ABIDE

Everyday practices for staying close to Jesus

through scripture



Book 5

Ever ancient, ever new

We are constantly marketed to with the allure of new products and services. This pervasive influence to favor the new can lead us to have a subtle disdain for coming back to the same passages of the Bible we've read before—or for staying in one passage for very long. And if you've been engaging these practices for a while, they can begin to feel much less exciting—it's just not new anymore.

Our tendency to always favor the new can be both healthy and unhealthy, and so there are at least two good ways to address it. First, recognizing the unhealthy aspect comes from the influence of the world, we must fight against that. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). As we abide in Jesus, our thoughts and perspective become more aligned with his. The fight is to stay connected and let the vine do his work.

Second, for the healthy aspect of our desire for newness, we need to look for it in the right places. The Bible says of itself that it is living and active. The words stay the same, but our understanding of them grows. The Word of God reveals God himself, and there's no end to the new glories we can find in an infinite God. We can so easily get tripped up by a been-there-done-that attitude reading the same passage of Scripture we've read before and miss the new thing God is revealing to us about himself.

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.

Soma family, like it says in Hosea 6, let us press on to know the Lord. As we read together from the book of John again, expect to experience Jesus, who is the Word. The Lord coming to meet you is as sure as the dawn.

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** 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 — *this book*** 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.

The Gospel of John

As a church we believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. Every book in the Bible sits somewhere on a grand, redemptive story arc that climaxes in the death and resurrection of Jesus. There are four books of the Bible called gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They sit at the climax of the biblical story, telling of Jesus' life, death,

and resurrection and also recording much of Jesus' teaching. The Gospel of John was written by one of Jesus' 12 apostles who was with him for the three years of his public ministry and was one of Jesus' inner circle. In this book, the Gospel of John will be our focus—we'll read it and practice how to learn from it. Many people point brand new disciples to John as a great first book of the Bible to read, and it's also a deep ocean of rich truth about Jesus that all of us can come back to over and over in our journey of faith.

I am...

In Book 2, we looked at seven events in Jesus' life that John calls signs—these were "written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ." John also records seven instances when Jesus uses a metaphor to refer to himself, painting an astonishing picture of who he is. These seven "I am..." statements will be our main focus in this book.

Every morning

Plan for at least 10 minutes. 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. 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.

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

Like we did in Book 2, we'll spend the first week reading the whole book of John all the way through, like a story. Consider reading it in a different translation than you are used to. The New Living Translation (NLT), the New International Version (NIV), The Message (MSG), or the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) are all good options for this second pass.

Hopefully, you remember that reading the whole book is not as daunting as it might sound. In most Bibles, the book of John is less than 30 pages long. So, you'll only read about four pages a day. Conveniently, John has 21 chapters—that's three chapters a day for seven days. If you're on the slower end of the average adult reading pace, this will take about 10 minutes a day. That's less time than the average YouTube video.

After reading the three chapters, highlight one or two things you noticed—maybe something jumped off the page for you, maybe something provoked a question, led you to pray, or sparked your imagination. Whatever it is, you'll mark it so that you can find it easily when you meet with your Missional Community and DNA group.

Of course, if you make time for it, there's more you can do to really engage this week. Here are some ideas for going deeper:

- **Journal:** write down some thoughts and questions from the reading.
- **Pray:** use the 3Rs pattern of prayer from Book 1. Let the chapters you read be a springboard for Rejoicing, Repenting, and Requesting in prayer.

- **Read it all at once:** Students of the Bible have found it very rewarding to read an entire book in one sitting as they begin studying it. That will likely take you over an hour for John, but if you can make the time to do that during this week, you will almost certainly notice things and see connections you never knew were there before.
- **Read it again:** If you make the time for it, re-reading the chapters can help you see things you didn't even notice the first time. Maybe you read the chapters in the morning and then again that night. Or maybe you read them on your own and then again with someone in your household. Or read them in the morning and listen to them in the car.
- **Watch the videos:** You'll find links to animated videos from the Bible Project that help give you a sense of John's structure, themes, and more. If you didn't watch these the first time through, check them out this time.

Day 1

We begin by rereading John's version of the incarnation. Matthew and Luke tell us the details of the Christmas story —angels, a virgin birth, a manger, etc.—but John focuses on a more cosmic perspective and emphasizes **why** Jesus had to come for us.

Read John chapters 1–3.

Highlight what stood out to you. Something interesting, something you have a question about, etc. You can underline or highlight in your Bible or jot down the reference here.

Have 2 more minutes?

Watch the first minute and a half of the Bible Project's animated Overview of John 1–12, which briefly introduces the whole book. https://bibleproject.com/videos/john-1-12

Have 10 more minutes?

Watch the full video intro to John 1–12 from the Bible Project. https://bibleproject.com/videos/john-1-12

Day 2

The last chapter today is packed! Jesus feeds a huge crowd with a boy's lunch, walks on water, explains he has come down from heaven like manna to nourish and sustain us, and his disciple Peter acknowledges Jesus is the messiah.

Read John chapters 4–6.

Highlight what stood out to you. Something interesting, something you have a question about, etc. You can underline or highlight in your Bible or jot down the reference here.

Have 5 more minutes?

Write down questions you had as you read today. Something confusing? Something you want to know more about? Something you wonder?

Day 3

In these chapters, we see escalating conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders as Jesus teaches, heals, and interacts with people.

Read John chapters 7–9.

Highlight what stood out to you.

Five minutes or more to go deeper?

Pray with the 3Rs pattern using what you just read as a springboard to Rejoice, Repent, and Request.

Day 4

Notice that the beginning of today's passage has two I-am statements of Jesus.

Read John chapters 10–12.

Highlight what stood out to you.

Have 1 more minute?

Watch the first 50 seconds of the Bible Project's Overview of John 13–21, which briefly summarizes chapters 1–12. https://bibleproject.com/videos/john-13-21

Five minutes or more to go deeper?

Read Psalm 23, one of the Bible's most famous chapters. Meditate on Jesus being the Good Shepherd and you his sheep. Write down your thoughts. Later, chat with your DNA group or others about it.

Day 5

Today, we'll read most of Jesus' "Farewell Discourse." And in chapter 15, he introduces the metaphor of the vine and the branches. That's the very idea this Abide series is named for. We are spiritually nourished only through an abiding connection with Jesus, and this is one of the last key things he wanted to leave his disciples with.

Read John chapters 13–15.

Highlight what stood out to you.

Five minutes or more to go deeper?

What would it look like for you to abide in Jesus more than you do now? What would need to change? Do you believe that change is worth it? Write it down and tell someone about it.

Have 10 more minutes?

Watch the video intro to John 13–21 from the Bible Project. https://bibleproject.com/videos/john-13-21

Day 6

Near the end of today's passage, you'll read about Judas betraying Jesus. Try to put yourself in Jesus' shoes (or sandals). What might it have felt like to Jesus to get to the moment he knew was coming when someone he loved and shared life with would betray him and set in motion the events leading to his death?

Read John chapters 16–18.

Highlight what stood out to you.

Got a few more minutes?

Read John 18:15–18, where Peter denies Jesus. Imagine yourself in the narrative. What must that have been like for Peter? Or for Jesus, who predicted it?

Day 7

Today we finish the book of John with Jesus' death and resurrection—the very heart of our faith. Be ready to share something from this experience with the church family the next time you gather.

If you've gotten behind this week, carve out some time today to catch up and go into the next week having read the whole book. Even if you are just starting today, in a little over an hour you can likely read the whole book—it's probably about 30 pages in your Bible.

Read John chapters 19–21.

Highlight what stood out to you.

Got an extra 2 minutes?

Jot down one or two highlights of all your highlights. What stood out to you the most out of the whole book of John? Are these the same as the last time you read it?
Or different?

A little deeper?

Why do you think those super-highlights came to mind? Flesh out your thoughts about them.

Want to make a stronger foundation?

Reading the whole book in one sitting is a great way to strengthen your understanding, see connections, and prepare you to study the book. It will probably take you just over an hour.

Another option is to listen to the book while you are working in the yard, cleaning the house, doing laundry, cooking, exercising, driving to work, or whatever else you might be doing. There are many options between mobile

apps and websites where you can listen to audio of the Bible. Here's one: https://www.biblestudytools.com/audio-bible/nlt/john

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.

Find the passages you highlighted in John so far this week, and simply read them to each other.

What intrigues you about what you read? What questions do you have?

For your Missional Community

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

Enjoy spending time together and catching up on life. Then share with one another: are you setting any goals to help you focus on abiding in Jesus? What would it look like to help each other keep them?

Week Two

In Book 2, we studied John using what's called the inductive Bible study method. We'll use that same process. Hopefully, it feels familiar now, and using it again should really help establish this simple, time-tested process in your mind.

The three key words to remember for this process are: **Observe. Interpret. Apply.**

As a reminder, when looking at a biblical passage, you will ask, "What's there?" (Observe), "What's it mean?" (Interpret), and "So what?" (Apply). This method is one of those things that seems obvious but yet can be profound. It is a simple tool, but with practice can produce amazing results.

We'll spend two days in each passage. The first day, we'll mostly Observe and begin the Interpret step. Day Two we'll Interpret and Apply. We'll look first at the seven I-am statements and then end with the key passages from the end of John, particularly the last week of Jesus' life, his death, resurrection, and ascension.

Taking off the training wheels

Since we spent weeks with guided practice in the inductive method, the time has come for a little less guidance. You'll find the notes for each day a little more sparse than before. The goal is for you to be able to simply walk through the steps of Observe, Interpret, Apply on your own. You can reference the general How-to page as often as you need it. We've included it at the very end so you can easily flip to it or cut it out and stick it in your Bible.

Respond in prayer

Let the Scripture motivate your prayer. If you'd like, use one of the patterns you've learned in Books 1 and 4, like the 3Rs (Rejoice, Repent, Request), the Circles, and the Cycles.

Day 1 — I am the Bread of Life

It's fitting that Jesus' first I-am statement we look at has to do with nourishment. Today, we'll spend the bulk of our time making observations—the better you observe, the better you will understand the passage.

Read John 6:25–35

(If you have a little extra time, read the extended cut, John 6:25–59. Jesus says he is the Bread of Life three more times.)

Observe

What words are repeated? What words seem like key terms in this passage? Do you see any contrasts or comparisons?

Interpret

You may have noticed the word "work" repeated several times. Jesus says the work of God is to believe in the one he sent. What do you think that means? Why do you think he might have said that?

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 2 — I am the Bread of Life (continued...)

Today, we continue interpreting the passage to get at its meaning and consider how it applies to our lives.

Read John 6:25–35 (or 6:25–59)

Have a few extra minutes?

Read Exodus 16, the story about when God first sent manna, bread from heaven.

Interpret

In what ways is Jesus like manna? How does this comparison illuminate who Jesus is, what his purpose is, and how we relate to him?

Apply

If Jesus is the bread of life, the living bread, the bread of God, and the true bread from heaven, what does that mean for us? How can we consume this bread? What does it look like to be nourished by this bread? Why do we labor for what is not bread (Isaiah 55:2)?

Prayer

Pray in response. If you'd like, use the 3Rs (Rejoice, Repent, Request), the Circles, or the Cycles.

Day 3 — I am the Light of the World

Immediately after Jesus states he is the light of the world, the Pharisees interrupt and the conversation goes in a different direction. However, there are several other places where Jesus refers to himself as light.

Read John 8:12; 1:4–5; 3:19–21; 12:35–36, 46; 9:5

Have a few extra minutes?

Read 1 John 1:5–7, which also mentions light.

Observe & interpret

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 4 — I am the Light of the World (continued...)

Read John 8:12; 1:4–5; 3:19–21; 12:35–36, 46; 9:5

Have a couple extra minutes?

Whether you read it yesterday or not, read 1 John 1:5–7, and consider how it sheds light on the subject.

Interpret & apply

Prayer

Pray in response...

Seven I-am statements

In the Bible, the number seven is often associated with the divine and completeness. We saw in Book 2 that John chose to write about seven miraculous signs that Jesus did. He also includes seven metaphorical statements where Jesus says, "I am..."

In Exodus, when Moses asked God his name, God's response was simply "I am." God simply exists—he has always existed and will always exist. His existence defines reality. I am. Of course, the phrase "I am" is common in daily speech, but when Jesus makes radical claims about his divine nature with statements beginning with "I am," it should make us stop and take notice of the connection to Exodus and what God calls himself. In fact, Jesus drops the mic with an I-am statement that is not metaphorical when he says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."

1. "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
2. "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12; 9:5)
3. "I am the door of the sheep." (John 10:7, 9)
4. "I am the good shepherd." (John 10:11, 14)
5. "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25)
6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)
7. "I am the true vine." (John 15:1, 5)

Day 5 — I am the Door

Chapter 10 contains two related I-am statements. Jesus is both the door for the sheep and the good shepherd of the sheep. Read the whole passage today for context, but for observations and interpretations, focus on the first ten verses.

Read John 10:1–21 (focus on verses 1–10)

Observe & interpret

Prayer

Pray in response. If you'd like, use the 3Rs (Rejoice, Repent, Request), the Circles, or the Cycles.

Day 6 — I am the Door (continued...)

Read John 10:1–10

Interpret & apply

Prayer

Pray in response.

Day 7

If you missed some days, use today to go back and catch up. Or...

Read John 6

Reflect on how the larger context adds to the I-am statement.

Whichever you choose, enjoy the Father's presence. Remember, reading his Word is not a box to check or a way to win his favor. It's a means of grace to us—a way for us to be with our Dad, who loves us more than we deserve.

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.

Share with each other some highlights from what you've read and studied so far.

What are some specific applications you've come to? How can you help each other live those out?

For your Missional Community

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

In your time together, have someone pick a passage from John that you've read so far this week. Pick a longish story rather than a very short one. And read it out loud together in a translation that is different from what the group is most used to. You might try:

- New Living Translation (a very readable thought-for-thought translation)
- The Message (a translation striving to capture the rhythm, idioms, and flavor of the original)
- Living Bible (a classic, easy-reading paraphrase)
- King James Version (a landmark English translation —from Shakespeare's era)

If you want a suggestion for a passage, try John 6:1–59. It's that packed chapter from this week where Jesus says he's the Bread of Life.

Simply read the story out loud together and chat about what stands out to you and what questions it raises.

Week Three

With God, his Word is a person. Jesus, God made flesh, is the physical embodiment of so much we otherwise think of as abstract. The Word of God is a person. The Truth is a person. The Way to God is a person. Resurrection is a person. This is a radical and unique aspect of Christianity.

This week, we'll look at some I-am statements that transcend simple metaphors and broaden our understanding of God, and how magnificent Jesus is.

Day 1 — I am the Good Shepherd

We looked at this passage last week, but now we'll focus on the second I-am statement. Read the whole passage for the context and then focus on verses 10–18.

Read John 10:1–21 (focus on 10–18)

Observe & interpret

Few extra minutes?

Jot down observations from stories and verses where you remember sheep and shepherds being mentioned all throughout the Bible. Not sure where to start?
Try Psalm 23.

Day 2 — I am the Good Shepherd (continued...)

This passage mentions a hired hand, a thief, and a wolf. How do these compare to Jesus?

Read John 10:10–18

Interpret & apply

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 3 — I am the Resurrection and the Life

This I-am statement appears in the passage with the last and culminating sign—Jesus raising a dead man to life.

Read John 11:1–46

Observe & interpret

Prayer

Pray with hope in a future resurrection, acknowledging that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now in you by the Holy Spirit.

Day 4 — I am the Resurrection and the Life (continued…)

This I-am statement appears in the passage with the last and culminating sign—Jesus raising a dead man to life.

Read John 11:1–46

Interpret & apply

Prayer

Pray in response…

Day 5 — I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life

Three-for-one. Jesus combines these into one I-am statement. Meditate on how these are related to one another.

Read John 14:1–11

Observe & interpret

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 6 — I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (continued...)

If Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, how might that affect how we love those who don't yet know him?

Read John 14:1–11

Interpret & apply

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 7

Take the day to review something you learned or catch up on any missed days. Or...

Read John 11

Prayer

Consider using the Circles pattern from Book 4 to pray for those who don't yet know Jesus in each Circle in light of Jesus being the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

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.

Share with each other some highlights from what you've read and studied so far.

What is something that has stood out to you from the book of John about Jesus? What can you worship him for? What are you grateful for? What are you impressed by? Respond to him in prayer about these things.

For your Missional Community

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

The inductive Bible study method (Observe, Interpret, Apply) can be even more effective with a group. You get multiple perspectives—different people notice different things and see different connections, and everyone benefits when they are brought up in a group conversation. Examine this passage together. It's not one of the I-am statements, but another significant passage from John.

Read John 17:1–26

This is often called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. He intercedes for his disciples and us—those who would believe based on their words. Pay special attention to Jesus' emphasis on unity.

Week Four

This week, we'll finish the I-am statements and look at some other key passages in the Gospel of John.

If others in your MC or DNA group are going through this guide too, take advantage of it. Shoot someone a text or chat over coffee or a beer and ask what they are learning. Let's learn from one another and encourage one another.

Day 1 — I am the Vine

For our church family, this may be the most familiar I-am statement. It's the passage this whole Abide series is named for—the foundation of our efforts to equip ourselves to find nourishment in Jesus. And it's the last metaphorical I-am statement John records. Notice how life comes through the vine—branches not connected to it die. And twice, Jesus says, "I am the… and the life." Meditate on that as you reread this passage.

Read John 15:1–17

Observe & interpret

Prayer

Pray in response…

Day 2 — I am the Vine (continued...)

We've thought a lot about how this passage applies to our lives. How's it going living that out? What might need to change for you to more effectively abide in Jesus, the vine? Who could help support you?

Read John 15:1–17

Interpret & apply

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 3

Now, we'll look at some other key passages from John beyond the signs and I-am statements.

It's natural to think that life would be better if we could see Jesus and he was here with us in human form. However, Jesus says it's to our advantage that he goes and sends the Holy Spirit. He says it's better to have him inside us than beside us.

Read John 16:4–15

Observe & interpret

Prayer

Pray asking the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth. Imagine what it would be like to take more and more decisions to the Father in prayer.

Day 4

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will "convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." What do you think that means? What evidence do you have for your interpretation?

Read John 16:4–15

Interpret & apply

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 5

Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection is the climax of the Bible's epic story, the turning point of history, and the very core of our faith. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that if Christ has not been raised our faith is in vain. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth and illuminate this essential passage to you.

Read John 19:16–20:18

Observe & interpret

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 6

Most of these events happened on a Friday nearly 2,000 years ago. As the core of our faith, the gospel has implications for every area of life. As you think about application, it might be helpful to ask the Spirit for an area of life to focus on: work, school, marriage, dating, parenting, finances, media, the "least of these," etc.

Read John 19:16–20:18

Interpret & apply

Prayer

Pray in response...

Day 7

Today, don't just review the past week, but review the whole guide.

- What are the big ideas you learned and want to apply to your life?
- When did you get a sense that the Holy Spirit was opening something up for you to understand or leading you to make a change?
- What can you worship God about based on the book of John?
- Which one of God's characteristics that you see in this book inspires you to praise him?

Praise God for what you've learned about him through his Word. Ask him to show you more. Ask him to let it transform you more and more into the likeness of Jesus.

Come ready to share with the church family something you learned and how you experienced God through the Gospel of John.

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.

Share with each other some highlights from what you've read and studied so far.

What are some specific applications you've come to? How can you help each other live those out?

For your Missional Community

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

With your MC, practice the process of Observe, Interpret, Apply together in a discussion.

Read John 21:1–19

Observe, Interpret, Apply.

Going deeper

Consider the context. Peter and the disciples had seen Jesus crucified and then resurrected—they had seen him twice. Yet Peter decided to go back to his old life as a fisherman. It seems like he is not convinced and confused about the significance of what has happened though he was an eyewitness. Why?

Contrast Peter in John 21 with Peter in Acts 2.

What's the difference?

Tying a bow on these four weeks

Soma family, Books 2 and 5 of this series have focused on studying the Bible. The elders are striving to equip you to get the nourishment you crave through an abiding connection with Jesus. We pray you feel empowered to dig into the Word on your own, to encounter God and be transformed. We pray you are captivated by Jesus through the grand narrative of the whole Bible, and that as a church family we are developing an insatiable appetite for the Word.

Before God brings revival, he always brings renewal in his church. It's after his people abide in him that we see the fruit of new life. Let's press in to Jesus together, preparing for a harvest of our friends and neighbors coming to know him. May we experience a revival of Jesus' church, seeing the gospel saturate Federal Way so much that every man, woman, and child has a daily experience of the love of Jesus through the words and deeds of his people.

The journey continues in Book 6, where we slow down—learning the good gifts of Sabbath and solitude and finding the rest our souls were made for.

How to Observe, Interpret, Apply

Place this page in your Bible for reference.

Three simple words to remember—observe, interpret, apply—let this be your foundational approach to studying the Bible. It's an intuitive, time-tested method used by millions of people around the world. Use it to focus on one section of the Bible's unified story, seeking to discover what the biblical author intended to communicate to the original audience and to encounter Jesus and be transformed by his Word.

Observe: What's there?

- What comes immediately before and after the passage?
- What kind of literature is it (narrative, poetry, letter, etc.)?
- Where does this text fit in the unified story of the whole Bible?
- What is the cultural context of the original readers?
- Note characters, relationships, locations, time, actions, and reactions.
- Imagine yourself in the story. What do you see, hear, and smell?
- Look for repeated words, comparisons, contrasts, cause and effect.
- Identify the key terms.
- What questions does the text raise?

Interpret: What's it mean?

- Develop some more questions based on your observations. What stirs your curiosity?
- What sentences seem to add up to a unit of thought? Consider that a paragraph.
- Summarize each paragraph and/or the whole passage in one sentence.
- Look for connections between the paragraphs.
- What other passages shed light on this one? Let Scripture interpret Scripture.
- Answer your questions from the text.
- Why do you think this passage is here?
- How does this passage lead to Jesus?

Apply: So what?

- How does this passage challenge how I see God?
- What does this passage say about my identity?
- What can I worship God for based on what I see in this text?
- How should this passage shape the way I see the church or the world?
- Is there a command to obey, a promise to hold on to, or an example to follow/avoid?
- How did Jesus live out the big ideas from this passage perfectly on my behalf?
- If I really believed the essential truths of this passage, what would my life look like?

- What are the barriers to living out this truth?
- How can we live this out as a community?
- How does this change what I'll do tomorrow?

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