



# ABIDING IN CHRIST'S LOVE

Summer 2023 National Quarterly Retreat

# Abiding in Christ's Love

## Table of Contents

### Introduction – p. 3

Introduction and retreat background – 5 minutes

### Invitation and Prayer – p. 4

Settling In and Opening Worship – 15 minutes

### Grounding Meditation – p. 5

Connecting with God in our Bodies – 30 minutes

### Forming Leaders Self-Assessment – pp. 6-8

Looking at my life in the Presence of God – 60 minutes

### Break – p. 8

Take a selah pause! – 60 minutes

### Prayer Through Art – pp. 9-10

"Abide" by Matilda Wentzel – 30 minutes

### Lectio Divina – pp. 11-12

John 15:4-8, NIV and ESV – 20 minutes

### Closing Worship– p. 13

"The Sower's Song," "Life is a Sacred Gift," "Child of Love," Endnotes – 10 minutes

## Suggested Schedule

**Hour 1:** Introduction, Invitation, and Grounding Meditation

**Hour 2:** Forming Leaders Self-Assessment

**Hour 3:** Break (enjoy unstructured time with Jesus)

**Hour 4:** Prayer Through Art, Lectio Divina, and Closing Worship

## Supplies

Retreat guide, journal for writing, pen or pencil, art journal or blank paper, colored pencils, paints if desired, earbuds or headphones, and a device for listening to guided meditations and music. [🎧 PLAYLIST 🎵](#)

## Introduction

Welcome, beloved in Christ, to the final national quarterly retreat this year in our series of [Forming Leaders Retreat Guides](#). The link to each guide is provided below for your future reference in case you missed one or would like to engage it again. These are for you, dear InterVarsity and IVP staff, for your holistic thriving in life and ministry!



Fall 2022—Identity: [Being Christ's Beloved](#)

Winter 2023—Character: [Developing Christ's Character](#)

Spring 2023—Mission: [Embodying Christ's Mission](#)

Summer 2023—Abide: [Abiding in Christ's Love](#)

The center of our life in Christ rests in abiding in him as the vine (John 15). Jesus extends this invitation to flourishing fruitfulness to you and me, to us as an organization, and to his gloriously beautiful and diverse global church. While each aspect of the Forming Leaders Circle is essential—intimacy, character, and mission—and these flow back and forth continually in our lives as we follow Jesus, at the center, at the heart of it all, is ABIDING. REMAINING. DWELLING. I love the words Eugene Peterson uses in *The Message* to describe this relationship: LIVE IN ME, JOINED WITH ME, AT HOME WITH ME.

"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. ... But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon" (John 15:4-5, 7, MSG).

May you and I make our home in Jesus today, joined with him, living in him, at home with him. His peace be yours as you take this retreat.

In Christ's love,

Julie Meissner  
Assistant Director of Spiritual Formation

## Invitation and Prayer

Welcome, dear one.

A space has been prepared just for you to come.

Come receive the generous blessing of the Father.

Come abide in the eternal love of the Son.

Come live in the fruitful abundance of the Holy Spirit.

Come into the Presence of Love, where you are...

truly seen,

always heard,

intimately known,

perfectly loved.

Come be free to be your created self, the child within, touching eternity with every breath, every hope, every dream.

May this time set apart with God renew your soul, mind, and body with the fresh wind and fire of God's affirmation over you and the many possibilities awaiting you as Christ's beloved.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Take off your shoes, for your encounter with the Divine One is holy ground, and he is calling you to come.

Selah.

## Opening Worship



♪ ["Joy \(Acoustic\)"](#) by CalledOut Music<sup>i</sup>

♪ ["Abide in Me"](#) by Andrew Marcus<sup>ii</sup>

## A Grounding Meditation

Dr. Hillary McBride, author of *The Wisdom of Your Body*

Get into a comfortable position and listen [here](#). 



Stay present to your body. Move around by walking, stretching, dancing...

## Self-Assessment in the Presence of God

By Carolyn Carney, National Spiritual Formation Director

The following questions are designed to help you notice your formation as a leader in intimacy, character and mission. These are not meant to produce guilt, shame, judgment, or comparison but to take an honest look at your life in the presence of the God who loves you completely and endlessly. This assessment may be a tool to help you awaken to the places where you may be losing your soul for the sake of ministry expansion or how what you do in ministry is flowing from your “being” with Jesus. We know that our ministry needs to be founded and rooted in our relationship with Christ. But it becomes very easy for us to default to the energy it takes to do ministry.

As you read each statement, get a sense of reading them along with Jesus. Allow the tenderness of Jesus to help you answer honestly. And then perhaps ask him, “What can we do about this?” Take your time. This could be a good tool to come back to again and again at the end of each year.

1. When I mentor, disciple, teach, or lead others, my words come from a place deep inside that I am already living and experiencing. In other words, I teach outwardly what I am living inwardly.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

2. I regularly have a keen sense of the Holy Spirit's empowerment and guidance in ministry.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

3. I believe I have become more defensive.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

4. I feel that my prayer/devotional life is appropriate for my life stage.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

5. When I am suffering or going through a hard time I feel like God is distant or punishing me. When this happens, I have a hard time talking to him.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

6. I've got my strategy and my goals for ministry. I'm working my plan. If I come up short, my first move is to tweak my plan and readjust as needed.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

7. I am satisfied with how I keep the Sabbath.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

8. When I experience disappointment, I have found myself drifting into numbing activities, like bingeing social media, consuming alcohol, or scrolling on my phone, etc.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

9. I am greatly helped by an older, wiser individual who guides me in my life with God.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

10. I am faithful in taking regular retreat days – where I step away from ministry in order to seek God. I consider this time essential for my ministry.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

11. I feel that my rhythms of work/rest/play honor God.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

12. I am uncertain how to manage my anxious thoughts.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

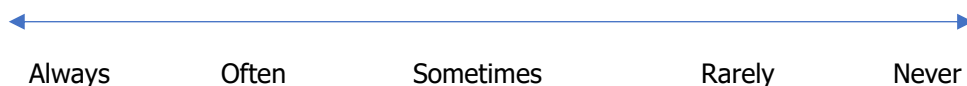
13. If others saw my devotional life they would say that I love God's word.

← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

14. I feel pretty isolated in my work and like there is no one I can call on for help.

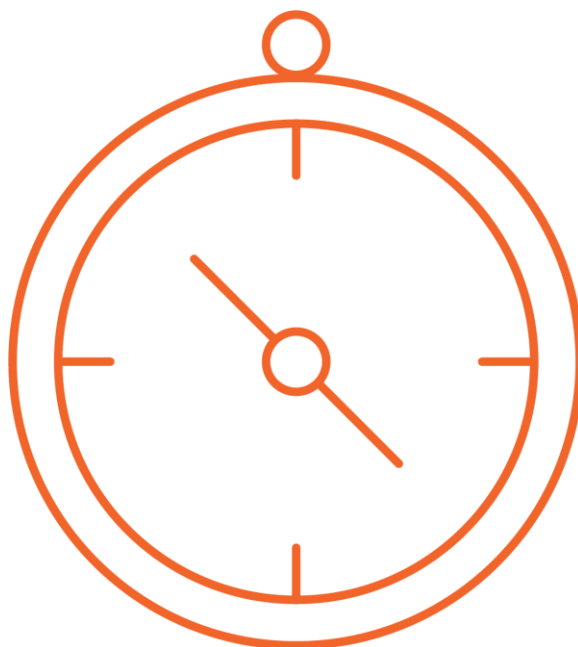
← Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never →

15. I am aware of the issues of my false self and am working toward transformation with the Holy Spirit's help.



Take a step back now and, with the knowledge of Jesus' gracious, tender presence, look at your answers. What do you notice? Are there surprises? What do you know now about yourself that you did not know earlier? How would you characterize the stay of your soul? How is Jesus inviting you to care for your soul?

Consider reflecting upon your responses to this self-assessment with a sacred companion, spiritual director, mentor, counselor, pastor, or trusted friend for further exploration with God. Ask this person to prayerfully hold you accountable for the sake of your holistic growth and flourishing.



### **SELAH!**

Take an hour break to rest, play, eat, dance, sing, create...whatever feels invited!

## Prayer Through Art

### "Abide" by Matilda Wentzel



Matilda Wentzel, "Abide," original acrylic painting on stretched canvas.

## How to Pray Through Art

Adapted from "Ways to Prayer: Prayer Through Art"<sup>iii</sup>

We generally think of prayer as a something we read, say, or listen to. But prayer can also be a visual experience. As the saying goes, "a picture is worth 1,000 words." Images (and all forms of visual arts) can often evoke rich nuance and meaning that cannot be replicated in words. Similarly, art can bring another dimension to prayer. There are two main modes from which to approach prayer through art: 1) meditating on art as a starting point for prayer, and 2) creating art as an expression of prayer. While they are in some ways opposites, they both use visual means to engage in and nurture prayer, reflection, and meditation.

1. Choose an image (such as the "Abide" painting above), other work of art, or even something outdoors in creation.
2. Look at the image and let your eyes stay with the very first thing that you see. Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye. Try to keep your eyes from wandering to other parts of the picture. Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so.
3. Now, let your eyes gaze at the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of the photograph. See it all. Reflect on the image for a few minutes or longer.
4. Consider the following questions: What emotions does this image evoke in you? What does the image stir up in you, bring forth in you? Does this image lead you into an attitude of prayer? If so, let these prayers take form in you. Write them down if you desire, or create your own art as a responsive prayer.
5. Now, offer your prayers to God in a final time of silence.



## John 15:4-8 Meditation

[Click to listen—Guided Meditation](#) 

*\*Note: while this meditation was recorded for the beginning of a new year, in InterVarsity's campus ministry rhythms, we are ending one academic year and preparing to begin another. Hold this awareness in your heart and mind, being present in your body to notice and attend to what stirs as you listen. Journal what you notice, hear, and experience.*

### NIV

<sup>4</sup> Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

<sup>5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

<sup>6</sup> If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

<sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

<sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

### ESV

<sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

<sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

<sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

<sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

<sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

*\*The following coloring page is for your coloring and doodling enjoyment as you listen and reflect.*



## Closing Worship

♪ "The Sower's Song" by Andrew Peterson<sup>iv</sup>

♪ "Life is a Sacred Gift" by Broken Walls (Native American)<sup>v</sup>

Now get up and dance if you haven't already for this final song!

♪ "Child of Love" by We the Kingdom<sup>vi</sup>

Go dancing in peace and with great joy! Thanks be to God!!!




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<sup>i</sup> "Joy (Acoustic)," Performed by CalledOut Music, Written by Samuel Nwachukwu, Produced by William Ajiyemi and Samuel Nwachukwu, © 2020 HFP Music, ® 2020 HFP Music.

<sup>ii</sup> "Abide in Me," Performed and written by Andrew Marcus, © 2020 Northern Lights Records, ® 2020 Northern Lights Records.

<sup>iii</sup> "Ways to Pray: Prayer through Art," St. Brendan's Episcopal Church, <https://www.stbrendans.org/single-post/2018/03/22/ways-to-pray-prayer-through-art>.

<sup>iv</sup> "The Sower's Song," Performed by Andrew Peterson, Written by Andrew Peterson and Ben Shive, Produced by Andrew Peterson, © 2015 Andrew Peterson, under exclusive license to Centricity Music ® 2015 Andrew Peterson, under exclusive license to Centricity Music.

<sup>v</sup> "Life is a Sacred Gift," Performed by Broken Walls and Jonathan Maracle, Written by Jonathan Wesley Maracle, © 2022 Jonathan Maracle, ® 2022 Jonathan Maracle.

<sup>vi</sup> "Child of Love," Performed by We The Kingdom, Written by Andrew Bergthold, Franni Cash, Martin Cash, and Scott Cash, Produced by We The Kingdom, © 2020 Capitol CMG, Inc., ® 2020 Capitol CMG, Inc.