



Reflection Guide
 SEPTEMBER 20 - OCTOBER 3
 By: Mary Wood & Sara Turnquist

Weekend Reflection

FRIDAY, SEPT 20 - SUNDAY, SEPT

22

This week we talked about *abiding* in God's Light. We learned that sometimes pruning of our branches needs to be done in order to better produce fruit. We also heard how to define fruit: outward fruit could be evangelism or good works; inner fruit could be the fruit of the Spirit. We talked about striving and thriving, and then we landed on how to be still. Take a moment to **read through John 15:1 -11** again (ESV below) and start this weekend by reflecting on what you've learned about abiding in Jesus. If you missed the Gathering or just want to listen to the teaching again, you can listen online @ momlifeclarksville.com (click on MomLife Resources and then "message audio" under September 19).

"**1** I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. **2** 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. **3** Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me, and I will abide in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. **5** 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. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **10** 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. **11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

Journal some thoughts:

- Which verse stands out to you the most? Why?
- How are you currently abiding in the Lord?

→ What is one thing you can do today to grow in abiding? *Think of a new habit (like memorizing Scripture) or new rhythm to add to your routine (like getting up 10 minutes early) to know God more.*

Over the weekend, take some time to meditate on one of the following verses and practice memorizing and praying through it:

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." (John 15:7-8, NASB)

or

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light - for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth..." (Ephesians 5:8-9, CSB)

Meditate: I find it useful to be in a quiet, comfortable space with my Bible and journal. Sometimes I doodle the verse and get creative with it. Sometimes I look up all the different translations and write out the one that speaks to me most. (Note: biblegateway.com is a good online tool to read multiple versions of Scripture and you can even read them side by side.) Sometimes I pick out just a word or two that stands out to me from that verse and ponder on them for the day.

Memorize: Honestly, I am not the best at this. I try to put the verse in front of me as much as I can. I will write it out and stick it in my car or in my kitchen or in my kids bathroom (the places that I am the most). I also have to give myself grace because as much as I have it in front of me, I still may not always remember it word-for-word. But I know the repetition is good for my mind and heart.

.....

Weekday Reading

MONDAY, SEPT 23 - THURSDAY, SEPT 26

We are going to continue this week reflecting on abiding and fruit. Part of abiding is learning how to be still or to let go. Think about Psalm 46:10a (NIV), "He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'"

The Hebrew word for "Be Still" is "*Raphah*" which is also translated as "let go, drop, refrain, cease, be quiet." This idea of *letting go* really stuck out to me. We often think of it as stopping, but it is more of an active verb. Think about it: we play a part in actually letting go and turning it over (or releasing it) to God. This is where we can practice ceasing our striving and just let God be God. For me this plays out in different ways. Sometimes it is reminding myself that God is in control and that I need to surrender my will to His. If my kiddos are toe tapping the line (you know the line I am referring to, and if you don't, mad props to you... please teach me!), or pulling me in several different directions and I can feel the stress welling up inside, I will take a moment to recenter myself. I might read a Psalm to calm down, or

listen to a worship song before I deal with them. Or I might choose to recite Scripture instead of worry. I might also take a moment to ask myself, “Do I *pray* more than I *say*?” (For example, am I praying more than I complain, more than I gripe, more than I worry?) That’s totally a Christy quote from last year’s MomLife. But whatever it is I do in the moment, I’ve learned to take an intentional and mindful PAUSE to be still, let go, and know the better way to respond, move forward, or do nothing at all.

Here’s a challenging question (for both you AND me): Are you trying to impose your will on God or are you being still to listen to Him and the little nudges from the Holy Spirit? To more fully allow Him to lead your moments, days and life?

Read the following Scriptures. Choose one (or a few) a day or read them all at once if you happen to have an unexpected large chunk of time. Or choose one and read it again and again. Remember, this is a *guide* for you to use however it fits your time and needs best. After you read, journal about the Scriptures using the questions that follow as a guide.

→ **Exodus 14:14**

→ **Psalms 46:10**

→ **Matthew 7:16-18**

→ **Jeremiah 17:8**

→ **Psalms 91:1-2**

Journal about the Scriptures you read:

→ **What STUCK OUT most to you?** This could be something new or a reminder of something you’ve forgotten.

→ **Did any QUESTIONS come to mind?** Pray and ask God about it. If it lingers, talk about it with someone you trust and respect.

→ **What are you learning about the CHARACTER OF GOD in this passage?** This could be something that helped you to better understand the person or actions of the Almighty. It’s something that stirs you to feel more connected and love him more.

→ **How are you moved to PRAY today?**

.....

Weekend Reflection

FRIDAY, SEPT 27 - SUNDAY, SEPT

29

Which of the Scriptures from this week have stuck out to you most?

How is God calling you to abide in Him?

Those gentle nudges (or in my case sometimes bricks thrown at me) that I sense are from the Holy Spirit, leading me toward God. For some people this can be a physical feeling, sometimes it’s a feeling in your gut. For others it might just be a thought that you know isn’t normally like you: that thought of “I could get up 10 minutes earlier to read and pray”; that specific worship song that just happens to play

on the radio EVERY time I get in the car; something that keeps coming up, making me lean in and want to know more, or question if God is trying to tell me something. Those are all leadings of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look closer at Jeremiah 17:8 (NIV), "They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

Use these questions to continue meditating on Jeremiah 17:8 and journal your thoughts this weekend:

- What is this verse calling us to do?
- Practically, what does this look like for you in the season of life you're in? Are you in the heat? Are you in drought? Are you bearing fruit? Are you abiding and not worrying or fearing (or the other way around)?
- Are there things God is calling you to let go?

Aren't we like this tree, growing towards Jesus as He draws us in? He provides us with a stream of Living Water (John 4:13-14, NIV). We don't need to fear, we can always be ourselves, we can always bear fruit. By abiding in His light, we can be fruit that light shines through. Take some time to pray and ask God what you can do daily to be in His light. If you need help knowing where to begin, you can even write your own version of this verse as a prayer. Here's an example:

Abba Father, You are my living stream for me to grow my roots into. You protect me through heat and drought. With You, I can always be honest and true. You see my every thought, my every need, my every want. Your living water gives me the strength of patience with my kids. I have no worry of the future because I know You will direct my steps. Your words are a light unto my life, a lamp unto my feet. I have no fear for You will always lead me. Let Your light shine through me. Break down my walls and barriers and let Your love shine through me. Amen.

Abiding is a regular discipline we have to build. Last weekend you were asked what was one thing you could do to grow in abiding...what was that thing? Have you been trying it? How's it been going?

Take some time to process what is working and what's difficult about abiding. Celebrate even the little win of practicing it consistently even if you haven't seen much progress yet. And if consistency has been a challenge, show yourself some grace and remember that today is a new day to try again. God isn't going anywhere - he's ready for you to draw near (flaws, mistakes, imperfections, worry, doubt, insecurity, and all).

Take some time this weekend to share your thoughts about abiding and anything new that you're trying with your family (look at the Family Activity at the end for some ideas). Think about asking your spouse or a friend to help encourage and support you by holding you accountable.

.....

Weekday Reading

MONDAY, SEPT 30 - THURSDAY, OCT 3

Abiding allows us to reflect God's light. Jennie Allen talks about this in her book *Nothing to Prove*.

...every single light humans have ever built requires energy or some force to light it...Then I think of the light God creates...It needs nothing to exist. It needs no other energy source. It just is... When I think of our striving, I realize we've been trying to build light. I've been trying to produce light. And guess what happens when people try to produce light? We get tired... What if instead of trying to create light we just simply received light? The vision of God for our lives is that we would receive His light and THEN give light to the world.

Take a moment to reflect on this. In your effort to *build light*, are you tired? Overwhelmed? Bitter? Are you *striving* towards perfectionism? Or are you *thriving* in God's light? Whew! That's a big question... give yourself some time to really think about it.

As you have been abiding in God's light since the last Gathering, do you find that you are striving less? Worrying less? I sure hope so! But if not, what do you think that could look like?

There is a reason they call them spiritual disciplines - they are not always easy. That is OK. I once heard it said it is only worth it if it is hard. The hard things push us to grow. They bring us out of our comfort zone and stretch us in directions we might not otherwise lean. We have to continue practicing them. Give yourself grace, try a different way if the first didn't work out. I know that being in God's word and spending time with Him is ALWAYS worth it in the end. He will always teach me something new and show me things I have never seen before. He is so good and faithful with every small effort we put in.

Here are some verses about abiding and resting in Jesus. Read through them, remembering to grant yourself the freedom to read what you have time for. Read them all at once or two an evening!

→ Psalm 36: 8-9

→ Matthew 11:28-30

→ Philippians 4:8-9

→ Matthew 6:33-34

→ John 17:22-23

→ Colossians 3: 2-3

Journal about what you read. Use the questions below as a guide:

→ **What STUCK OUT most to you?** This could be something new or a reminder of something you've forgotten.

- **Did any QUESTIONS come to mind?** Pray and ask God about it. If it lingers, talk about it with someone you trust and respect.
- **What are you learning about the CHARACTER OF GOD in this passage?** This could be something that helped you to better understand the person or actions of the Almighty. It's something that stirs you to feel more connected and love him more.
- **How are you moved to PRAY today?**

As we prepare for our next Gathering, take a few moments to pray over what you have been learning about abiding in God's light this week. Pray, expecting to hear God speak, whether it be at the next Gathering, through Scripture, through a song, or even outside in nature. However God moves in you, you can expect He's going to move. Pray Expectantly!

"Each morning I bring my requests to the Lord and wait expectantly." Psalm 5:3 NLT

Optional Family Activity

Get your kids and/or spouse involved in what you are learning, reading, and reflecting on through MomLife! Each Reflection Guide will include a space like this with ideas and notes for how to read and have discussion/activities with your family around Scripture.

- Find a family friendly devotional or a kids devotional that you can do together.

I have 3 girls. A few years ago we read *100 Princess Devotions* by Jean Fischer and the *Tell Me More Devotional: 365 Devotions for Young Girls* by Kelly Corrigan. It would take 5 minutes, and let's face it, when they were first starting school that's all the attention span they had! We would read it and talk about it while in the car-rider line.

Now they enjoy reading the *Jesus Storybook Bible* together. Talking about the stories and what it teaches us about God. Sometimes we read it at night, sometimes we read it in the mornings before school. There are days when I can tell they won't pay attention, so we skip it. Then there are days they will ask to do it before I have remembered.

- For creative kids: On some construction paper create a "Fruit of the Spirit" tree. Let the kiddos label the fruits and talk about each one as you place them on the tree. Maybe find a fruit of the spirit song on any music app and learn it together with your kiddos.
- For older kids, simply talk about it. Read with them the same verses you are reading and talk about what it means for each of you. And say a simple prayer together. Shopshereadstruth.com also has some great Bible Study Journals for boys and girls in their teen-years!

Additional Resources (links found @ graceclarksville.com/momlife-resources):

Bible:

- Get a good Study Bible, pick a translation that you understand, NLT & CSB are easier to read.
 - ◆ The She Reads Truth Study Bible is a good option.

Apps/Websites:

- Pray As You Go- <https://pray-as-you-go.org/> or download it in the App Store
 - ◆ This is a daily scripture reading and reflective prayer exercise that goes along with the Liturgical Calendar
- Spiritual Pathways Test - this assessment helps you discover what ways you connect best with God
 - ◆ Online version - <https://northpoint.org/spiritual-pathways-assessment>
 - ◆ Printable version - https://rmcap.org/files/Spiritual_Pathway_Assessment.pdf

Books:

- *Nothing to Prove* by Jennie Allen
- *Boundaries for Your Soul* by Alison Cook and Kimberly Miller

Podcast:

- *Made For This with Jennie Allen*
- *That Sounds Fun with Annie F Downs* ("January 2018 Rhythms" episodes)

Songs:

- "Here's my Heart Lord" - Lauren Daigle
- "Lord, I Need You" - Matt Maher
- "Even If" - MercyMe
- "Be Still and Know" - Steven Curtis Chapman

