

## Jesus's Farewell Message

# Session 4: Abiding in Christ

### SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

#### **Main Idea**

Spending time with God leads us to know and experience his love and joy in our everyday lives.

#### **Head Change**

To know that God wants us to have a deep relationship with him and cares about our joy.

#### **Heart Change**

To feel God's love for us and his joy in our lives.

#### **Life Change**

To abide in Jesus by spending time alone with him and obeying his commands.

### OPEN

**What is your favorite thing to do with your best friend?  
What makes spending time with him or her so enjoyable?**

There is something about presence, simply being near to a person we love. Sharing a hobby or interest with them can be an excuse to be with them for an extended period of time. We may learn something new about them or make a new memory, but it is most important to be around them—to *abide* with them.

In this session, Francis will teach us about the importance and blessing of abiding with Christ. God wants to spend time with you, to be known by you, and for you to experience his joy.



**DISCUSS**

Throughout this series, Francis has encouraged us to spend time alone with God, praying about and meditating on the deep truths Jesus shared with his disciples. Jesus asks us to do the same in the passage we’re studying today. Read John 15:1–9. **What are the benefits of remaining with, or abiding in, Jesus?**

A branch cannot survive by itself, disconnected from a vine and a system of roots. The essential nourishment it needs requires dependence on something greater than itself. **In what ways do we, as Christians, try to live apart from God’s nourishment, guidance, and love? What areas of our lives do we try to separate from our faith?**

Branches need nourishment, but they also have a greater purpose: to mature and bear fruit. People should notice the changes in your life as you spend time with Jesus. **In what ways has your life changed since becoming a Christian?**

*[Note: To learn more about what it means to bear fruit, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.]*

Francis defined “abiding in Christ” as living connected to Jesus and remaining with him. We often think that the only time we spend with God is in quiet alone time, prayer, or Bible studies. But Jesus wants us to always be connected to him. **In what ways can we abide in Christ while we are with our friends, at work, or running errands? How could you remind yourself of his love and presence throughout your day?**

We are meant to be connected to Jesus throughout the day, but there are some behaviors and habits that divert our energy and attention from spending time with Jesus. Verse 2 says that we should expect the Father to “prune” us, or to remove all of our unhelpful or distracting behaviors so that we can be more fruitful. **What habits—sinful or not—can distract us from abiding in Christ? What difficult changes might you need to make to focus more of your time and energy on bearing fruit?**

One of the ways God “prunes” us is through his Word. Francis said, “Be careful that you don’t just take God’s Word and dissect it . . . the Word will actually dissect you.” **What is the difference between dissecting the Bible and**

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**letting it dissect you? In your Bible study, what steps could you take to let the Holy Spirit use his Word to push you away from sin and toward Christ?**

*[Note: In the video, Francis called the Bible “living and active,” a quote from Hebrews 4:12. For a more in-depth look at that passage, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.]*

Anytime we are pruned, it may feel painful, but God changes us so that we can know his love and experience his joy. Read John 15:10–11. **What is the key to abiding in God’s love and the way to knowing his joy? What comes to mind when you think of “obedience”?**

Many of us think of obedience as a chore, a boring practice of discipline. But God’s commands don’t lead us to solemn glumness; his commands point us to love and joy. **What do you feel when you think of being an “obedient Christian”? Is joy a part of that mental picture? Why, or why not?**

*[Note: To learn more about the joy of God, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.]*

But God cares about our joy; he wants us to be with him and know his love. He is a loving Father who knows where life is found and is intent on leading us to it. **In what ways could chasing God’s joy change the way you approach his commands?**

Life with God is more fulfilling than anything the world has to offer. But knowing God will not automatically give us a life of ease. When we pursue God and seek to abide in Christ, we will meet resistance. Read John 15:18–27.

Following Jesus will cause us to live differently than your coworkers, neighbors, classmates, and society at large. Our new habits will stand out and cause people to question us. But think of Jesus who, even as he loved others, was hated. We must be prepared for the same treatment. **What kind of opposition have you encountered because of your faith? What was your response to that slander, mocking, or abuse?**

Jesus says that we will be hated because people do not know the Father. People who oppose us are ignorant of the gospel, don’t know the love of God, and reject us in the same way they rejected Jesus. But that doesn’t mean

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we can turn against them and “fight fire with fire.” In verse 27, Jesus says that our response to being hated is to “testify” about him. **With his words in mind, how can we use opposition as an opportunity to tell people about Jesus? To show them his love?**

*[Note: To learn more about how Christians should live in a hostile world, go to **Go Deeper Section 4** at the end of this study.]*

At the end of the video, Francis asked us what characteristics define Christians. Read John 15:12–17. **What do you think defines Christians in our society?**

Christians should be known by our love first and foremost. But Jesus says that we should love others in the same way that he loved us. **How has Jesus loved us? In what ways is his love different than our cultural idea of love?**

If God’s love is in us, people should also see his joy on full display in our lives. **What could you do to abide more in Jesus so that you might know more of his joy? What do you think it looks like to live joyfully, even when things aren’t going your way?**

**LAST WORD**

It might sound crazy, but God wants us to be joyful. He wants us to experience his love. These qualities shouldn’t be something we just experience on Sunday morning or while we read our Bibles. Rather, they define the way we live, whether at church, running errands, at work, or in persecution.

If you do not know God’s love, think of some ways you can abide in him throughout your day. Pray, asking him to make his love known in your life. Learn his commands and obey them. As Francis and Psalm 34:8 encourage us, “Taste and see that the Lord is good!”

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gentle, faithful, and self-controlled. **In what ways have you seen the fruit of the Spirit in your life as a Christian? Do you feel like you are seeing these qualities grow in you over time? Why, or why not?**

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Fruit is visible. You can't miss a red apple hanging in a tree—it stands out. In the same way, people should see our character change as we spend time with Jesus. If we are known by anything other than the fruit of the Spirit, we must stop and consider what desires are controlling us. **What can make bearing fruit difficult? Which fruit are the hardest for you to practice?**

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God has taken away our old desires and given us new ones. His Spirit will create new fruit in us, we simply need to submit to his influence and let him work in us. Look back at verses 19–21. **Which of these desires are you still tempted to act on? What would it look like for you to refuse to participate in those behaviors so that God can make you more like Jesus?**

## 2. Living and Active Word

Francis encouraged us to let the Word “dissect” us. It may seem like a strange way to talk about the Bible, but one that Francis pulled directly from the book of Hebrews. Read Hebrews 4:11–13. **According to verse 12, how does the Word of God dissect us?**

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In this passage, the author of Hebrews is exhorting Christians to obedience, much like Jesus does in John 14–15. God's Word acts like a surgeon's scalpel, doing surgery on us to reveal our sin. It won't even let us hide our sinful motivations behind our righteous actions. When confronted with the Bible, we cannot hide. **Has reading the Bible ever revealed your faults? In what ways has the Word of God convicted you of your sin?**

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We can put a lot of effort into the way we present ourselves to the world. But appearances are often deceiving. We can look like we have it all together—a perfect family, perfect home, perfect Christian life—while remaining a complete mess beneath the surface. God loves us enough to look beyond our appearances. He sees our motivations, what causes us to tick at our deepest level, and he is not afraid to point out the sinfulness in our innermost being.

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**What do you want people to think about you? What do you want them to say about you?**

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**What are you afraid people will see or learn about you?**

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God sees everything we have tried to hide and will lovingly wound us to cut out the rot of sin in our lives. Hebrews 4 encourages us to obey God, even in our desires and thoughts. **Do you think it is possible to make our thoughts and feelings obey God? What makes controlling our desires such a difficult task?**

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The Bible is not a list of rules or trivia. It is the living Word of God that actively confronts us, even the parts we try to hide from the world. Take a moment to pray and ask God to examine you. Pray for God to “dissect” you through his Word so that you can be more like Jesus.

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**3. Taste and See**

It can be easy to think of God as detached from our lives, wanting us to obey him from a distance. But, as we saw in this session, God cares about our joy and is lovingly involved in our lives. Read Psalm 34. **Once you have read the psalm, go back through it and write down the troubles people face and the ways God serves his people.**

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**What does God’s care for his people teach you about him?**

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God is actively involved in the lives of his people, working for their good. He wants to be involved in our lives, showing us his love and giving us his joy. **Where can you see evidence of God’s love in this passage?**

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In verse 8, David encourages the godly to taste and see God’s goodness. We are both meant to observe God and experience his goodness. **Where in your life have you seen and experienced God’s goodness?**

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In verses 11–15, David teaches us what it means to “fear the Lord.” **What does he encourage us to do? What is the result of fearing the Lord in verse 12?**

We often think of obedience as a chore, but it is the direct path to joy. God has laid out his laws so that we can feel secure in the chaos of life, experience joy despite our circumstances, and have a good life. **Do you believe**



**obedience directly leads to happiness and that God wants you to have a joyful life? Why or why not?**

David writes about a lot of trouble in this song—oppression, fear, hunger, broken hearts—but sees reason to praise God’s goodness *in the middle* of these calamities. **What do you think it looks like to “take refuge in” (v. 8) and “seek” (v. 10) the Lord?**

When we trust God to take care of us, we don’t have to be anxious about the future. We can be confident that God is controlling the circumstances we cannot. **What would it look like for you to trust God with the problems you are facing today?**

#### **4. “As far as it is up to you . . .”**

Despite what Jesus says in John 15, Christians aren’t always known by their joy. The stereotype of Christians today tends to be much more negative. **How do you think non-Christians would describe us? Do you think these stereotypes are deserved? Why, or why not?**

While the tone of discourse in our society is often combative, Christians are not called to fight fire with fire. Read Romans 12:14–21. **According to this passage, how should we interact with people who disagree with us? What should be our response when people sin against us?**

Romans tells us that we should try to live in harmony with everyone. It commands us to join in the rejoicing and weeping of others. We don’t respond to evil in kind, but always act in a way that is “honorable in everyone’s eyes.” We aren’t told to just get along with our side, but to be at peace with *everyone*. **Where in our society have we drawn “battle lines,” pitting groups of people against one another? What can make it difficult to cross those dividing lines?**

In verse 18, we are told to live at peace with everyone “so far as it depends on you.” While we can’t control others, we can always control the way we interact and respond to them. **What do you think is a Christian response to people sinning against us? What would it look like for you to build bridges of peace with people you don’t get along with?**

This passage doesn't give us space to give up on people, justify our combative behavior, or get back at people who have hurt us. According to verse 20, the only way to overcome evil is with good. **Why do we often want to respond to evil with evil? In what ways would we stand out from the rest of our society if we repaid evil with goodness?**

If we are to be known by our love (John 13:35) and joy (John 15:11), we must be the comforters, celebrators, and peacemakers of our culture. **What can you do to be known by your love in a culture of division and outrage?**