

ReFocus (Discipleship) Guide: Growth comes from Connection

Focus: Spiritual maturity does not come from anxious striving to earn God's approval. It grows as we remain connected to Christ. This week invites us to move from performance to abiding, from pressure to grace, and from trying to manufacture spiritual fruit to cooperating with the Holy Spirit's work within us. Healthy effort matters, but it is always a response to grace, not a way to prove our worth.

Day 1: Remaining Connected

Scripture: John 15:1-5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit." — John 15:5a (CEB)

Reflection:

Jesus describes spiritual growth as connection. A branch does not bear fruit by trying to prove itself. It bears fruit because it remains connected to the vine. In the same way, we do not grow by anxious pressure or by trying to force ourselves into maturity. We grow as we remain connected to Christ. Prayer, worship, reading Scripture, and acts of mercy are all ways we stay open to the life Christ gives.

Questions:

Where do you feel spiritually tired or disconnected right now?

What helps you remain connected to Christ?

What is one practice that can help you stay rooted in Christ this week?

Prayer:

Jesus, You are the vine, and I am the branch. Help me remain connected to You and receive the life only You can give. Amen.

Day 2: Letting Go of Anxious Striving

Scripture: John 15:4

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you." — John 15:4a (CEB)

Reflection:

Striving tells us we must prove ourselves. It says we are not praying enough, serving enough, giving enough, or growing fast enough. Jesus offers a different word: remain. This does not mean doing nothing. It means our effort begins from grace rather than fear. We pray, worship, serve, and practice faith because Christ has already loved us, not because we are trying to earn that love.

Questions:

Where have you been trying to prove yourself spiritually?

How does anxious striving affect your relationship with God?

What would it look like to practice faith this week as a response to

grace?

Prayer:

Gracious God, free me from the need to prove myself. Teach me to respond to Your grace with trust, love, and peace. Amen.

Day 3: Remaining in Love

Scripture: John 15:9

"As the Father loved me, I too have loved you. Remain in my love."

— John 15:9 (CEB)

Reflection:

Before Jesus speaks about fruit, He speaks about love. We do not grow so that God will love us. We grow because God already loves us. This love is not something we achieve. It is something we receive and remain in. When we forget we are loved, faith becomes pressure. When we remember we are loved, faith becomes a life-giving response.

Questions:

When are you most tempted to forget that you are already loved by God?

How would your faith feel different if you lived from love instead of pressure?

What is one way you can remain in Christ's love today?

Prayer:

Loving God, help me remain in Your love. When pressure rises, remind me that I do not have to earn what You have already given. Amen.

Day 4: Fruit That Grows Over Time

Scripture: John 15:8

"My Father is glorified when you produce much fruit and in this way prove that you are my disciples." — John 15:8 (CEB)

Reflection:

Jesus cares about fruit, but fruit grows from connection. Spiritual fruit is not manufactured by willpower. It grows over time as Christ's life works within us. This means we can be patient with the process. Growth may begin quietly beneath the surface before others can see it. The Holy Spirit forms love, peace, patience, kindness, and faithfulness in us as we stay connected to Christ and cooperate with grace.

Questions:

What fruit do you hope the Holy Spirit will grow in your life?

Where have you been impatient with your own spiritual growth?

What is one way you can cooperate with God's grace this week?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, grow Your fruit in me. Help me be patient with the process and faithful in my response to grace. Amen.

Day 5: Joy in Abiding

Scripture: John 15:10–11

"I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be complete." — John 15:11 (CEB)

Reflection:

Jesus does not invite us to abide so we can become more burdened. He invites us to abide so His joy may be in us. This joy is not shallow happiness or denial of hardship. It is the deep life that comes from being rooted in Christ's love. When we stop striving to prove ourselves and begin remaining in Christ, joy has room to grow.

Questions:

Where has faith felt more like pressure than joy?

What helps you experience the joy of being connected to Christ?

How can you spend five minutes today simply being present with God?

Prayer:

Jesus, restore the joy of abiding in You. Teach me to live from Your love instead of pressure, and let Your joy grow in me. Amen.

Closing Prayer:

Living Christ, You are the vine, and I am the branch. Forgive me for the times I have tried to grow by pressure, fear, or performance. Teach me to remain connected to You through prayer, Scripture, worship, communion, community, and acts of mercy. Help me receive Your grace and respond with trust. Grow Your fruit within me so that my life reflects Your love, joy, peace, and faithfulness. Amen.