

RIVER *Flow*

Seven Days of Devotional Practice

June 21 - 27, 2026

ABIDING IN JESUS

A Week to Prepare Our Hearts
Before the Series Begins

Next Sabbath we begin a new sermon series, “Abiding in Jesus,” from the words our Lord spoke to his friends on the last night before the cross: “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4). Before we gather to hear it preached, I want us to spend a quiet week simply leaning toward it.

So this guide is an invitation to slow down. Each day takes one small facet of what it means to remain in Jesus — the vine and the branch, the inner room where we meet him, the grace that lets us rest, the Spirit who lives in us, the love that overflows — and asks the Spirit to begin a quiet work in us before a single sermon is preached.

Two friends have helped me think this through, and you will hear them gently in the background: Chuck Miller, who writes that we must be the people of God before we do the work of God, and Richard Lovelace, who reminds us to begin each day standing on the truth that in Christ we are already accepted. But our text is Scripture itself. Read each day slowly. Pray each prayer as your own. And come next Sabbath not anxious to begin, but already abiding.

- Pastor Mel Baga, D.Min.
Lead Pastor, Auburn SDA Church

Daily Devotional Guide

SUNDAY, June 21 – The One Thing

“Abide in me, and I in you.” – John 15:4

Read: John 15:1-5; Luke 10:38-42

Reflect: On his last night, with so much he could have said, Jesus reached for a picture from the garden – a vine, its branches, and a single quiet command: abide in me. Of all the things he might have urged on his disciples in that final hour, this is the one he chose. Not try harder, not do more, but remain. Stay close. Live your whole life from your connection to me.

It helps to notice how restful this is. A branch does not strain to produce grapes; it simply stays joined to the vine, and the life of the vine does the rest. We were never meant to manufacture our own spiritual fruit by effort and willpower. We were meant to remain – and to let his life flow into ours. So much of the weariness we carry comes from trying to live the Christian life near Jesus instead of in him.

This is why, before we hear a word of this series preached, we begin here. We must be with him before we do anything for him. Mary understood it while Martha bustled – she chose the one thing, and sat at his feet. This week is simply an invitation to choose that one thing, and to begin learning, day by day, what it means to remain.

Respond: Where have you been trying to bear fruit by effort rather than by abiding? Name it, and bring it to him quietly today.

Pray: Lord Jesus, you are the Vine and I am only a branch. Teach me this week the one thing – to remain in you, and to let your life be my life. Amen.

MONDAY, June 22 – Apart From Me

“Apart from me you can do nothing.” – John 15:5

Read: John 15:4-8; 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

Reflect: Jesus finishes the picture with a line that can sound severe until we hear it as kindness: apart from me you can do nothing. A branch broken off the vine does not slow down its fruit-bearing; it stops entirely. It can keep its shape for a while, still look like a branch, but the life is already gone. He is not threatening us. He is telling us

the truth about how the new life actually works.

We are slow to believe this. We can know the gospel by heart and still quietly try to live it on our own steam — drawing on our discipline, our sincerity, our good intentions, as though grace got us started but now the rest is up to us. The spiritual life does not flow out of imitating Jesus from a distance. It flows out of union with him: his life in us, doing through us what we could never do alone.

There is real relief hidden in this hard-sounding word. If apart from him we can do nothing, then we can finally stop pretending we can do everything. We are free to come empty, to admit our need, and to receive. The fruit was never ours to produce. It was always his to grow.

Respond: Where are you running on your own strength right now? Confess it gently, and ask him to be your life there instead of your example.

Pray: Lord, apart from you I can do nothing — and I am tired of trying. Be the life in me today, and grow what only you can grow. Amen.

TUESDAY, June 23 — You Are Accepted

“Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.” — Romans 5:1

Read: Romans 5:1–2; Ephesians 1:3–8

Reflect: Here is the quiet secret that makes abiding possible: we do not remain in Jesus in order to win his love. We remain in the love we already have. Paul says we have peace with God and now stand in grace — present tense, settled, ours. The branch does not earn its place on the vine by bearing fruit. It bears fruit because it is already, securely, joined.

Yet most of us live as though our acceptance were always up for review. We start each day measuring ourselves — by yesterday’s prayer, this morning’s mood, our recent successes and failures — and so our peace rises and falls with our performance. One wise writer says the rarest thing among Christians is to begin each day standing simply on this: you are accepted, not because of your spirituality or your achievements, but because God has counted to you the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Imagine starting tomorrow there. Not anxiously hoping God is pleased, but resting in the fact that, in Christ, he already is. That is the

soil abiding grows in. We do not labor toward acceptance; we relax into it – and out of that rest, real love and gratitude and obedience quietly begin to grow.

Respond: Tomorrow morning, before anything else, preach this to your own heart: in Christ, I am already accepted. Then live the day from there.

Pray: Father, I am accepted in your Beloved – not by my record but by his. Let me rest in that today, and abide in you as one already loved. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, June 24 – The Inner Room

“He would withdraw to desolate places and pray.” – Luke 5:16

Read: Luke 5:15–16; Mark 1:35–39

Reflect: If abiding is the heart of the Christian life, it needs a place to happen – and Jesus himself shows us where. In the middle of the most demanding ministry the world has ever seen, with crowds pressing and needs everywhere, he kept slipping away to a quiet place to be with his Father. The busier he was, the more he withdrew. He did the work of God out of his time alone with God, never instead of it.

There is a room, we might say, behind all our doing – an inner room where we meet the Lord before we meet the day. Chuck Miller calls it the Soul Room, the place where God speaks words of love and forgiveness, refreshes us, and forms us into who he is making us. It is easy to ignore that room. We are practical people, and there is always something to do. But the time we spend there is not time taken from our life; it is the spring our whole life flows from.

It may help to think of this not as a duty but as building an altar – a daily place where we lay ourselves down and offer the day to God, the way Abraham built altar after altar wherever he went. Not a performance to get right, but a place to surrender. This week, before the series begins, try simply going into that room each morning, and staying a little while.

Respond: Where is your “inner room” – the actual time and place you meet God before the day begins? If you do not have one, choose one today.

Pray: Lord, draw me into the quiet room where you wait for me. Before I do anything tomorrow, let me first be with you. Amen.

THURSDAY, June 25 – You Are Not Alone

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.” – Colossians 1:27

Read: John 14:16–20; Galatians 2:20

Reflect: Notice that abiding runs in two directions. Jesus did not only say “abide in me”; he said “abide in me, and I in you.” We are not reaching up toward a faraway God, white-knuckling our way into his presence. He has come down to live in us. By his Spirit, Christ has made his home in the one place we can never escape – our own heart.

This is the deepest comfort of the whole Christian life: you are not alone, and you never will be again. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in you. So abiding is not finally a thing we achieve by concentration; it is a relationship we wake up to. He is already here. Paul could say it plainly: it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

That changes how we approach this whole week. We are not trying to summon a presence from far away. We are learning to notice and trust a presence already nearer to us than our own breath. To abide is simply to keep company, all through the day, with the One who has moved in to stay.

Respond: Through the day today, gently remind yourself: Christ is in me, right now. Turn toward him in the ordinary moments.

Pray: Lord, you are not far off – you live in me by your Spirit. Make me aware of your nearness all day long, and teach me to abide in the One already here. Amen.

FRIDAY, June 26 – The Cup That Overflows

“Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” – John 7:38

Read: John 7:37–39; Psalm 23:5–6

Reflect: When a branch truly abides, fruit comes – not by force, but as the natural overflow of a life filled to the full. Jesus promised that those who come to him and drink will find rivers of living water flowing out of them. The order matters and it is always the same: filled first, then poured out. We give to others from the overflow,

never from the empty.

Think of a pitcher filling a cup. As long as we keep coming to be filled, the cup runs over, and the overflow spills out to bless everyone around us — our families, our church, the stranger we meet. But we cannot pour from a cup that was never filled. So much ministry burns out precisely here: people pouring and pouring with nothing flowing in. The secret of fruitful love for others is a life quietly, daily abiding in Jesus.

This is the good news for anyone who feels dry and depleted. The answer is not to try harder to give; it is to come again and drink. Abide, and the fruit takes care of itself. Stay close to the Vine, keep your cup under the pitcher, and watch what begins to flow out of you that you could never have produced on your own.

Respond: Are you pouring from an empty cup? Come and be filled today before you give anything away.

Pray: Lord, fill me until my cup overflows, that what flows out to others may be your living water and not my striving. Amen.

SABBATH, June 27 — Abide in My Love

“Abide in my love.” — John 15:9

Read: John 15:9–11; Hebrews 4:9–11; Matthew 11:28–30

Reflect: And so we come to the Sabbath, which turns out to be the truest picture of abiding in all of Scripture. On this day we lay down our work — and in laying it down, we confess the very thing this whole week has been teaching us: that our standing with God was never built on our doing. The Sabbath is abiding made visible. We rest, because in Christ the work is already finished.

Jesus deepens the word here. “Abide in me” becomes “abide in my love.” Remaining in him is not gritted-teeth effort; it is settling down inside a love that will not let us go, the way a child rests in a parent’s arms. He even tells us why he gives this command: “that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” Abiding is not the hard price of joy. Abiding is the joy.

Today the series begins, and we will spend the coming weeks learning to remain in him more deeply. But come to it as a Sabbath people — not anxious to get abiding right, but already resting in the One who holds us. Lay your work down today. Let your soul be still. And simply abide in his love.

Respond: Keep this Sabbath as practice in abiding. Set down everything you have been carrying, and rest in being loved.

Pray: Lord Jesus, on this Sabbath I lay my work down and rest in your finished love. As the series begins, keep me abiding in you, that my joy may be full. Amen.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus chose “abide in me” as the one thing to leave with his friends before the cross. What is the difference, in your own experience, between living the Christian life near Jesus and living it in him?
2. “Apart from me you can do nothing.” Where in your life are you most tempted to run on your own strength rather than his? Why is this hard-sounding word actually a relief?
3. We are invited to begin each day standing on “you are accepted” rather than on our recent performance. How would your day change if you truly started there? What keeps us from it?
4. Jesus withdrew to quiet places to pray, even when he was busiest. What does your own “inner room” look like — or what would it take to build one this week?
5. Abiding runs both ways: “abide in me, and I in you.” How does it change things to know that Christ already lives in you by his Spirit, rather than imagining you must reach a faraway God?
6. The cup overflows only when it is being filled. Where have you felt yourself pouring from empty? What would it look like to come and drink first?
7. The Sabbath is abiding made visible — rest, because the work is finished. As we begin the series, what would it look like to come “already abiding” rather than anxious to begin?