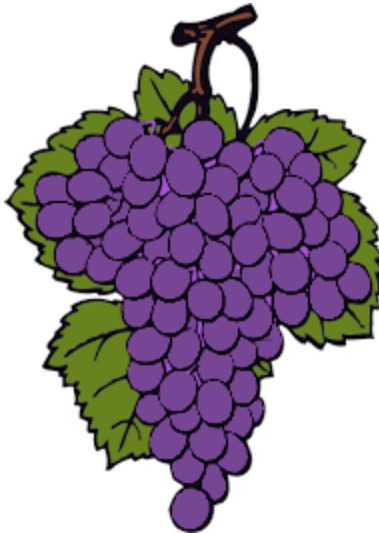


A Reflective Experience in

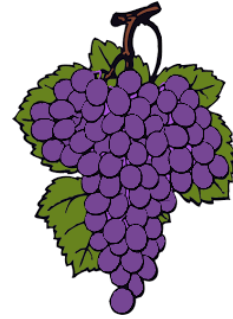
ABIDING



Preparation Guide and Resources

# A Reflective Experience in

# ABIDING



Hello, friends.

We'd like to invite you to experience the richness of abiding more deeply in Christ with your friends, your family, your team, in a space that's set aside for meditation and sensory exploration of John 15:1-17.

Allow a couple of hours and encourage your group to journal their way through the stations in any order they choose. Then, after a length of time you decide, call everyone together and discuss the experience together.

This experience, in coordination with the Abide Bible Study series and choices you're making to abide in your day-to-day walk with God, invites your heart, mind, soul, and strength into communion with Jesus.

Not only is this memorable and special, it's also adaptable. Make it fit your space, your budget, and your group of people. On the following pages, we've listed the **items to provide** and included [links to Amazon](#) to help you find some of the more complicated pieces, but this is up to your own creativity. We provide the outline, and it's up to you to color it in and invite others to abide.

We'd love to hear how you use this resource to supplement your abiding journey.

In love and abiding,

Staff Development and Care  
SDC@navigators.org  
[www.SDCResourceHub.org](http://www.SDCResourceHub.org)

## General Preparation

**Invitation card** for each participant with John 15:1-17 on one side (p. 6), and on the other side:

*Welcome to a safe place to prepare your heart to meet with the Lord.*

*We invite you to pray the prayer of St. Ignatius – asking for the grace to be completely open to God.*

*“Director Lord, guide and influence all that is happening in my mind and heart during this time of prayer - all my moods and feelings, my memories and imaginings. May all be directed and influenced to your greater glory, praise and service and to my growth in the Spirit.”*

**The Room:** *Intentional Ambience*

Christmas/twinkly lights  
Candles (LED if necessary)  
Speaker/playlist for soft worship music  
Hot drinks/snacks  
Tablecloths—decorative scarves, one plastic for the art table

**The Stations:** *5 Sensory Experiences*

Allow at least 1.5-2 hours for setup.

At Each: A couple of seats in an intimate setting, facilitating prayer  
(It's best if there are more than enough seats for your group so there's space to move around as they desire)  
A sign naming the station (framed)  
A copy of the passage, nicely formatted (framed, p. 6)  
2-3 copies of directions for the station, formatted (one copy framed)  
(Print pp. 7-13)  
The activity/props for the station

## Processing Questions:

- 1) What ideas or thoughts captivated you during this experience?
- 2) What emotions stirred in your heart?
- 3) What is God's invitation to you from this time?

## Prep-Station 1

Supplies needed:

- [3 bamboo silverware trays](#), each with enough space to allow individuals to interact
- Different soils
  - [rich, dark, moist soil](#)
  - [rocky ground](#)
  - thorny ground (raid your yard or a friend's garden; weeds work)
  - [sandy soil](#) (a [bird](#) eats the seed here)
- Instructions with questions for each tray (p. 8)
- [Sharpies to write on rocks](#)
- Wet wipes with [trash can](#) as they leave
- (If not included in an invitation, the prayer of St. Ignatius can be included here)



## Prep-Station 2

Locate this station near snacks and drinks, in a cozy corner.

Supplies needed:

- Sign that says: Welcome, Make Yourself at Home
- Blankets/pillows
- Art supplies:
  - Butcher/art paper
  - markers
  - crayons
- Paper to rewrite the passage
- Pens
- Instructions for a breath prayer (p. 10)
- Copies of the passage from *The Message* (copies of *The Message*)

## Prep-Station 3

Supplies needed:

- [Vine/grapes \(decorative\)](#) ([grapes](#))
- [Slideshow](#) on computer or screen

## Prep-Station 4

Supplies needed:

- [Basket](#) of Grapes, 2-3 varieties - variety enough for a bunch per person
- [Essential Oils](#) – 3-5 vials, different fruits
- [Cotton balls](#) (something to put them in)
- Cardstock or art paper for making a collage
- Magazines
- Scissors and glue



## Prep-Station 5

Supplies needed:

- [Vine/grapes](#) (decorative)
- Photograph of a vinedresser (and/or the tools)
- Tools:
  - [Gloves](#)
  - [Pruning shears](#)
  - Basket for the harvest

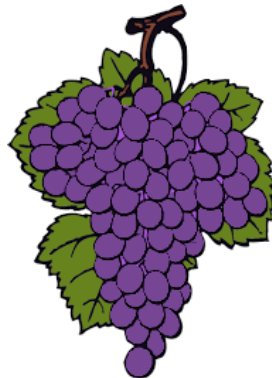


# I Am the True Vine

## John 15 (ESV)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 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."

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another."



## Station 1: Prepare Your Heart

*Please take a tray filled with different kinds of soil. Read the following passage:*

### Matthew 13 (ESV):

#### The Parable of the Sower (13:1-9)

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

#### The Parable of the Sower Explained (13:18-23)

"Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

**Place your hand in each of the four types of soil represented in the tray.** Let the soil remain in your hands for a few minutes as you meditate on these questions:

- How would you describe the current soil of your soul? As you dig deeper, what do you find below the surface? What are God's invitations to you regarding the soil of your soul?
- Spend some time thanking God for His graciousness to produce good fruit from your life. Thank Him for ways you see Jesus in you.
- If applicable, pull a rock out of the tray to represent the barriers of your heart or action(s) that are keeping you from going deeper with the Lord. With a Sharpie, write on the rock the barrier you have become aware of or the sin you are confessing. Discard the named rock with thanksgiving for God's power to forgive, heal and change.



## Station 2: Abide/Dwell

Dear Christian, you have entered God's dwelling place. Please make yourself at home and experience a comfortable, unhurried time with the Lord. You are invited to get cozy, grab a seat, take your shoes off and enjoy a snack and hot beverage as you sit with Him.

- Read John 15: 1-17 and pay particular attention to John 15:4:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me."

- Consider what it means to abide:

The word *abide* comes from the Greek word *meno*, which means "to dwell or remain."

- Read the following verses slowing and meditate of the usage of the same word, *meno*, (dwell/ remain) as in John 15:
  - John 1:32 "And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him."
  - John 12:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."
  - John 14:10 "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his work."
  - John 14:17 "even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you".
  - John 15:9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love."

### Activity #1

Reflect on the following questions: What does your abiding/dwelling with God currently look like? What kind of dwelling place have you invited God into? What would you like your dwelling place to be?

Now, draw a picture of your dwelling place on the paper provided.

### Activity #2

Rewrite a meaningful part of the passage in your own words. Read from a copy of the passage from The Message (provided) to help you as you rewrite the passage in personal language. Make it yours, retaining its original meaning. This process is for devotional purposes - it is not intended to be exegetical in nature. Then create a breath prayer that represents the most relevant part of the passage to you.

## Breath Prayer Instructions

Being intentional about how we use our bodies in prayer and worship helps us to engage our minds and hearts on God's Word.

- Sit in a comfortable chair and allow yourself a couple of minutes to let go of busy thoughts. Close your eyes and recall the line "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10 RSV). Be still, calm, peaceful, open to the presence of God.
- Imagine, with your eyes closed, that God is calling you by name. Imagine that God is actually asking, "(Your name) what do you want?"
- Give God a simple and direct answer that comes honestly from your heart. Write down the answer. If you have more than one answer, write them down. Whatever your answers, they are the foundation of your breath prayer.
- Understand that the breath prayer is one of praise and petition. The praise comes from calling one of the divine names, such as God, Jesus, Lord, Father, Christ, or Spirit. You may have another name besides these. This praise is combined with a petition to form the breath prayer. Remember John 14:13, "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do."
- Select the name that you are most comfortable in using to speak with God. Combine it with your written answer to the question God asked you. This is your prayer. You can work on it so you end up with a prayer of six to eight syllables. With the words "God" and "peace" you might pray, "Let me know your peace, O God." With the words "Jesus" and "feel your presence" you might pray, "Jesus, let me feel your presence."

**Breathing in** the name of Jesus or a prayer from Scripture is an expression of receiving or internalizing God's Word and Spirit.

**Breathing out** is an expression of releasing tensions and control (submitting to God). Or breathing out a prayer can be viewed as overflowing with (sharing) God's Word and Spirit with others.

### Sample Breath Prayers

- Jesus, // let me feel your love.
- Show me your way, // O Lord.
- Holy one, // heal me.
- Alleluia, // have mercy, Jesus.
- Holy Wisdom, // Guide me.
- Father, // let me feel your presence.

### **Station #3: Viniculture and Spiritual Formation: Pruning and Stressed Soil**

*John 15:5-6: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned."*

#### **Insight #1: End of Season Pruning**

At the end of the growing season, the main vine is totally pruned (think brokenness). With all its main branches pared back, the vine looks as if there is little life left in it. Yet it is during the dormant winter season that the vine puts all of its energy into extending its roots deeper into the soil. When nothing seems to be growing above the ground, the vine is nevertheless going deeper below ground. The pictured vines above show what a totally pruned vine looks like just before it begins a new season of fruitfulness.

#### **Reflection Questions**

- Reflect deeply on the image of the pruned tree. Allow yourself to name how and when you relate to its barrenness.
- Over the last year, when have you been frustrated by the lack of fruitfulness? During that time, have you noticed the roots of your life expanding?
- Ponder: Be encouraged to remember that the vine in the picture is on the verge of another season of fruitfulness, just as you may be on the verge of a new season of fruitfulness in the Father's care. Remember Psalm 1:3 where the tree planted by streams of water yields its fruit in season.

#### **Insight #2: Stressed Soil**

The more the soil is stressed, or the vine is stressed (within a certain range), the better the character of the grapes produced. Soil stress leads to the production of secondary chemistry in the grape resulting in a unique and desirable blend of flavors in the finished mature wine. Likewise, drought or heat induced plant-stress also produces flavor and aroma characteristics that make for fine wine. Interestingly, this secondary chemistry likewise promotes the production of vitamins that humans need. Because of this, unstressed fruit may often be less healthy than fruit produced under more stressful conditions.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

- Identify some situations that God orchestrated that have been put into your life to stress (and stretch) you. Did they deepen the "character" of His wine in you? How do you metabolize the thought that hard circumstances are used to create spiritual "vitamins" in your life that are useful in encouraging another's life?
- When did those flavor-enhancing stressed situations and circumstances happen in your life? How did they reshape you?

(Source: <http://preservingbibletimes.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Story-II.Chapter-4.pdf>)

#### **Station #4: Bear Much Fruit**

*John 15:4-5: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*

#### **Savor**

Eat slowly from the variety of grapes before you. Close your eyes and savor the taste and their different flavors. Inhale the sweet scents of different essential oils. (Some skin types may be sensitive to oils, so cotton balls have been provided for your convenience.)

Over many hundreds of years, winemakers have established how best to match the various wine-grape varieties to soil types and sunlight conditions. They found that planting grape vines in the "right" conditions can literally make the difference between a great wine and an ordinary wine. Some soils produce better wine grapes than others, and some wine-grape varieties produce the best results in particular soil types. Consider for a moment the right conditions for fruitfulness for in your life.

#### **Reflect**

- Abiding in Christ means bearing fruit. What emotions are stirred in you as you consider this promise? Where are you experiencing the sweetness of the love of God?  
  
"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" (15:9, 10b).
- Where is the love of Christ found in your life? Who are the people who are wanting more of that kind of love from you?
- Create a collage depicting you as a fruitful branch on the vine.

## Station #5: God as our Vinedresser

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser." John 15:1*

### Job Description—Vinedresser

#### Job Overview

Agriculturalist involved in the daily pruning and cultivation of grapevines. This millennia-old profession, mentioned in the Bible, is an important component of the production of wine and other grape-derived products. The vinedresser works nearly year-round to help ensure the vineyard has a successful crop from which to create wine, juices, and other items

#### Responsibilities and Duties

- **Pruning**  
A vinedresser must have knowledge of the two most common ways to prune grapevines: cane and spur-pruning. These pruning techniques take into consideration the shape and consistency of the vine. Pruning removes dead, diseased or stunted fruits to make room for new growth, ultimately leading to a healthy and productive vine. The pruning process begins very shortly after planting, usually within a few weeks.
- **Pest Management**  
Keeping pests away from burgeoning vines is vital to maintaining the vineyard and ultimately the wine production. To effectively eradicate pests from the crop, the vinedresser must have knowledge of the type of pests common to the region as well as the type of pests attracted to the particular grape species.
- **Irrigation**  
Vinedressers must also closely monitor vineyards to ensure each is receiving the correct amount of water and irrigation during the growing season. Failure by the vinedresser to provide adequate water to vines could lead to sunburn, immature vines and pest problems.
- **Harvest**  
Grapes must grow five to six months before it is time to harvest. Different grapes must be harvested at different times, depending on their growth cycle. Vinedressers must constantly evaluate and monitor the vineyard, even after harvest, as any pest infestations could compromise the next growing season.

#### Reflection:

Sit with the Lord, YOUR Vinedresser, and take time to ponder the four ways He has tended to you. Name specific ways in which you have seen His tender care in your life – through His vigilance, protection, provision and joy of the harvest. Pour out your heart to Him as you review His intimate involvement in your life.

Adapted from excerpt by Stephanie Reid <https://work.chron.com/job-description-vinedresser-7358.html>

