

*2025 Winter Churchwide Study*



abide

BEARING FRUIT THAT LASTS

**Leader Guide**

Dear Group Leaders,

Thank you for being part of Petra's 6-week Churchwide Series, **"Abide."** As group leaders, your dedication to guiding your group through discussions enriches community, nurtures connections, and helps to foster authentic spiritual growth. Your role is pivotal as it aligns with our Small Group Ministry Core Values of Connection, Growth, and Service. Your dedication resonates with the vision and heart of Petra Church, and we are grateful for the vital role you play in shaping our community's narrative.

With heartfelt appreciation,

*Matt Kauffman*

Small Groups Pastor

This six-week series will help you grow deeper in God—not by trying harder, but by remaining in Jesus. What does that mean and how do I do it? Those are questions you will discover already answered in John 15:1-17 as we study together.

All Group Leaders are encouraged to attend our “Leader Launch.” At this launch, we will go over last-minute details, allow you to ask any other questions you may have, and give you the opportunity to meet other group leaders. Register below.

### **Leader Launch Meeting**

January 26 at 12:45 p.m. in the Belong Room

*Register Online at [petra.church/registration](https://petra.church/registration)*



For more on **Leading a Group**,  
visit [petra.church/leadagroup](https://petra.church/leadagroup)



For more information on our Churchwide Study,  
**Abide**, visit [petra.church/sermonseries](https://petra.church/sermonseries)



If you have any other questions about the series or as you're leading your group, please feel free to reach out to Small Groups Pastor Matt Kauffman at [mattk@petra.church](mailto:mattk@petra.church) or 717-354-5394 ext. 129.

We look forward to seeing what God has in store  
for you and your group!



# I've Called You Friend

## WEEK 1

### GET TO KNOW YOU | 15 min

- What makes you laugh the most?
- What is a favorite Bible verse you regularly go to for strength and encouragement?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | 60 min

Tonight, we'll read through John 15:1-17 twice. The first time, we'll focus on the truths in the text. The second time, we'll focus on experiencing the Spirit and person of Jesus in the text.

1. In smaller groups of 3-4 people, **read John 15:1-17**. Make a list of repetitive words and themes that are used more than twice.
2. Explain what Jesus meant by each of these themes or ideas, but try to do so by citing the text. For Example, v.4, 5, and 6 all use the word "Remain." What does "remain" mean to Jesus?
3. For each of the themes that you are discussing—e.g., "Remain"—answer the following question: What does God desire, and why?

In these 17 verses, God the Son explains what relationship with God the Father is like. Reread verses 9, 14, and 15 and notice how important relationship is to God. Based on John 15:11, one of God's central motivations for relationship is for his "joy" to be in you and for his "joy" to be "complete."

4. In your own words, how do you describe a relationship with God? How do you experience the fullness of joy?
5. If you were honest, how would you describe how you relate to God? How has that changed over the years? And, based on Jesus' words, how do you think God wants to develop that?
6. What's the difference between "trying" and "trusting" in God? How do you think they might produce different results?

## **MEDITATION TIME** | 15 min

Now, have a different person read John 15:1-17 leaving room for a couple of minutes of silence and meditation. As the text is being read this time, you're not trying to analyze it. Listen to it as if Jesus were in the room speaking directly to you. He's provoking you into deeper relationship with him. What do you sense Jesus revealing about himself; is there a truth that he is sharing with you? That might start in the form of a keyword or phrase that really grabs your attention.

- After a few minutes of silent meditation, take some time to discuss your experience as a group and then close in prayer.

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## *notes*

# Training

## WEEK 2

### WORSHIP | 15 min

Start your group with a time of worship. If someone in your group knows how to lead worship, invite them to lead two or three songs. Here are a couple of recommended lyric videos from YouTube.

*Build My Life*



*Where I'm Standing Now*



End your worship time with several members of your group offering prayers of thanksgiving.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | 60 min

Last week, we read John 15:1-17 and discussed how relationship is of central importance to God. To live in union with God, we must “remain” in him. Let’s look at three important components to “remaining” in Jesus. There are necessary responsibilities we have to rest in his work, to allow his Word to train us, and to obey him.

**1. Resting.** Trust in the work he has already done and the love he has already proved. Read these scriptures.

- Matthew 11:28-30
- Romans 3:23-25
- Galatians 3:10-12
- Hebrews 4:9-10
- John 15:9

- a. What details, themes, or truths did you notice in these scriptures?
- b. Do you find it easy or difficult to rest in God’s unconditional love and acceptance, or do you find yourself still trying to do things to impress him, or hiding mistakes from him?
- c. When is it most challenging to trust in his love? To receive his grace?

**2. Training.** Training is the necessary pathway that keeps me connected to Christ so I can grow in him. Reading the Bible, worshipping, praying, and

meditating are essential habits that train us in the ways of God.

Read these scriptures.

- 2 Peter 1:5-8, 10
  - 1 Timothy 4:13-16
  - 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
  - Ephesians 6:18
  - Psalm 119:9-16
- a. What details, themes, or truths did you notice in these scriptures?
  - b. What is the difference between “trying,” “trusting,” and “training” in God?
  - c. What obstacles do you personally face in training toward mature faith?
  - d. Do you have any goals to improve the structure of your habits of scripture, worship, or prayer?  
i.e., time of day, resources, groups, mentor, etc.
  - e. How do you prevent your disciplines from turning into lifeless routines or human efforts?

**3. Obeying.** Jesus teaches that his disciples follow his words. We will explore this theme in more depth next week. For now, read Matthew 7:15-27.

- a. What details, themes, or truths did you notice in these scriptures?
- b. Next week, we will explore this theme further.

## SMALL GROUP PRAYER | 20 min

As we wrap up this week, we will pray for the “trusting” and “training” that we learned about. Break into smaller groups of 3-4 and pray over each other. Pray for each person to be blessed and filled with the love and blessings of Jesus [trust in his strength]. Secondly, pray for the strength, wisdom, and perseverance of Jesus to help us train in practical ways for a mature faith. Feel free to share any specific prayer needs you might have as well.

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# *notes*







# Transformation Through Obedience

## WEEK 3

### GET TO KNOW YOU | 15 min

- I want to praise God for...
- In the last two years, I've really grown at...

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | 60 min

1. Last week, we learned that to remain in Jesus, we must learn to trust, rely on his love, and train toward maturity. It's not enough to hear his teachings. James 1:22 says, *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* Yet, in our quest to live a godly life, we run into obstacles.
  - In what areas of your life do your emotions, appetites, unhealthy thinking, or bad habits still kind of run the show?
  - Or have you noticed any powerful habits in your family or workplace that might need to be retrained by the truth of God's Word and Spirit?
2. Read the following scriptures and answer the following questions for each.
  - a. What details, themes, or truths did you observe in these verses?
  - b. How do you practically apply these to your life?
    - 1 Peter 1:14-16
    - John 15:10-12
    - Deuteronomy 10:12-13
    - Philippians 2:12-13
    - Joshua 1:6
3. Meditation is a tool that helps us confront the lies in our lives with the truth of God's Word. Read these couple of verses. How do you practically apply each of these verses to your life?
  - Psalm 10:4
  - 2 Corinthians 10:5
  - Romans 12:2
  - Psalm 119:99

4. Obedience to God's will means that you are not in charge. Not only are you not in charge, but the fruit you produce isn't even for you to enjoy. Good fruit is for other people to be blessed and to benefit from your sacrificial love.
  - If sacrificial love deeply transformed your life, visualize and discuss what that would look like in your daily interactions and the impact it could have on others.

## MEDITATING | 15 min

End your group time by meditating on God's Word. Have someone read Psalm 119:33-48 slowly, allowing space between phrases. Practice concentrating on the meaning of the words and living out the meaning yourself.

Here is a link to ambient worship if you'd like to provide a meditative background:



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## *notes*



# Hearing God's Voice

## WEEK 4

### ICE BREAKER | 5 min

- You've been given access to a time machine. Where and when would you travel to?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | 45 min

The most important way God speaks to us is through his timeless and inspired Word. Nothing is a substitute for the truth and authority of his Word. Yet God continues to encourage us, lead us, minister through us, and communicate with us through his Holy Spirit inside of us.

#### 1. Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-16

- Based on this scripture, how do we come to know God's thoughts for ourselves?
- If the Spirit reveals God's thoughts inside of our own mind, how do we discern the difference between our thoughts and God's thoughts? (Notice, for example, in 1 Corinthians 14:29, Paul tells the congregation to weigh carefully what is said—to exercise discernment.)

#### 2. Based on 1 Corinthians 14:3

- What is the purpose of the New Testament gift of prophecy? Discuss what each of these words means.
- If you are hearing God correctly, either for personal relationship or for ministry to other people, what should be the fruit of the Holy Spirit's ministry? You can refer to Galatians 5:22-26 if that would help.

3. God's Word is full of examples of people who prayed with inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Read the following scriptures. What observations can you make?

- |                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| • Joel 2:28/Acts 2:16-21 | • Luke 2:36-38     |
| • Genesis 18:20-23       | • Luke 22:31-32    |
| • Exodus 32:7-14         | • Acts 9:10-17     |
| • Ezekiel 37:1, 4, 7     | • John 10:27       |
| • Psalm 50:7             | • 1 Kings 19:11-13 |

4. On a spectrum of hearing God's inward voice – zero (I don't know what his inner voice sounds like) to ten (God speaks to me all the time through his inner voice)—where would you currently fall on that spectrum?

## WORSHIP WARMUP | 15 min

When we refocus our attention, quiet our emotions, and begin to worship God through our spirits, we become more attuned to God's communication and revelation. Take about 10-15 minutes to worship the Lord as a group. You can begin with this worship song:

*Indescribable*



Then, keep playing some instrumental music in the background. Declare scriptures out loud that worship God or offer prayers of thanksgiving for who God is and what he's done.

- Revelation 15:4
- Psalm 147:2-3
- Psalm 147:5
- Isaiah 44:24
- Deuteronomy 32:3-4
- Revelation 22:16
- Malachi 1:11
- Psalm 36:5-6

## PRACTICING THE HOLY SPIRIT | 30 min

Hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit takes time to practice. Remember, 1 Corinthians 14:3 says that prophecy is for 1) strengthening, 2) encouragement, and 3) comfort. The following exercise is designed to help you practice encouraging each other in prayer. Break up into groups of 5-6.

Pick a person in your group that you want to pray for. Then, have the group pray for that person by asking the Lord to give you a scripture, a word of encouragement, or a mental image/picture that might strengthen, encourage, or comfort them.

Then, rotate until everyone is prayed for.

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# *notes*





## HYMN OR WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT | 5 min

Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”

Open your group time by singing one of these classic hymns. You should be able to google the lyrics.

- A Mighty Fortress
- Amazing Grace
- How Great Thou Art
- Holy, Holy, Holy
- It is Well
- Great Is Thy Faithfulness
- Praise to the Lord the Almighty
- Be Thou My Vision
- All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
- Blessed Assurance
- The Love of God

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | 35 min

Read **John 15:12-17** & **John 17:20-26**

1. In these two chapters, Jesus uses different descriptions to articulate the same truth.
  - Based on these verses, what is the Lord’s ultimate desire for his disciples?
  - What is his command, and how does it achieve the desired effect?
  - Jesus compares his relationship with his disciples to his own relationship with the heavenly Father. What do you think is so important about this comparison? See John 15:9; John 17:21.
2. We often try to manufacture love for other people that we don’t possess. Another way to look at John 15:9 is to remain in the love Jesus supplies us—like keeping your bucket under the faucet so that you’re filled up from the source.
  - How well do you do at keeping your bucket in the source?



- What disconnects you from his love source for others? Are there practical moments, patterns, or triggers that knock you out of alignment with receiving from your love source?
3. What encouragement do you think the Holy Spirit might want to speak to those places that are dry and love-less?

## COMMUNION | 15 min

Celebrating communion together is a powerful way to reaffirm our commitment to the Lord's commands and to celebrate the community of God's people living in love, unity, and forgiveness toward each other.

Take 10 minutes to take communion together. (A script is provided on the next page.)

## WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT | 30 min

Out of the posture of unity that communion fosters, we will practice encouraging each other with our words. This may feel uncomfortable or clumsy to you. Those feelings are normal to many people—that's why we practice!

1. Break into groups of 5-6 people.
2. Take 10-15 and write down one thing you appreciate about each person's character (who they are). And one thing you've observed about each person's actions (What they've done).

**Example:** *"Vicky, I've noticed that you have a very sensitive heart for people, and I think that's really special (who she is). You take the time to listen when others talk, and I've watched you serve other people by cleaning up after them, and not everyone does that!"* (what she's done).

3. Take 10-15 minutes to have the group share their words of encouragement with each person. This is a time to practice our love with our words

## SUGGESTED SCRIPT FOR COMMUNION

**Say:** *“In the gospel of Luke, Jesus instructed his disciples to ‘do this in remembrance of me.’ (Luke 22:19)”*

### **BREAD**

**Say:** *“In Matthew, it says, ‘While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’” (Matthew 26:26)”*

*The bread represents the body of Christ that was broken so that we could be restored to God.*

**Action:** Hand out the bread.

**Pray:** Pray out loud on behalf of the group. Pray from your heart as you feel led. (It is usually appropriate to thank God for giving his son Jesus, to thank Jesus for giving himself for us so that we could be healed, and to recognize God’s presence in our midst.)

**Action:** Eat the Bread (take your time; give people time to pray and reflect).

### **CUP**

**Say:** *“Again, in Matthew, it says, ‘Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’ (Matthew 26:27-28)”*

*The cup represents the shedding of Jesus’ blood so that our sins could be washed away and we could be made new.”*

**Action:** Hand out the cups.

**Pray:** Pray out loud on behalf of the group. (It is usually appropriate to thank Jesus for his blood, the cleansing from our sins, and the freedom we experience through his blood.)

**Action:** Drink the juice.

### CLOSING PRAYER

**Pray:** Pray out loud on behalf of the group or invite others to pray out loud, closing the time of communion.

### FOLLOW UP SUGGESTION

Because communion is so powerful, experiential, and intimate, it can be a great opportunity to lead people into a time of worship, confession of sins (groups of 2-3), or personal sharing.

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*notes*



# Generations

WEEK 6

## ICEBREAKER | 15 min

See page 21 for instructions on “Conversation Carousel.”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | 45 min

1. What is a “good thing” that your parents have passed on to you?

*Some examples:* It could be something physical like the family farm or an heirloom. It could be a family routine, like playing a Sunday afternoon game together. It could be an aspect of faith, like stopping to pray and trust in God during difficult situations.

2. What traits have you inherited from your family that aren’t necessarily healthy?

*Some examples:* Bad habits or prejudices, unhealthy slogans, like “That’s just my bad luck,” or maybe it’s an emotional stoicism or expectation of rejection from other people.

3. The scriptures teach us that we are individually accountable to God for our sins. However, our sinful habits, or faithfulness, can impact our families and communities. Both individual guilt and collective responsibility can be true. Read the following scriptures and answer the questions below.

- Exodus 20:4-6
- 1 Chronicles 16:15-18
- Ezekiel 18:19-20
- Luke 1:16-17
- Psalm 78:3-8
- Matthew 1:17
- Acts 2:38-40
- 2 Timothy 1:4-6

### Questions:

- a. What examples of blessings did you find from healthy generational faithfulness?
- b. What are examples of mistakes and unredeemed patterns we can pass on to our children?

- c. Why do you think God intends for communities to be a source of his blessing?
  - d. What practical ways can we be diligent to foster God's faithfulness in the next generation?
4. In review: What has the Lord been teaching and training you in through this Abide sermon series?

## **PRAYER TIME** | 20 min

In prayer groups of 4-5, take a few minutes to pray for the following topics.

1. Pray for the churches in our county. To be filled with the power of God's presence, his Holy Spirit, and his Word of truth.
2. Pray for our community. For healthy families, local schools, local businesses, the Amish, and for the poor.
3. Pray for salvation and spiritual hunger. For friends, family, and people all around the county to be awakened to spiritual hunger. To desire and encounter Jesus. To seek to do what is right.

## ICEBREAKER: “CONVERSATION CAROUSEL”

Everyone begins with a question on a slip of paper. Each person asks one other person the question on their paper, and they have to answer. Once both individuals have asked and shared their answers, they switch questions and initiate dialogue with another person. You can cycle in new questions to keep the conversation moving.

1. Who is your hero?
2. If you could live anywhere, where would it be?
3. What is your favorite family vacation?
4. What motivates you to work hard?
5. What is your favorite thing about your job?
6. What is your favorite book to read?
7. What makes you laugh the most?
8. What was the last movie you went to? What did you think?
9. If you could choose to do anything for a day, what would it be?
10. If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?
11. If you could go back in time, what year would you travel to?
12. What are your hobbies?
13. What is the best gift you have been given?
14. Where do you see yourself in five years?
15. How many pairs of shoes do you own?
16. If you were a superhero, what powers would you have?
17. What's the longest you've gone without sleep (and why)?
18. What's your favorite type of foreign food?
19. How long does it take you to get ready in the morning?
20. What's your favorite family recipe?
21. Is there anything you wished would come back into fashion?
22. If you were ruler of your own country, what would be the first law you would introduce?

23. If you had a warning label, what would yours say?
24. What celebrity would you like to meet at Starbucks for a cup of coffee?
25. What's the most interesting thing you can see from your office or kitchen window?
26. On a scale of 1-10, how funny would you say you are?
27. What was your first job?
28. Who is the most intelligent person you know personally?
29. Have you ever had a nickname? What is it?
30. Would you rather trade intelligence for looks or looks for intelligence?

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## *notes*

# Small Group Guidelines

**Confidentiality is Essential:** What's said in the group is not shared outside the group.

**Speak Only for Yourself:** Do not share information that is not yours to share.

**Respect Others:** Let everyone find their own answers; do not give advice unless asked. Be present and involved during group meetings. No side conversations.

**Extend Grace, Not Rules:** When people share their struggles or personal journey, our first reaction should be compassion and a desire to see them healed, not correction and a desire to see them set right.

**Limit Personal Sharing:** Everyone in the group needs an opportunity to share.

**Start and End on Time:** Use your time wisely; do not get stuck on rabbit trails.

**Come Prepared:** You'll get the most out of the material if you do a little bit each day—ten to fifteen minutes. The goal isn't to cram for a test just to get it done. The goal is to meditate on the truths and to create new habits that change our lives.

**Take Responsibility:** If you feel uncomfortable with anything happening in the group or among group members, share your concern with the group or with the leader or co-leader.

**Agreement:** Can everyone in the group agree to these guidelines?







**PETRA GROUPS**

## **SMALL GROUPS SURVEY**

Please help us improve your future small group experiences by completing the short survey below. Thank you!

How did you enjoy your Small Group experience?

What aspect(s) of your Small Group experience did you appreciate the most?

What aspect(s) of your Small Group experience would you change for the future?

Is there anything else Petra can do to help facilitate your future Small Group experiences?

Would you like to discuss your feedback further with a member of the Small Groups Ministry Team?

Yes, please connect me with a member of the Small Groups Ministry Team

Name & Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_



Let us know about your experience leading a Petra Group!  
If you choose to fill out this survey by hand, please submit it to  
Small Groups Pastor Matt Kauffman upon completion.



# Small Group Survey



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