



# THE WAY Sermon Study Guide

## Week 10: The Way Up - Abide

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11 January 2026

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At the beginning of a new year, there is often a sense of fresh possibility. New calendars. New plans. New rhythms. Yet alongside that optimism sits a familiar pressure: the feeling that life is already noisy, demanding and overwhelming before the year has even properly begun.

It's not possible to strive our way into peace, but Jesus offers a different way. As we continue our series on "The Way", we pause to consider His call to come and abide.

Read John 15:1-8 and Psalm 127:1-2

The world has no shortage of voices competing for attention. Relentless news cycles. Personal pressures. The constant sense of needing to "get it right". Jesus never promised an escape from the pressures of life. What he does offer is something far more radical—a different way of living *within* it. A way that is not driven by performance, productivity or pressure, but by connection.

This journey begins with cultivating a deep, personal relationship with our Creator. To abide. To dwell. To remain. Jesus repeats this phrase eight times in the eight verses of John 15:1-8. It's about living with an upward perspective, even amidst the chaos and pressures of daily life.

The world trains us to strive—to do more, achieve more, prove more—but Jesus offers a different way: staying connected to Him as the source of life. A branch doesn't strain to produce fruit. It simply stays connected to the vine. And we are invited to do the same.



1. In what specific ways does the overwhelming nature of the world challenge your ability to maintain an upward focus on your relationship with God?
2. Where do you notice “striving” showing up in your faith—trying to be good enough, faithful enough, or useful enough?
3. What words or images come to mind when you hear the word *abide*?

## Read John 14:16-23 and 1 Corinthians 6:19

For first-century Jewish listeners, Jesus’ words carried profound significance. God’s presence had always been associated with a specific place—the temple. In Exodus 25, God instructs the people to build a sanctuary so that he might dwell among them. The temple was central to spiritual life and if someone wanted to know where God dwelled, they knew exactly where to go.

Yet Jesus flips this understanding completely. Through the Holy Spirit, every follower of Jesus becomes a dwelling place for God’s presence. Every follower of Jesus becomes a living temple. This means God is not distant or reserved for “holy places”. He is present in ordinary moments, everyday routines, and imperfect lives. This is both humbling and deeply affirming: God chooses to make His home with us.

1. How does it change your perspective to think of yourself as a dwelling place for God?
2. Are there times or places where you find it easier or harder to believe God is truly present with you?

## Read Zephaniah 3:17

It can be challenging to truly abide with God if we carry the unspoken fear that He disapproves of us or that we must earn His favor. Yet, the liberating truth is that God deeply loves us, rejoices over us, and is pleased with us, not because of our performance, but because of what Jesus has already accomplished. This profound, unconditional love clears the way for a healthy and freeing relationship, allowing us to approach Him with confidence and abide with Him in joy.

1. How have past experiences shaped the way you think God feels about you? When you imagine God looking at you right now, what expression do you picture?
2. What difference might it make to your prayer life if you believed God delights in you?



## Re-Read John 15:2

Jesus also speaks about pruning—a process that can feel painful or confusing. Yet pruning is not judgment; it is loving formation.

When we know we are deeply loved and indwelt by God, seasons of loss, correction or difficulty can be received differently, and we can trust the good Gardener to shape us. Pruning strengthens what truly matters and brings forth the richest fruit.

1. Have you experienced a season that felt like pruning? What fruit, if any, came later?
2. What might God be gently inviting you to release right now?

## Closing Reflection

We are called to live with an upward perspective. This is not a ladder to climb, but a relationship to abide in. As you close, spend some time reflecting on this invitation from the One who delights in you.

1. **Awareness** – becoming conscious of God’s presence.  
Imagine a place where you feel at ease. Picture God present with you there, attentive and pleased.
2. **Release** – placing burdens, pressure and striving into God’s hands.  
Silently name what you are striving to carry and imagine placing it in God’s hands.
3. **Remaining** – choosing to dwell in God’s love.  
Speak to God in the quiet of your heart and express your desire to remain in His love.

## Suggested Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you that you choose to dwell with us and in us. Thank you that because of Jesus, we are deeply loved and fully welcomed. Help us let go of striving and learn to remain in your love. Shape us through your gentle pruning and produce fruit in us that brings life to others. Teach us to live from connection, not performance. In Jesus’ name, Amen.