



Discussion Guide  
Encounters – Part 8  
PARTICIPANT GUIDE



ENGAGE & CONNECT ||

What is something you inherited?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER ||

Lord, as we look back on Your promise, show us Your faithfulness to the generations.

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE ||

*“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

[Joshua 1:9]

BIG IDEA ||

The message closed with a question worth sitting with as a group: how do we walk away from this series not just believing in God's presence, but actually living differently because of it? How do we surrender to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to close the gap between God's presence and Word and my life?

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || *Read John 15:1-11 aloud in the ESV.*

Jesus' words are described as producing, cleansing, pruning, and transforming. Hebrews 4:12 says the word of God is “living and active,” able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- Jesus says His disciples are already clean “because of the word” He has spoken to them. What does it look like, in practice, to let a specific word from Jesus — not just information about Him — do that cleansing work in you?
- Honestly reflect: whose words currently carry the most authority over how you see yourself — your identity, your value, your worth? How do those words compare to what Jesus says about you?

To abide means to live in — not a single decision, but a continuous dwelling. Jesus describes a mutual abiding: us in Him, and He in us.

- Abiding is described as mutual — “abide in me, and I in you.” Which side of that feels more natural to you: staying near to Jesus, or believing He is truly near to and at work in you? Why?

- Verse 5 says apart from Jesus, “you can do nothing.” Where in your life have you been quietly trying to bear fruit — produce results, hold things together, grow — apart from actually abiding in Him?
- Verse 6 is a sober warning about branches that don't abide. What keeps a person from abiding — distraction, self-reliance, unbelief, busyness? Which of those is most often true for you?

Jesus connects abiding prayer directly to His words abiding in us: “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” Answered prayer flows out of that abiding relationship — it doesn't replace it.

- Why do you think Jesus places “my words abide in you” directly before the promise about prayer? What does that tell us about what “asking whatever you wish” actually means?

**The message named four tensions that mark abiding prayer:**

- God's word versus my wants
- God's call versus my comfort
- Serious versus casual
- Bold versus timid

Which of those four tensions do you feel most in your own prayer life right now? What would it look like to move toward the first side of that pair this week?

**STEP OF OBEDIENCE ||**

*As you consider your next step, reflect on:*

- If someone watched your calendar and your habits this past week, would they conclude you actually believe you're a branch that can do nothing apart from Jesus? Why or why not?
- As a group, how can you help each other actually live this out rather than just agree with it? Consider identifying one person to check in with before you meet again.

**PRAYER FOCUS ||**

*Lord, teach us to abide in You. Be our source for everything, and do not let us go to lesser sources to meet our needs.*