Mark 9, "I believe; help my unbelief."

This is a good one to talk with your DNA or MC about. Why might it be hard for many to call God "Dad"?

Day 4

Today's verse is from the story of Jesus' baptism. Jesus lived a sinless life and deserved this commendation from his Father. On our own, we don't deserve this, but Jesus traded his perfect record for our imperfect record. So, what the Father says of Jesus, he now says of us as his children! Chew on that...

> **Matthew 3:17**
>
> *and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

Try it: Put your name into the verse, and read it over and over that way. For instance, "and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved [daughter], [Anna], with whom I am well pleased.'" Hear your heavenly Dad saying this to you.

You may want to write down what that experience was like for you.

Day 5

After you meditate on this verse, tell someone about it—it doesn't have to be earth-shattering or original, simply tell a friend something that came to mind this morning as you thought about this verse.

> **Ephesians 1:4–6**
>
> *...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ*

Try it: Read this same passage in different translations. Even use another language if you can. A different version often helps us see the same verse in a new light. A site like biblegateway.com makes it easy to view a verse in several translations side by side. (Though using a paper Bible reduces the distractions that come with our phones and computers, you may not have multiple translations laying around.)

Record something about your meditation this morning.

Day 6

Today's verse is one of the most familiar verses in the Bible, so you may have to resist the urge to dismiss it and think you already know all about it. Try and read it like you've never heard it before.

> **John 3:16–17**
>
> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

Try it: Pick one or more of the meditation methods from earlier this week to use while you think deeply about God's love.

Write what came to mind as you pondered these truths.

Day 7

Begin by taking a moment to remember some of the experiences with Dad this week and what the Spirit has brought to mind. Then meditate on this verse:

> **1 John 4:9**
>
> *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*

Try it: After you read this verse that tells you how God revealed his love in Jesus, close your eyes and imagine the Father saying directly to you, "I love you." It's true... Revel in that love for a moment, and then do it again. And do it a third time, and as many more times as you want.

How did that hit you?

For your DNA group

Going through this book with your DNA group? When you gather, don't wait—within the first five minutes, get talking about your experience with meditating on how much the Father loves you.

Use these questions as conversation starters:

- The Bible, and even creation, tells us that our heavenly Father loves us. Which verse or meditation was most meaningful to communicate that to you?
- Do you find it hard to believe that God loves you? How about when you royally mess up? Or how about when people are angry or disappointed in you (including yourself)? Are there other situations when it's hard to believe he loves you? Is it always hard?
- We often don't truly believe what God says about himself (like that he loves us). It sounds harsh, but that means we are effectively calling God a liar. Yikes! If you've been in that boat this week, what would you like to say to the Father now? Say it to him in prayer—with your friends or on your own.

For your Missional Community

If your MC is in this book together, bring these to your gathering:

Have a few people share some highlights from their meditations this week. It could be an insight into one of the verses, a connection you made for the first time, a

feeling, a difficulty you had with the practice of meditation, etc.

- What was it like to think through the idea of what it means to call God "Abba" or "Dad"? Does it come easily to you? Does it feel scandalous? Why do you think that is?
- If our MC really believed God loved us like a perfect father, how might we approach him differently when we need help? What might that change about how we interact with each other?
- It's said that God answers prayers with "Yes," "No," or "Not yet." If you really believe he loves you beyond measure, how might that change how you respond to "No" and "Not yet"?

Week Two

We hope that after last week, you feel loved. For the remaining three weeks, we will begin with that same kind of "Win the Morning" meditation and add prayer inspired by Scripture. The book of Psalms is filled with songs to God which have inspired people's prayers for thousands of years. Jesus knew the Psalms so well that in his moment of greatest agony—on the cross—he quoted a line from a Psalm in desperate prayer to God!

For the next three weeks, we'll use Psalms and other Bible passages as a springboard to inspire our prayer. You can read the whole thing or just part, and for now, the focus is more about meeting with our Dad in prayer than deeply studying his Word. Below, you'll find an excerpt from the one-pager titled "3Rs of Praying Scripture" in the Soma Discipleship Toolkit. We'll practice this simple pattern of Rejoice, Repent, Request each day with a Bible passage pointing us to some things to rejoice about, repent of, and request.

Grab a Bible as you do this every morning. Try using a physical copy of the Bible rather than a digital one—our electronic devices come with many distractions. If you need a Bible, ask any Soma leader—we'll hook you up.

3Rs of Praying Scripture

Letting the Bible inspire our prayers...

> *"Virtually all of the Bible leads us to praise God, thank God, cry to God, and confess to God." —John Piper*

Ben Patterson, in God's Prayer Book, encourages people to read and pray through Scripture with the lens of the "three Rs": Rejoice. Repent. Request. It's a simple idea that has borne much fruit for many people over many years.

Rejoice

In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

We can rejoice in who God is; his character and nature are to be celebrated, and we see those most clearly in Jesus. We can rejoice and thank him for what he's done—he's blessed us immeasurably, especially through Jesus and the gospel. We can rejoice and be grateful for who he has made us—new creations because of Jesus.

Repent

What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Repentance and faith always go hand-in-hand. To repent is to change our minds about who God is and worship him rather than the created thing that we valued more than the Creator. Allow the Holy Spirit to convict you of where you settled for something less than Jesus. Remember there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus—you are as holy and blameless as Jesus himself because of the gospel. And the Father adores you and is pleased with you, though it seems too good to be true. You might pray, "I believe. Help my unbelief." And then worship and rejoice

again because Jesus is better, and your debt has already been paid in full.

Request

How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

When our prayers are not informed by Scripture and centered on the gospel, we tend to drift toward banal self-centered requests. Looking to the Bible to inspire our requests, we tend to pray bigger, richer, more God-centered prayers as we are caught up in his grand story of redemption. Jesus said, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). We can have more confidence that we are asking for things in line with God's will when our requests come from his Word abiding in us and shaping our hearts and minds.

Day 1

Just like last week, we'll start by meditating on a verse about the Father's love for you.

Meditate

> **John 15:13**
>
> *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends...*

Try it: Use one of the practices that resonated with you from last week as you think deeply about this verse.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

In addition to meditating on a verse, spend a few more minutes in prayer inspired by the passage below. In it, the apostle Paul describes how he prays for the church in Ephesus. Let this be a starting point for how you pray for yourself and others.

In your Bible, read Ephesians 1:16–23.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

For example, after reading this you might pray, "Thank you, Jesus, that you are 'far above all rule and authority' on earth. You are the King of Kings! I'm glad you are on the throne and your kingdom will never end..."

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

For example, this passage might spark repentance that sounds like, "Father, this passage says you are truly the one in charge, but I've been trying to be the one in control. I've been worried about how I'm going to handle that

conversation today, thinking and planning and stressing about it as if it was all up to me. I imagined that if I said the wrong thing I might turn my friend away from you forever. And I never asked for your help. I was believing the lie that I was in control and not you. Please forgive me. I do believe you are the King over all and that I can't mess up your plans..."

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

For example, you might pray along these lines: "Father, would you give me the Spirit of wisdom that Paul talks about here? Please help me to lean on your wisdom to speak about you in an unforced way. And would you open up my friend's heart to you and give me the right words to say at the right time. Please open the eyes of his heart to see how much you love him."

Jot down thoughts you had while meditating and praying.

Day 2

Meditate

> **1 John 3:1**
>
> *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*

Try it: Write this verse out by hand, contemplating the words as you write them. And do it again. And again—at least 3 times if not more. Writing it and seeing it on paper in your own hand is a way to help you slow down and think about this truth.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Read Psalm 136—you'll notice a repeated refrain about what the Jesus Storybook Bible calls the "never-ending, never-giving-up, unbreaking, always and forever love of God." If pressed for time, read just a portion, say verses 1–9.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Write 1 John 3:1 by hand.

Day 3

Flip back to where you wrote the verse yesterday. We're going to meditate on the same verse again today.

Meditate

Read 1 John 3:1 in your own handwriting.

Try it: Let's engage many parts of our bodies. As you read it with your eyes, use your mouth to speak this verse out loud so that you can hear it with your ears. Also, use your finger to trace along under the words as you go.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Read Psalm 8 in your Bible—it starts off talking about the majesty and glory of the Lord. Let that inspire rejoicing and gratitude...

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Begin jotting down something you rejoice about, repent of, and request of the Father each day. It will help you remember and share it with others. It doesn't have to be eloquent or even full sentences, just a note.

Day 4

Meditate

> **1 John 4:10 (NLT)**
>
> *This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

Try it: After reading the verse a few times, pick a key word or phrase in the verse, like "sacrifice" or "loved" or "take away," and focus in on that, mulling over what it means and how it communicates God's love to you this morning.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Read Psalm 42 in your Bible. It begins with the psalmist saying, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God." It's the abiding, nourishment idea yet again. Let that image enliven your prayer today.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

These blank lines are begging for your meditations, rejoicings, repentance, and requests.

Day 5

The Message translates Jesus' invitation to "abide" as "make yourselves at home." You abide in your abode, so it's a fitting translation to give you something to think about.

Meditate

> **John 15:9–10 (MSG)**
>
> *I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.*

Try it: If a healthy human relationship can get stronger and deeper over the years, imagine the strength of the love between the Father and Jesus in the Trinity that has always existed. Can you fathom that Jesus loves us the way the Father loved him? Let that sink in...

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Read Psalm 121—knowing the Lord watches over us and never gets tired can be a very comforting truth.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Make a quick note for each section: Meditate, Rejoice, Repent, Request.

Day 6

We see again today that the Holy Spirit is the one who communicates God's love to us.

Meditate

> **2 Timothy 1:7 (NIrV)**
> *God gave us his Spirit. And the Spirit doesn't make us weak and fearful. Instead, the Spirit gives us power and love. He helps us control ourselves.*

Try it: Ask yourself some "why" questions about this verse as you meditate. Why does the gift of the Holy Spirit give us love? Why doesn't it make us weak and fearful? Etc.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Read Psalm 19 in your Bible (if short on time, just verses 7–10).

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

You might pray something like, "Thank you, Father, for giving me your Word. I've wanted to be spiritually nourished and you've given me a gift to revive my soul, make me wise, and more. That's a gift more precious than gold!"

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Your repentance might sound like, "Father, I so often look to other people than Jesus, the Word made flesh, to gain wisdom. Yesterday, I looked online and asked friends for advice but turned to you last. Please forgive me for coming to you as a last resort. I believe you love me and know everything. Whether I find answers in prayer, in your Word,

through friends, etc., I want to come to you first and let you guide me."

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

You might pray, "Dad, please help me come to you for wisdom, to be revived, and, well, everything I need. You are the source of everything good, and I need your help to turn to you first. Please help my brothers and sisters in my MC and all of Soma desire you more than gold or honey or anything else..."

Add notes by section: Meditate, Rejoice, Repent, Request.

Day 7

Begin by taking a moment to remember some of the experiences with the Father this week. What words or images really helped you know and feel his love for you?

Meditate

Go back and pick a verse that stood out to you (or one you missed), and think deeply about it. Through that verse, the Father is unequivocally telling you he loves you. Hear that...

Try it: Review the week's meditations and write down something that stood out to you about God's love.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Choose a previous passage that inspired prayer or one you missed.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Write something about what stood out to you as you review the week's prayer and meditation.

For your DNA group

Going through this book with your DNA group? When you gather, don't wait—within the first five minutes, get talking about your experience with these practices this week. DNA groups give you the space to go deep, so in this context, we'll focus on repentance.

Use these questions as conversation starters:

- How does it feel to repent daily? Are you doing this by yourself or with someone in your household?
- What themes do you see when reviewing a week of repentance?
- When we openly share what we have repented of, how does that strengthen our DNA group?

For your Missional Community

If your MC is in this book together, bring these to your gathering:

- Pick one day in your notes or journal and share something you requested of the Father. (Ideally, have everyone share at least one request.)
- As you listened to others share, what request inspired you or resonated with you in some way?
- Inspired by the passages you read this week, if you could make one request today as an MC, what would it be? Go ahead and ask the Father for that in prayer.

Week Three

It can be easy to start going through the motions following a guide like this and forget that every morning you are having a one-on-one with the King of the Universe! And that this omnipotent ruler of everything is a perfect dad to you. As you meditate on verses about how much your Father in heaven loves you, don't let it only be an academic or mental exercise. Let the truth about his love for you sink in deep. Mull it over, chew on it, let it engage your heart so that you are captivated and feel the love of God for you. You don't have to manufacture any emotions, just be open and alert to them.

Day 1

Meditate

> **2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 (MSG)**
>
> *May Jesus himself and God our Father, who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart in you, invigorate your work, enliven your speech.*

Try it: Notice how this verse tells us both what Jesus already has done and what Paul is praying he will still do for us. Pick one of the past tense actions (reached out to you in love, surprised you with gifts, [gave] unending help and confidence) and one of the present tense prayers for you (put a fresh heart in you, invigorate your work, enliven your speech). Write a prayer to God about how you would like to see these in your life. For instance, "Father, I pray you enliven my speech today. Please make my words life-giving, especially when I talk to _____."

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Read Psalm 146.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

The psalmist starts off with exclamations of rejoicing and praise. Rather than just read these words, speak them emphatically out loud. Shout them even!

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Verses 7–9 talk about how the Lord seeks justice for those who are often overlooked. Where have you overlooked

those needing justice? Does that reveal something to confess to the Father and others?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Think of those in your life who do put their "trust in princes" rather than the Lord. Pray that the Lord would change their hearts to seek him!

Day 2

Where does fear show up in your life? Today, we will name our fears and bring them to the God who loves us.

Meditate

> **2 Timothy 1:7**
>
> *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

Try it: Sit in silence for one minute and pay attention to your emotions. Ask the Father to help you see where you are experiencing fear. Over your children? The state of our world? Your health? Then ponder the contrast of power, love, and self-control. Meditate on the deep love of the Father that extinguishes fear and timidity.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

In your Bible, read Psalm 56. If short on time, focus on verses 3–4 and 10–11.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Verse four begins with, "In God, whose word I praise." Take time to praise him for his words that you have meditated on for a couple weeks.

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

The Psalm ends with "that I may walk before God in the light of life." Are there ways that you have walked away from God that the Spirit is bringing to mind?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Words like "attacker," "oppress," "enemies," "strife," "injure," and "tears" can remind us of difficulties we face in life. Bring those difficulties to the Father who loves you.

These blank lines look so sad and empty. They need notes.

Day 3

Today we meditate on one of the most profound passages in all of Paul's writings! As we continue thinking about those areas where we could be fearful, this passage reminds us that what's most important will never be lost.

Meditate

> **Romans 8:35–39 (NLT)**
>
> *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ...No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Try it: Imagine yourself facing something Paul mentions at the beginning. What does it mean to you that even in the midst of that, Christ's love is still fully present with you? Write down some thoughts as prayers to God.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Psalm 27 begins with a famous rhetorical question, "whom shall I fear?" If the Lord is our stronghold, there's no one to fear.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Verse four illustrates seeking God's presence. Take time to ask the Father to reveal his presence to you throughout the rest of your day.

Make a quick note for each section: Meditate, Rejoice, Repent, Request.

Day 4

Today, we'll meditate on the beginning of the same passage we'll use as a springboard for prayer.

Meditate

> **Psalm 40:1–3**
>
> *I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth,*

Try it: If you're familiar with a song based on this psalm, sing it as a way to meditate. Or simply sing the lines to a tune you make up as you go. It doesn't have to be musically beautiful. The idea is to engage your mind differently as you reflect on the fact that God rescued you because of his great love. Psalms are meant to be sung after all.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

This time, begin reading Psalm 40 and when you find a reason to rejoice, stop and tell the Father about it. Do the same for Repent and Request.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Years from now, when you find this little booklet again, will you wish you wrote more notes?

Day 5

When the Bible says "eternal life," it's not only talking about the future and the afterlife. The biblical idea of eternal life starts when you are adopted into God's family and has no end. Now, we glimpse that life as if through a dark, dirty window, but there's a time coming when we will see face-to-face. As you meditate on two translations of the same verse, think about how the Father's love leads to how we live now and in the future.

Meditate

> **1 John 4:9**
>
> *NIV: This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.*
>
> *NLT: God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.*

Try it: Read the same verse in the two translations above. We "live through him" and we "have eternal life through him." How do these two ways of articulating it add to your understanding of how God showed his love to us?

Rejoice, Repent, Request

David wrote Psalm 30 to be sung at the dedication of the first temple, which was finished after his death. It's a song of personal thanksgiving for a lifetime of care from God. So, as you rejoice, repent, and request, zoom out and consider the many ways God has rescued and cared for you during your life.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Jot down a thought for each section: Meditate, Rejoice, Repent, Request.

Day 6

Chapter 2 of Ephesians begins by saying that we were dead in our sins and by our very nature were "children of wrath," disobedient and following evil. And then the profound and famous transition, "But God..."

Meditate

> **Ephesians 2:4–7**
>
> *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ —by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Try it: Dwell on the main contrast in this passage—we were dead and he gave us life. Consider how Jesus died and was given life, and how his death is the very thing that gave us life. Wonder at how we are united with him in his death and in his life. Let your mind be blown by this crazy love.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Psalm 145 is a triumphant exclamation of praise to God. It's almost as if it needs an epic movie soundtrack playing as you read it. This is a great one to read aloud. Like the last verse says, let your mouth speak the praise of the Lord.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Notes go here:

Day 7

In the Bible's creation story, God creates the whole world in six days and then reviews all that he made and sees that it is very good. On the seventh day, he rested—not because he was tired, but in part, to set a pattern for us. The first humans were created on the sixth day, so their first full day of life must have begun by admiring all that God had done in the past week.

Similarly, today, look back at the verses you read and the notes you made and admire what God has done. If you missed a day or two this week, you have a chance today to catch up. Remember, the practices of prayer and meditation are not something you do so that God will love you. God, the Father, already loves you more than you can imagine, and prayer and meditation are ways you encounter him and revel in his love for you.

Meditate

Choose a verse you meditated on earlier or one you missed.

Try it: Review the week's meditations and notes, and write down something that stood out to you about God's love.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Choose a previous passage that inspired prayer or one you missed.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

This might be notes just for today or maybe a look back at the whole week.

For your DNA group

Going through this book with your DNA group? When you gather, don't wait—within the first five minutes, get talking about your experience with these practices this week. DNA groups give you the space to go deep, so in this context, we'll focus on repentance.

Use these questions as conversation starters:

- Have you been faithful to connect with the Father each morning? If so, what have you put in place to help you stick with it? If not, what are some supports you need to help you make time and space for these practices?
- After meditating on 2 Timothy 1:7 (for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control), how would you answer the question, "what are you afraid of?"
- Are you developing any new habits of rejoicing, repenting, or requesting in prayer?

For your Missional Community

If your MC is in this book together, bring these to your gathering:

Practice the 3Rs pattern of prayer together using the passage below to inspire you to Rejoice, Repent, and Request.

> **1 John 4:11–21 (NLT)**
> *Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God.*

But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. We love each other because he loved us first.

If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.

- Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?
- Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

- Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?
- If perfect love drives out fear, our MC (people perfectly loved by God) has nothing to fear! Ask the Father to help you encourage one another to live without fear because of his love.

Week Four

Biblical meditation and prayer are called "practices" for a reason. They require practice. And they come alive as you practice them more. At this point, beginning Week Four, get ready to take more ownership of these practices. The goal is that you can begin to do them without a guide, and teach others how to experience God through prayer with these simple practices. You've been led through various passages and examples, and now it's time to spread your wings a little. Many days this week, you'll choose your own verse to meditate on or a psalm to pray through. Pick one that is meaningful to you (it doesn't even have to be listed earlier in this guide). Especially this week, it will be key to share with your DNA group, your MC, or a friend what you did, how you are experiencing the Father's love, and how that is impacting your life.

Day 1

Meditate

> **John 15:9–11**
>
> *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

Try it: Choose a "Try it" suggestion from Week One, or make up your own method to help you think deeply about these verses.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Enjoy Psalm 16 and pay special attention to the rich verses at the beginning and at the end.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Got notes?

Day 2

Meditate

Pick a "Win the Morning" verse that was meaningful to you from a previous day to meditate on again.

Try it: When the Scriptures mention something you can see (it's usually outside), go take a look at it as you meditate. Today, go outside if you can, or look out a window—imagine the love of God being like the air that fills the space all the way up to the heavens.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Enjoy reading Psalm 57. Consider reading it and praying outside, looking up toward the heavens often. May our God be that highly honored!

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

How did the outdoors inspire your meditation and prayer? What thoughts do you want to record to share with your MC and DNA?

Day 3

Meditate

Is there a previous verse that after meditating on it you almost know by heart? Meditate on that verse again or pick a short one that was meaningful to you.

Try it: Read and say this verse over and over until you've committed it to memory and can smoothly repeat the whole thing with your eyes closed. Memorizing Scripture is a great way to meditate and ensure that you have truth about God's love at the ready whenever you need it.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Notice that Psalm 66 starts off with "us" and "our" then halfway through switches to "I" and "my." We experience God's love individually and as part of his people. It's both. We rejoice, repent, and request on our own and together.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

How might your individual rejoicing also lead to rejoicing with the whole church family?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

How might your personal repentance be shared with your DNA group?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

How might the requests you are making based on this Psalm inspire others in your MC?

Write your individual thoughts so that you can share them with your MC and DNA.

Day 4

Meditate

Is there a day in the last few weeks where in meditation you strongly felt the love of God? Flip to that day in this guide and meditate on that previous verse again, look at your notes, and ask the Spirit to pour the love of God into your heart anew.

Try it: Use the same method of meditation you used that day where you most strongly felt the love of God.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Psalm 77 is a song of lament. The author is deeply troubled. He can't sleep, crying out to God all night. He's so shaken that he questions aloud whether the everlasting love of God has somehow ceased. But then he remembers, ponders, and meditates on God's mighty deeds. All his troubles don't disappear by the end, but he is confident in the love, wisdom, and power of God. Meditation and prayer changes his outlook.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

The psalmist remembers the Exodus story—at the time, this was the main story of redemption for God's people. Now we know clearly that it foreshadowed our ultimate redemption in Jesus. Rejoice in prayer that in Jesus' death and resurrection we see an act mightier than parting the Red Sea!

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Not sure what to write? Try writing out your prayer of rejoicing, repenting, and requesting.

Day 5

Mix-and-match. Pick a verse from one day and a "Try it" method from a different day.

Meditate

Pick a verse that was meaningful to you from a previous day to meditate on it again.

Try it: Choose a "Try it" suggestion from a previous week, or make up your own method to help you think deeply about these verses.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Psalm 91 is all about God being a refuge for those who trust him. Verse 8 mentions punishment of the wicked and is a good filter for the other verses. It's not that God's people never experience hardship, but God, himself, is our refuge from the punishment we deserve.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

You might start praying something like, "Father, I often don't 'dwell in the shelter of the Most High' or 'abide in the shadow of the Almighty.' I want to do things my way..." If that rings true, continue that prayer and get specific as you confess, knowing that Jesus has already paid for it.

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

Record something about your experience meditating and praying.

Day 6

Imagine a friend of yours—someone you've known for years. Picture them. Now imagine they willingly stepped into harm's way to save you. It could be that you deserved a firing squad and somehow this person took the bullets for you.

Meditate

> **John 15:13–14**
>
> *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends...*

Try it: Let your mind and heart be amazed at this radical, intense love we see in Jesus. It's not just an idea—he really loves you and calls you his friend if you are his disciple.

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Reading Psalm 139, it's easy to get thrown off by verses 19–22 where David calls for God's wrath on his enemies. When we learn about studying the Bible in Book 2, we'll learn more about how to best understand these harsh statements. For now, as a springboard to prayer, focus on the other verses. For instance, one of the most famous parts of Psalm 139 is in verses 7–12. God's loving presence is poetically described as being inescapable.

Rejoice: In this Scripture, where do I find reasons to rejoice and be thankful? How does it remind me of Jesus?

Repent: What sin in my life does this Scripture reveal? How is Jesus better than whatever I put above him?

Request: How does this Scripture inform the way I pray for myself and others in Jesus' name?

This psalm ends with a beautiful, intense, and open request: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" How can you make this heartfelt request in your own words? It's the kind of request that leads to a nourishing, thriving life with God.

Suggestion: write the request at the end of Psalm 139 in your own words as a prayer.

Day 7

You made it! Whether you hit every day or only prayed a handful of times, hopefully you feel more loved and accepted by the Father than you did four weeks ago. You've practiced some skills that will help you find nourishment for your soul as you meet with God. This is only the beginning. Remember, God himself is inexhaustible—experiencing him and gaining insight into his ways is what is exciting and renewing about these spiritual practices. You will look at the same verses in the future and see the Spirit illuminate different truths. It's not just a one-month thing, it's a lifetime thing. And it's less about what you do and more about who you are with—Jesus!

Meditate

> **1 John 3:16 (NIV)**
>
> *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.*

Try it: Repeat the verse, emphasizing a different word each time and thinking about what that emphasis reveals about this verse.

> ***This** is how we know...*
>
> *This **is** how we know...*
>
> *This is how we **know**...*

Rejoice, Repent, Request

Think back over all the passages you've read and all the conversations you've had about God in the last four weeks. You've built some prayer muscles through all these reps. Take a moment to flip through your notes to admire what

God has done in you these last four weeks. Hopefully that inspires your prayer.

You can simply talk to your Abba this morning and rejoice in his goodness, repent of ways you have disregarded him, and request what you need with the confidence of a toddler asking a loving dad. Of course, you can also go back and read a passage you missed and use it to inspire your prayer as well.

Round out your notes for this whole four-week experience. What were the highlights?

For your DNA group

Going through this book with your DNA group? When you gather, don't wait—within the first five minutes, get talking about your experience with meditation and prayer.

Use this to guide your DNA conversation:

- What did you Discover about the Father as you've meditated and prayed this last week?
- Have each person flip through their notes and share something they repented of to the Father. Then Nurture one another's hearts by having someone else in the group share how the gospel comes to bear on that repentance. Talk about how the gospel brings hope, strength, encouragement, and more.
- How can you ensure you Act in a way that lines up with your desires to meditate and pray through this guide this coming week?

For your Missional Community

If your MC is in this book together, bring these to your gathering:

- Share a verse that you read that inspired a request. Also share what you asked the Father for. (Ideally, have everyone share at least one verse and request.)
- How has using Scripture as a springboard for prayer changed what you ask for?

- Inspired by the passages you read this week, what are some requests you want to make on behalf of your MC? Go ahead and ask the Father for those things in prayer together.

Tying a bow on these four weeks

Soma family, our prayer is that these weeks of practice have helped you find real nourishment through an abiding connection with Jesus. We hope you feel and know the love of the Father more deeply than ever and are excited to press in further. We're just getting started—Book 2 takes us deeper into feeding on God's Word.

May this be the beginning of a new season of maturity for all of us and a big step toward a day when every man, woman, and child in Federal Way has a daily experience of the love of Jesus through the words and deeds of his people.

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