

thesisterhoodmag.com

► FALL 2025

# *the* sisterhood ROOTED ROSE magazine

**SPOONFULS  
OF COMFORT:**  
CREAMY, COZY SOUPS  
TO SAVOR THIS FALL

## A BUSY WOMAN'S GUIDE TO ABIDING IN JESUS

**FINDING  
ROOM TO  
BREATHE**

**WHEN  
COMPASSION  
COSTS**

**THE MOM  
DILEMMA**  
WHAT IS THE RIGHT  
AGE FOR A PHONE





## PEACE *of* MIND

As long as the earth  
endures, seedtime  
and harvest, cold and  
heat, summer and  
winter, day and night  
will never cease.

Genesis 8:22

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↑ God's promise of ongoing seasons—  
fall is part of His faithful design,  
including the blessing of harvest.

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## Abiding in Christ

This fall, we enter a season of deep sorrow and aching questions. The Texas floods stole lives too soon, daughters, friends, and bright lights extinguished in a moment. Random shootings and stabbings continue to shake our communities, and across the world, in Gaza, families—mothers and children—are starving. It's almost too much to bear.

As women, we carry the weight of these tragedies. We weep for children we never knew, mothers we've never met, and communities broken by violence and loss. These aren't just news stories. These are people—people with dreams, with homes, with loved ones left behind.

So where do we go when our hearts are heavy and hope feels thin?

We abide.

When my soul is overwhelmed, I picture myself curled up beneath the protective wings of the Father. I press my face into His robe and cry the tears I don't even have words for. I release

the pain, the fear, the helplessness. And then—I rest. Not because the world is fixed, but because I know the One who holds it.

Abiding in Christ means surrendering control. It means allowing His presence to be enough when our strength is gone. When prayer feels like a whisper. When tears have run dry. When it seems like all is lost.

Abiding doesn't change the chaos—but it anchors us in the storm. It's how we survive the unthinkable. It's how we keep breathing. It's how we hold onto hope.

So abide, my sweet sister. Cling to the One who sees, who hears, and who holds every broken heart. You are not alone in this grief. Let His love wrap around you. And know—you will make it through.

With love,

*Cathy*

# FINDING PEACE IN THE CHAOS

Seeking the peace of  
Jesus amidst the storms  
of life is no easy task.

PAGE 34



# table of contents

FALL 2025



## FAITH & INSPIRATION

- 6** The World Can't Give It to You
- 8** Come Away with Me: Dying to Self, Living in Christ
- 10** Abiding in the Ugly Vine
- 12** A Busy Woman's Guide to Abiding in Jesus
- 14** Abiding in Christ by Erasing the Lines Between the Secular and the Sacred
- 16** At His Feet
- 18** Web of Deception
- 20** Abiding in Between



## FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

- 22** The Mom Dilemma: What Is the Right Age for a Phone?
- 24** From Arguing to Abiding:
- 26** Abiding is Continuous
- 28** Yet I Still Dare To Hope: Abiding in God's Faithful Love
- 30** When Compassion Costs
- 32** From Eye Rolls to Open Hands: Why This Season Is a Sacred Gift, Not a Gut Punch
- 34** Finding Peace in the Chaos



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

- 36** Seeking a Balanced Life
- 38** Come Away & Abide
- 40** The Why Before the How: Awaken the Desire to Be Well
- 42** The Sacred Rhythm of Slow
- 44** The Shame of Should
- 46** Finding Room to Breathe
- 48** Faith in Motion



## HOME & HOSPITALITY

- 50** Creating a Home that Abides in God's Presence
- 52** Spoonfuls of Comfort: Creamy, Cozy Soups to Savor This Fall



## VISIONARIES & VENTURES

- 56** Time for a Reset
- 58** The Invitation
- 60** When God Hides You
- 62** Bay Leaf Tree & A Bush



ENJOYING EVERYDAY LIFE

# THE WORLD CAN'T GIVE IT TO *you!*

/// BY JOYCE MEYER

People search for happiness in a lot of places. They look to things like relationships, money, vacations, houses, clothes, and even open doors of opportunity. Yet, while these things can bring a degree of excitement for a period of time, *happiness* is based on what is happening “in the moment.”

I was a Christian for several years before I understood that enjoying true peace, joy, and fulfillment is the most important thing in life. It's something that goes far beyond happiness to a deeper joy, regardless of our circumstances. And no matter what we own, where we go, or what we do, only one thing can give us this true satisfaction—God.

Simply put, without God, we will never truly be able to have everyday joy.

Psalm 27:4 has become one of the foundational scriptures of my life. It says, “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek, inquire for, and [insistently] require: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [in His presence] all the days of my life, to behold and gaze upon the beauty [the sweet attractiveness and the delightful loveliness] of the Lord and to meditate, consider, and inquire in His temple.”

*Seek* is a strong word. It means “to crave, pursue, and go after something with all of your might.” Many people want a greater relationship with God—and they want to have the immense joy and fulfillment that comes with it—but they don't *crave* and *pursue* Him or lay aside other things in order to have it.”

I love Psalm 16:11. It says, “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy, at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

The Lord desires for us to live with His joy—to be permanently, *consistently* satisfied. This all comes from spending quality time with God...from reading and studying His Word, talking to Him in prayer, or simply sitting quietly in His presence.

The truth is, everything we need to live a



joyful, successful life is waiting for us in His presence. Because of the sexual abuse I suffered as a child, I was forced to grow up quickly and worry about things a child should never have to worry about. As a result, I never had the chance to be a kid—to enjoy life care-free and simply have fun. As far back as I could remember, I was always tremendously serious and intense.

Maybe you can relate. Maybe life has thrown you some curves and left you joy-less. Or maybe you are so caught up in the hurry and worry of everyday life that you've forgotten how to simply stop, have fun, and enjoy yourself. If so, I want you to look at Matthew 11:28. Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls]."

Jesus offers us *rest and relief*. It's the rest we need to live in the world and deal with stressful situations without letting them upset us, ruin our health, or steal our joy. It's a supernatural rest we can only find through a personal relationship with Him—it's not something we can find in the world.

What is our part? We simply need to go to Him! Jesus never promised us we'd have a trouble-free life, but He said we can live above our circumstances. With His grace, wisdom, peace, and strength, we can deal with stress and trouble and maintain a good attitude. His rest is a rest we can have in our souls—our mind, will, and emotions.

Having this rest is like giving your soul a vacation. It means that no matter what's going on, you don't have to worry about it and try to figure everything out. It's a wonderful place to be, because when your soul is at rest in Christ, your emotions are stable and you have peace and joy.

*Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.*



← For more on this topic, order Joyce's three-part teaching resource *Joy and Enjoyment*. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine,

*Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting [www.joycemeyer.org](http://www.joycemeyer.org). Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 150 books, including *BATTLEFIELD OF THE MIND* and *OVERCOMING EVERY PROBLEM* (FaithWords). She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* program, which is broadcast to millions in over 110 languages. For more information, visit [www.joycemeyer.org](http://www.joycemeyer.org)



# COME AWAY — WITH ME: — DYING TO SELF, LIVING IN CHRIST

/// BY ANNE WOOTEN

W

hat does it really mean to abide in Christ? It's a phrase we hear often in church or devotionals, but for many of us, it can feel abstract, maybe even out of reach. Is it a feeling? A mindset? A set of spiritual practices? Or is it something more, a way of living, breathing, and being that begins not with striving but with surrender?



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For years, I carried the weight of trying to earn acceptance, not only from others but even from God. I poured my identity into performance, perfectionism, and people-pleasing. It worked for a while, until it didn't. Behind the polished surface was a soul growing more tired, more disconnected, and more spiritually parched.

The exhaustion eventually caught up with me—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The striving and self-sufficiency left me feeling defeated and unsure of who I was beneath the roles I played. There were backslidden times when I never stopped believing in God, but my faith faded because I didn't fully receive His love as I tried to earn it. I clung to self-reliance and pride, letting fear drive my actions. I even knew Galatians 2:20, but I didn't let it shape how I lived.

When Paul wrote Galatians 2:20 (NIV), he offered more than a theological truth; he handed us a daily compass for how to truly live and abide with Christ: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." That verse has echoed through many seasons of my life,



growing louder each time, until I reached the end of myself.

Later in life, I had to face the toll that years of self-reliance had taken on my health and heart. It was time to surrender, truly surrender. Pride. Control. Unforgiveness. Friend, it was done through tears, confession, and repentance to receive God's grace to really transform me from the inside out. It took all of it. Dying to self wasn't just about letting go of sin; it was about releasing everything I used to define myself.

Through that journey, I discovered the transforming power of abiding in Christ. Jesus doesn't call us to strive; He calls us to come. "Come away with Me," He whispers, not as a demand but as a divine invitation. To abide means to stay, to remain, to draw near, and let His life shape our own. It's not always dramatic. Sometimes it's quiet and steady, like water carving its way through stone.

There's a line in Phillips, Craig, & Dean's song, "Crucified with Christ," that says, "Even though it took dying to survive, I've never felt so much alive." That's the paradox of the gospel. When we die to ourselves, we don't lose—we gain. We gain peace that leads to reconciliation with Him. We gain assurance. We gain a new or renewed identity—not one we've created, but one rooted in Christ.

That truth is not meant to be only inspirational; it is transformational. It changes how we face hardship, how we relate to others, and how we understand our purpose. A life that abides in Christ is one that no longer relies on temporary affirmations or worldly markers of success. Instead, we begin to crave what is eternal, what is holy, what is of God. Our joy deepens, our faith strengthens, and our identity aligns with the One who created us in His unconditional love.

Maybe you're reading this and wondering if God could really want you. Maybe your life feels too messy, too broken, too far gone. Let me gently speak this truth: Jesus gave Himself for you. And His arms are still open. He's waiting for you.

You don't have to clean yourself up before you come. You don't have to have all the answers. You must choose to be willing to lay down the weight you're carrying. That's what it means to abide. It's not about doing more; it's about completely trusting Him more. It's about resting in the truth that you are deeply loved, fully known, and never alone.

To rest in Christ is to stop striving to prove your worth. It's to breathe deeply in the presence of a Savior who isn't asking you to perform, but simply to be with Him. To walk with Him. To learn from Him. To abide in Him. This is where freedom begins.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) declares, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" This is more than a second chance. It's a new beginning. A new identity. A new way to live, not by your strength but by His.

Abiding with Christ doesn't mean every day is easy. It means you never walk alone. It means you have the Spirit of the Living God inside you, guiding you, comforting you, transforming you. And that transformation is not reserved for the "spiritually elite"; it's available to anyone willing to die to self and truly live.

The road of surrender and abiding with Christ is not one we walk perfectly. Believe me, I know. Friend, there will be days of doubt, of struggle, of tension between the old life and the new. God understands this, so don't let those moments push you away from Him; let them pull you closer to His heart. Into His

Word. Into prayer. Into the arms of the One who died to make you His own.

So, wherever you are today, whether you're in the valley, on the mountaintop, or somewhere in between, know this: His invitation to abide with Him still stands.

Rest in His presence and let this truth wrap around your heart like a warm blanket to remind you where you belong. Let this word from Him become your daily affirmation:

*"I am crucified with Christ; therefore, it is Christ who lives within me, now and forever more!"*

# ABIDING IN THE 'UGLY' VINE

/// BY PEGGY EASTERLING



← Peggy Easterling is the Founder and CEO of The Mindset School, where she helps faith-driven women identify mindset blocks, renew their thinking, and step boldly into their God-given calling. A summa cum laude Psychology graduate with certifications from The Life Coach School, The Primal Question, and Kingdom Coaching Certification, Peggy equips women—whether in life, leadership, or business—to stop letting fear, shame, or limiting beliefs hold them back. Her clients learn to clear the mental and emotional clutter so they can hear God's voice, trust it, and move forward with clarity and confidence. Peggy believes God uses the unlikely to do the extraordinary—so He alone gets the glory (1 Corinthians 1:27). Website: [TheMindsetSchool.net](http://TheMindsetSchool.net)



**T**he Mediterranean was everything I hoped it would be—cathedrals that took my breath away, markets that made me linger, and art that whispered of everlasting beauty.

In Italy, we wandered through sacred chapels and stood in reverent awe at the Vatican. We marveled at Michelangelo's *David*, explored Pompeii's ruins, tossed coins into the Trevi Fountain, and sat with gelato in hand near the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

There were no slow mornings—the days were full of beauty, never-ending sights to see, and the kind of pace that fills your camera roll and your soul.

But the moment that marked me most didn't come with a postcard view.

It came from a vineyard.

Our guide led us between rows of vines, sharing how her family had tended that land for generations. Then, with a sheepish look, she apologized.

"I'm so sorry. A few weeks ago, this vineyard would've been breathtaking. But now it's pruning season. If we don't cut the vines back, they won't grow fruit."

She wasn't wrong. It wasn't beautiful.

The vines looked stripped and sparse. Piles of leafy cuttings lay in brittle heaps at their feet. Every twist, every wire, every bare stem was exposed.

And in that moment, the Holy Spirit whispered:

**This is what abiding looks like too.**

I've had seasons like that. I'm just coming out of one now.

God has been pruning me—cutting back things I once held tightly: opportunities I once prayed for, relationships I cherished, even identities I wore like armor. It didn't feel like growth. It felt like loss.

And I found myself wanting to do exactly what the vineyard guide did: apologize.

Apologize for not being "on."

Apologize for not producing more.

Apologize for the pruning.

But here's what I'm learning:

**Abiding isn't about impressing—it's about staying.**

"Abide in Me, and I in you," Jesus said in John 15:4 (ESV). "As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

He didn't say to flourish.

He didn't say to impress.

He said to **abide**.

Stay—even when it's not productive.

Stay—even when it feels raw.

Stay—even when fruit is nowhere in sight and things appear bare.

Because the goal of abiding isn't performance—it's remaining rooted in connection with Him.

God isn't asking for perfection. He's asking for closeness. To remain. To trust Him even when we don't understand the season we're in.

And since God is Triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—abiding doesn't mean isolating. It means stepping into intimacy with Him, and yes, with others.

There are moments we're called to stillness and solitude, just like Jesus on the mountaintop. But even those moments were to reconnect with the Father and return empowered to love and serve.

**Isolation isn't always intimacy.**

**And pruning isn't always punishment.**

**It's preparation.**

That vineyard—cut back, bare, quiet—wasn't dying. It was getting ready to bear fruit that would last (*John 15:16, ESV*).

And maybe you are too.

Maybe your life feels stripped. Maybe your season doesn't look Instagram-worthy.

Maybe you're tempted to retreat or explain it away.

But don't call dead what God is preparing to multiply.

Don't run from what's rooting you deeper.

**Abide.**

Because the most fruitful seasons begin in the quiet, tangled, behind-the-scenes places—where trust deepens, roots strengthen, and transformation quietly begins.

If you're wondering how to stay when everything feels stripped, here are three ways I'm learning to abide in the pruning:

### **1. Get honest with God.**

Say the hard stuff. Write the unspoken thoughts. Don't dress up your prayers. God's not looking for polish. He's a gentleman, waiting for your permission to meet you exactly where you are.

### **2. Anchor yourself in identity, not outcome.**

Remind yourself: "I'm not called to impress—I'm called to abide." Speak truth over your emotions before fear gets the final word.

### **3. Take one obedient step—even if it's wobbly.**

Courage isn't the absence of fear. It's refusing to let fear silence your obedience. Do it sweaty. Do it shaky. But do it anyway.

If you're walking through a cut-back season, I want you to know you're not alone.

This is part of abiding. This is where the harvest begins.

And if you're craving a space to process your thoughts and strengthen your mindset as you walk through it, I'd love to invite you to tune in to **The Mindset School Podcast with Peggy Easterling**.

It's where emotional intelligence meets Kingdom purpose—and where God does some of His most powerful work: from the inside out.

Listen now at [www.themindsetschool.net/podcast](http://www.themindsetschool.net/podcast) or search **The Mindset School Podcast with Peggy Easterling** on your favorite platform.

Because God doesn't just work in the fruit.

**He works in pruning.**

He meets us in the bare, tangled, unseen spaces...

And calls them preparation.



# A BUSY WOMAN'S *guide* TO ABIDING IN JESUS

/// BY ANNMARIE ANDERSEN

While the world encourages us to forge our own path in life, Jesus shows us a far superior way to live. In His very last hours, Jesus prepared the disciples to live a life without Him by using the picture of a vine and branches to impress upon them His identity as well as what it means to be united with Him.

Just as a branch cannot bear fruit without remaining connected to the vine (John 15:5), we cannot live the abundant life God promises without consistently remaining connected to Him. Jesus used the Aramaic word for “abide”—*qewa*—which translates to “remain” or “stay until the end,” implying a lifelong, continual connection to Him.

Jesus wants us to lean on and live by His words. Remaining in Him reminds us we cannot, and do not need to, live by our own strength. Connecting to Him brings spiritual growth, spiritual fruit, and a life that glorifies God. It helps us draw on His love, strength, and guidance when needed and transforms our day-to-day lives.

Remaining joined with Jesus means **trusting** in Him and His promises. We must rely on His Word as our **life source**. It nourishes our

souls, providing the strength and wisdom we need and producing the spiritual fruit that shows His character. Staying connected to the vine means knowing we are deeply, fully, and eternally loved by Jesus.

Enjoying this close relationship with Jesus is for every part of our busy, everyday life, yet it doesn't happen by accident. We must be intentional and committed. Just as with any relationship, abiding requires time and effort. Our relationship with Jesus is unique to each one of us—there is no "one-size-fits-all" way to abide in Him.

### 1. PRACTICAL WAYS TO ABIDE: TIME IN GOD'S WORD

**Scripture is life-giving and transformative.** Just as sap flows through the vine to nourish the branches, God's Word nourishes our hearts and minds. Make time to **study** and meditate on His Word regularly. No matter what age or stage of life, someone or something will always compete for your time! Make Him #1.

**Tip:** Assess your schedule and eliminate time-wasters in your day (mine is getting distracted!). Set aside specific times in your day for Bible study, even if it's only 10 minutes. Use devotionals, reading plans, Bible apps, or journals to keep you engaged.

### 2. PRAYER AS YOUR LIFELINE

Prayer is a **two-way communication** with God. Just like any relationship, communication is key. Speak to Him with **honesty** and **vulnerability**—share your joys, struggles, and desires.

Don't forget to **listen** to His voice. Quiet your heart and hear from Him.

**Tip:** Find pockets of time for prayer during the day—on your commute, while doing chores, as you spend time outside, before you get out of bed, or as you prepare for the night. Set an alarm to remind yourself if needed.

### 3. INCORPORATING GOD INTO YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES

Abiding doesn't always mean sitting in stillness or attending a worship service; it means bringing Jesus into the busyness of your life.

**In every moment**, you can turn your thoughts to Him. Whether you're folding laundry, making dinner, or running errands,

invite Him into those moments. Give Him thanks, words of worship, and your most pressing needs.

**Tip:** Listen to worship music, Bible podcasts, or audiobooks as you go about your day.

### 4. OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TO ABIDING

#### Guilt Over Not Doing Enough

Remember: **small, consistent efforts matter.** Don't let guilt overwhelm you. *God sees your heart and your desire to stay connected with Him.*

**Tip:** Celebrate the progress you've made, no matter how small. Give yourself grace and ask for His strength.

### 5. DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS

Life is full of distractions, but it's **still possible to abide in Jesus** during chaotic times. Just like Jesus made time for His Father amidst His busy ministry (Mark 1:35), it is essential to find time to step away and connect with God. It might even be to step into a dark closet for a moment and ask for peace, clarity, or strength!

**Tip:** Put down that TV remote, your phone, your tablet, or whatever distracts you. Just like Mary of Bethany, choose "what is better." (Luke 10:42)

### 6. SPIRITUAL DRYNESS

When life feels overwhelming, it's easy to let spiritual practices slide. But remember, **God's presence is the ultimate source of rest and renewal.**

**Tip:** Ask God to refresh your spirit. Trust that He will meet you in your exhaustion and give you peace and strength. Search for verses that speak to your pain and bring comfort and encouragement. For example, during a recent trial, my go-to verse was Matthew 6:34: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." I prayed it many times during each day.

**"Our relationship with Jesus is unique to each one of us—there is no "one-size-fits-all" way to abide in Him."**

### 7. BE FLEXIBLE AND CREATIVE

Find **creative ways** to stay connected to His mind and heart. Place sticky notes with Bible verses on your bathroom mirror, refrigerator, or car. Pray during a walk, read a verse while eating lunch or waiting in line, then reflect on how you can apply it to your life. Keep a devotional in your kitchen. Find ways to serve in your church or community, reflecting His love.

**Tip:** Use moments of downtime to connect with God, even if it's just for a minute or two. Don't get discouraged! Remember—we have His Spirit *living inside us* to teach and guide us to be the women He created us to be and produce fruit that lasts.

Our relationship with God is the most important relationship we will ever have. By **abiding in Jesus**—through time in His Word, prayer, and intentional moments throughout the day—we grow deeper in our connection with Him.

**Persevere** in trusting Him, even when it's hard to find the time. Know that God honors every small step we take to remain connected to Him, and He is always there to refresh and sustain us.



→ AnnMarie Andersen answered the call to reach busy women with the hope and encouragement of God's Word in 2017, publishing weekly uplifting blog posts and offering a free Biblical Resource Library. She had been in that busy place of job, home, family, and commitments with little time or energy to dig into the Bible. You can find her at [busyblessedwomen.com](http://busyblessedwomen.com)



# ABIDING *in* CHRIST

## BY ERASING THE LINES BETWEEN THE SECULAR AND THE SACRED

///BY SHARON JAYNES

I received an email from a friend who put words to what I had felt many times.

"I just never have enough time to spend with the Lord. I work forty-plus hours a week, commute ninety minutes both ways, oversee elderly parents' affairs, and take care of my five-year-old son. I'm either on the road, at my desk, or taking care of someone else's needs. And on top of that, I never feel like I'm doing any of it well. What does God want from me in the middle of all this madness? How can I carve out time for Him? I feel like I'm constantly failing Him!"

Amanda is not alone. I've been right there with her. Haven't you?

We live in a physical realm, and our newly born-again spirits will never be completely satisfied here on earth. There will always be tension between the two. Living in union with the Spirit of God is counterintuitive to the ways of this world. What causes that tension and prevents us from experiencing an unbroken union with Christ? I believe it is the tendency to compartmentalize life into two hemispheres: the secular and the sacred.

Every day, secular activities vie for our attention, while our times of worship and communion are relegated to Sunday morning worship, early morning Quiet Times, and mid-week Bible studies (if we can fit them in). We spend the majority of our days operating in secular, day-to-day activities and feeling guilty for the lack of time spent in sacred communion with God. And for most of us, a struggle to find the balance between the secular and the sacred wages war in our hearts. We live in the secular and yet long to be in the sacred. The constant flip-flopping between the two is exhausting, and inevitably, we see one as the winner and one as the loser. We wobble on a spiritual tightrope, fearing the slightest misstep will toss us into the canyon of God's disapproval.

Thankfully, there is a way to wave the white flag of surrender and end the battle's constant conflict. We can experience true union with Christ when we erase the dividing line and meld the two hemispheres into one, when we learn how to abide.

### From Following to Abiding

"Follow me," Jesus called, as He walked along the path of life and invited holy hitchhikers to join Him in the greatest adventure of all time. "Come follow me," He called to the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 4:19). "Follow me," He called out to Levi and Philip (Matthew 9:9, John 1:43). "Follow me," He invited the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:21). Some accepted the invitation; others did not.

But in Jesus' final words to his eleven best friends, I see a different sort of invitation: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you," He urged (John 15:4). Another translation says it this way: "Dwell in Me and I will dwell in you [Live in Me and I will live in you]" (AMP). And still another says: "Abide

in Me, and I in you" (NASB). Jesus invited the disciples to *follow after Him* while here on earth. The night before He faced the cross, He invited them to *abide in Him* after he was gone. That is quite a difference. No longer is one person following behind another, but the two become one and move as one. I in Him and He in me; that is the beauty of the sacred union.

Abiding in Christ does not mean coming into His presence for times of Bible study and prayer, and then walking out of His presence in order to attend to the mundane duties of life that take up the greater part of your day. Your relationship with Jesus is not meant to be experienced in little puffs that refresh for a moment but rather in the continual breathing in and out of His presence. Abiding. Union. Moving as one.

Abiding in, dwelling in, and remaining in Christ all sound like wonderful ideas. I'm sure you'd agree there is no place we'd rather be. But what does that look like...really ... practically?

Jesus began His lesson in John 15 by comparing our lives to that of a branch attached to or "abiding" on a vine.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains [abides] in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (1, 4-5, note added).

If our serving does not come from the overflow of our abiding in Christ, we will feel drained quickly. But when our activity flows out of a full heart that results from our sacred union, we may be tired but not depleted. And we will bear much fruit in the process.

## Erasing the Lines Between the Sacred and the Secular

What would that look like? Let's go back to Amanda.

What if Amanda communed with God *while* she commuted to work? *While* she worked at her job? *While* she took care of her family? Do you see how that would help alleviate the false guilt that adds to her feelings of insufficiency?

The physical or secular realm involves cooking, cleaning, ironing, shopping, vacuuming, laundering smelly clothes, washing dirty faces, and wiping messy bottoms. It involves being a wife, a mother, an employee, an employer, a friend, a student, and a host of other roles and responsibilities that merge on any given day. What could be sacred about all that? Everything. But we'll get to that in a minute.

The spiritual or sacred realm includes praying, reading the Bible, going to church, memorizing Scripture, serving the poor, and meditating on meaningful messages. The spiritual aspects of our lives include worship and practicing spiritual disciplines.

I want to suggest that God never intended for the lines separating the secular and the sacred to exist in the first place. Abiding—the sacred—also includes cooking, cleaning, ironing, shopping, vacuuming, laundering smelly clothes, washing dirty faces, and wiping messy bottoms. When you erase the lines between the secular and the sacred, your entire life can become an act of worship.

How do you put this into practice? By merging the two worlds.

Suppose you acknowledge God's presence as you walk down the grocery store aisle, drive through the carpool line, sit in the hair stylist's chair, stir the spaghetti sauce, shampoo your hair, love your husband, or rake leaves in the yard. Praying with your eyes wide open at times is the only way to practice prayer without ceasing.

Monday always follows Sunday, but when you erase the lines that separate the secular and the sacred, the world becomes your sanctuary. God's presence is one steady stream.

This was true for Jesus. He never hurried. He never panicked. He was never driven by the tyranny of the urgent. If I were in his sandals, I probably would have been wringing my hands with all I had to accomplish in three and a half years. I can hear myself now: "I've got three and a half years to make a difference. How can I cram all the miracles and teaching into this

short amount of time?"

Three and a half years translates into 1,278 days. If you go back and count the days recorded in the four gospels, you'd come up considerably short. So what was Jesus doing on the days that were not mentioned by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? He lived His life. He worked. He ate. He washed. He partied. He prayed. He studied. He meditated. He listened. The Sacred lived in the midst of the secular.

Paul wrote: "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," (1 Corinthians 10:31 NASB). *Whatever you do...*

Cleaning bathrooms to the glory of God.

Vacuuming the floor to the glory of God.

Reading my Bible to the glory of God.

Singing praises to the glory of God.

Being intimate with my husband to the glory of God.

Cooking dinner to the glory of God.

Helping in the soup kitchen to the glory of God.

Shopping for groceries to the glory of God.

Mailing packages to the glory of God.

Filing my taxes to the glory of God.

All things...to the glory of God.

What does "to the glory of God" mean? The Greek word for *glory* is *doxa*; it denotes honor or splendor, a reflection of God's character. We are to reflect God's character, His ways, and His splendor in *everything* we do. Discounting sinful behavior, such as sexual perversions, gossip, drug and alcohol abuse, or any number of immoral acts that contradict the life of a Christian, our entire existence—both in the secular and the sacred realm—could and should be an act of worship. When that happens, words such as "do everything as unto the Lord" and "pray without ceasing" become clearer and more within our grasp.

“

He lived His life.  
He worked. He  
ate. He washed.  
He went to  
parties...

”

Yes, we do need times alone with God. Jesus pulled away to be with the Father often. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). If Jesus, the Son of God, needed to spend extended time alone with His Father, then we certainly do too. However, by acknowledging God's presence in every aspect of our lives, abiding in Him as we live and move and have our being in Him (Acts 17:28), we will experience the blessed union in all things.

God longs for you to experience His presence in the spin of the laundry, the sizzle of the cooking, the buzz of children's chatter, and in the quiet of solitude. From the time God rent the curtain in the Holy of Holies when Jesus took his last breath on the cross, God welcomed you into His presence...not just on so-called holy days, but every day...days.



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Sharon is a storyteller who loves weaving stories and Biblical principles to encourage and empower women to walk in courage and confidence as they grasp their true identity as a child of God and a co-heir with Christ. Her passion is to help women have a better story with Jesus as the hero. Sharon and her husband, Steve, call NC home.



# abiding

## AT HIS FEET: The Sinful Woman

ADAPTED FROM *UNPOPULAR: FOLLOWING JESUS, NOT THE CROWD*

/// BY TISCHA VAN DE REEP

We all have a need to abide, to plug into the source of all love, joy, and peace. Our loving Savior is that source, and we are all desperate for Him, but something tends to hold us back. The thing that keeps us from abiding with Jesus in His healing, restorative presence is sin. Whether it's our own sin, someone else's sin against us, or the impact of this fallen world, we often carry burdens through life.

This baggage — guilt, shame, bitterness, hurt, regret, brokenness, worthlessness, you name it — keeps us from fully engaging with the One who wants to free us from all of it.

We must lay what we're carrying down at His feet and leave them there. Then there will be nothing to keep us from getting close to Jesus as we abide in Him. There is a woman in Scripture who shows us how she laid her burdens down so that she could abide, fully engaged, at the feet of Jesus. Let's do Bible study!

**Read Luke 7:37-38. Why do you think the woman was doing what she was doing?**

This woman, so aware of her sin and so in adoration of her Lord, didn't care who was watching or what they had to say. Her only concern was to make her love-filled, repentant heart known to Him.

How often do we approach Jesus in this way? Even if we are not living overtly sinful lives, we are all sinners. Do we live in continuous acknowledgement of our need for Him? Would we do what this woman had done, with at least one religious leader and possibly many others looking on?

**What, if anything, is holding you back from openly expressing your faith in Jesus?**

**Read Luke 7:39. How did Simon the Pharisee think that Jesus should respond to the woman?**

Simon's thoughts were known to Jesus and He responded with a parable.

**Read Luke 7:40-43. What is the general theme of this parable?**

Read Luke 7:44-46. What does it say about Simon that he did not treat Jesus in the way that a guest should be treated, especially an honored guest?

What does it say about the sinful woman that she did everything that Simon neglected to do, and in a much more personal way?

Read Luke 7:47-50. According to verse 50, what saved the woman – her actions, or her faith? What does this teach you?

Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to his home, but he didn't love Jesus and treat Him as a guest of honor at his table. He didn't even wash Jesus' feet, which was a basic courtesy provided by any host. But this woman, known by all to be a sinner, gave of herself to love Jesus well. But it wasn't what she did, it was the heart with which she did it that made the difference.

The Sinful Woman teaches us how to approach our holy God even in our unholiness. She was known to everyone for her sins, but she was known to Jesus for her love and faith. This is why she was forgiven. There's one more thing about the Sinful Woman that I'd love to share with you. Come with me to the Book of John.

Read John 11:1-2. Who was the sinful woman?

Who was her brother?

Read John 11:5 and John 11:32-35. How did Jesus feel about the Sinful Woman and her siblings?

Now read Luke 10:38-42. Knowing what you know now, why do you think Mary sat at Jesus' feet?

To every Martha out there, Jesus loves you too! All you who have been good girls and faithful women are a shining example to those of us who took the long, bumpy road to Jesus. Your testimony proves that we can be devoted to Jesus from a young age and stay that way. Thank you for serving Him (and us) so well.

After a lifetime of mistakes, stumbles, and regrets, Mary could sit at the Lord's feet all day, every day. In Biblical times, students of a rabbi would sit at that rabbi's feet to learn and gain wisdom from him. Mary adopted that posture of a student at her Teacher's feet after she wept and cleansed her Savior's feet. She poured her sin and shame out at the feet of her blessed Redeemer and wiped them away because they had been reduced to nothing when exposed to His beautiful grace and love.

Precious sister, lay down your burdens at Jesus' feet, allow Him to remove that baggage from you, and then remain there, abide, at His feet, in His merciful presence.

Jesus, with all His loving grace, would take anyone who seeks Him sincerely – anyone – and He will save us. He will redeem us. He will forgive us of our sins – yes, even that.

**Say a prayer of thanks to Him right now.**

Lord Jesus, I humbly come before You and lay my sins at Your feet. Thank You for Your love and forgiveness. Thank You for restoring me through the cross. Please help me to remember to abide in You. Lord, I trust my situation to You and I praise You that You are sovereign over it all. In Your Holy Name, Amen.



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# WEB *of* DECEPTION

///BY SHARA BUELER-REPKA



Spiders. Geez. We have an overabundance here on the farmstead. Not just little ones...BIG ones. So freakishly big, I've named one particular species, Charlotte spiders.

However, they do spin pretty cool webs. As I sat in our rig, I studied a particularly interesting "Charlotte" web in the tree outside our window.

The intricacy of the web intrigued me. Swirls of circles spiraled in a circumference as wide as a truck tire. Delicate strands connected every circle. Anchor lines attached to the tree and fence held the web in place. One thick squiggly design zigzagged towards the center, finishing the masterpiece at the spider-in-waiting.

These webs are so huge and complex, I wondered why insects, large and small, flew right into them. Why didn't they see them? Were they blind?

I figured a "story" might be in this somewhere, analogies and all, so I decided to snap a picture. About the time I grabbed my phone for the shot, I heard the words in my spirit: "Web of Deception." This, followed by the words of the adage: "Come into my parlor, said the spider to the fly."

Huh.

I walked outside and up to the "spider" tree but couldn't find the web. I double-checked and yep, right tree. Carefully walking around it, I dodged the "anchor" strands. I spotted the spider, but the web was completely invisible—until the angle of the sun lit it up.

That's how easily the bugs were entrapped. They didn't see it either. I only spotted the web through the precise light. Wow.

And then it hit me. Deception. We can't discern deception in its entirety, if at all, except through Jesus' perfect light.

He's the only One who sees the big picture and has the wisdom to guide those who are listening away from being caught. He is also the only One who can lead us out of "the web" when we're captured.

Matthew 24:24 warns that the deception in these last days will be so powerful that it could deceive even those who can discern and follow the Lord's voice (the elect). That verse should cause us to stand up straighter and pay attention.

How do we keep from being entangled in that elusive web?

Well, how much time do we spend alone, listening to the Holy Spirit? Is that time a fly-by? Do we speed-read through a daily devotional, say a quick prayer of "guide me, bless me" while we bolt toward the door? Or, do we "get things off our chest" in a whirlwind of grievances, feel better, and bounce to the next project (or distraction)?

As my hand reluctantly shot up as a "yes" to all those questions, I had to do some soul-

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”

1 Peter 5:8, NKJV

searching. Am I spending enough one-on-one time with my friend and saviour, Jesus? Do I fully understand how much He wants to spend time with *me*?

No matter how tight our relationship is with Him, there's always room for improvement.

There are a myriad of deceptive "webs" around us and more being invented every day. To name a few: Nefarious characters practice their art of gaslighting, demanding you believe what they say instead of what you know you see and discern; Eloquent speakers tell outright lies; AI (ARTIFICIAL Intelligence) runs rampant on the World Wide Web; And Photoshop becomes more deceptive in the hands of unethical individuals, as images are changed from the real to the fake.

It's easy to fly into invisible webs if we're not "sober and alert." "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8, NKJV). As numerous voices vie for our attention, we must question everything and everyone who says anything ... no matter what or who it is, or what platform or pulpit they speak from ... and then bring the issue to the only One who knows the truth.

God's Word encourages in 1 John 2:26-28, "These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (NKJV).

And again in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (KJV).

The more we spend time listening to and learning from the Holy Spirit during those quiet moments, the better we'll recognize His guidance as He leads us through these confusing times. His guiding light will help us avoid the webs that are spun to ensnare us.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6, NKJV).



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*She lives with Bruce, her awesome husband of 22 years, in their living quarters horse trailer and call "home" wherever their rig is parked. Their mail-base, however, is Hallettsville, Texas.*

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*Join the fun and be encouraged on their website: [www.ponyexpressministry.com](http://www.ponyexpressministry.com), her blog: [lifeonthetraillesstraveled.wordpress.com/](http://lifeonthetraillesstraveled.wordpress.com/), or come for a visit on Facebook. Check out her book: Walk Like a Warrior: Inspirational True Stories of God's Encouragement on the Trail-Less Traveled, available on Amazon, their website, and various other outlets. Their music is available on their website or wherever downloads are available.*

