

# Island Group Discussion Guide

Abide • Connect • Share

Week of January 18, 2026

WHAT A DISCIPLE DOES • WEEK 3

CULTIVATING A LIFE OF ABIDING • JOHN 15:5



## OPENING PRAYER TIME

Begin your meeting with 10-15 minutes of prayer using these prompts:

- Thank God for His presence with us today and His desire to draw us closer to Him
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our discussion and open our hearts to His truth
- Pray for honest self-examination about our spiritual practices and their purpose
- Invite Jesus to reveal areas where we may have substituted activity for relationship
- Ask for wisdom to cultivate rhythms that position us to truly meet with God
- Pray for our church to be a community deeply rooted in abiding with Christ

## DISCUSSION

- **Ice breaker:** Have you ever started a habit with good intentions, only to realize later you were just going through the motions? What was that experience like?
- **Read John 15:5.** What stands out to you about Jesus' description of our relationship to Him as branches to a vine?
- Last week we learned that abiding is about loving, not just doing — that love is the "secret sauce." But the sermon this week explored a tension: *"Abiding requires cultivation in our lives. It doesn't just happen by accident."* How do you balance the idea that abiding is about relationship while also recognizing it takes intentional effort?
- The message walked through familiar spiritual practices: scripture, prayer, silence and solitude, fasting, and Sabbath rest. Which of these has been most meaningful in your own journey with Jesus? Which one feels most challenging right now?
- We heard that the key to scripture isn't information gathering but encountering — *"reading His word in order to hear His voice, not to just know a lot of stuff about Him."* How can we tell the difference between studying the Bible and actually meeting with its Author?
- In the sermon, prayer was described this way: *"The goal of prayer is absolutely presence, not performance."* What keeps us from listening as much as we talk in our prayer time?
- Pastor Charlie offered some fresh approaches to abiding: praying the Psalms aloud, walking prayer, practicing the presence of God



throughout the day, and intentional unplugging. **Application question:** Which of these might help you if your spiritual life has grown stale?

- **Read Matthew 15:8.** The sermon warned that spiritual practices carry a hidden danger — they can become *"the thing that replaces the relationships that they're really designed to foster."* Why is this shift so easy to miss in our own lives?
- Three warning signs were given that practices have become a prison: pride in your discipline, guilt when you miss, and seeing no transformation. Which of these resonates most with you, and why?
- The message emphasized: *"When you're more impressed with your consistency than transformed by His presence, something has gone wrong."* How can we guard against spiritual pride while still being faithful in our disciplines?
- We heard this illustration: *"The practice is the porch, not the house. You sit on the porch in order to spend time with the person who lives inside the house."* How does this picture help reframe your approach to quiet time, Bible study, or other spiritual habits?
- Pastor Charlie connected common struggles to disconnection from Christ: bitterness, anxiety, identity issues, anger, lust, discouragement, and materialism. He said, *"Many of the problems we face are actually symptoms of a disconnection from abiding with Jesus Christ."* **Application question:** What struggle in your life might be pointing to a need for deeper connection with Jesus?
- **Read Ephesians 4:32.** The sermon explained that when we're deeply connected to Christ, we become aware of both how sinful we are and how much grace covers us — and *"out of the overflow of that, it starts to become possible for us to forgive those who have hurt us."* How have you experienced this overflow in your own life?
- **Read 1 Peter 5:7.** Regarding anxiety, we heard: *"You cannot cast that thing that you are white-knuckling holding onto. Abiding loosens our grip on things so that we can let go of them."* What are you holding onto that you need to release to God?
- The message concluded with the wheel illustration of discipleship for Island Church: **Abide → Connect → Invest → Go.** Pastor Charlie was direct: *"You cannot connect with the family of God if you are not connected yourself with God... If we want to be a church that connects with one another, we better be a church that starts abiding in Jesus first and foremost."* Why is abiding the essential foundation for everything else?
- **Read John 15:9.** The sermon closed with this verse as the "secret sauce's secret weapon": *"Remain in my love."* **Application question:** What is one conversation with Jesus you weren't planning to have this week? When and where will you have it?

## CLOSING PRAYER TIME

Share prayer requests and concerns with the group. Be sure to write these down and send them to all group members so everyone can pray throughout the week, including those who were absent today.