

• A SMALL GROUP + INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE •

# DWELL

• ABOUT INVITING GOD INTO OUR DAILY LIVES •

• DWELL •  
**WEEK 1**  
• GROUP TIME •

**ONE PERSON READ THIS OUT LOUD.  
EVERYONE ELSE, FOLLOW MERRILY ALONG.**

Hi, everyone. Welcome to this small group experience called Dwell—a seven-part study about connecting more deeply with God, and making the relationship that you have with him a part of your everyday rhythm.

Each week, your group will meet for about 1 ½ hours. You'll read some things out loud, ask questions and have good conversations. In between these group meetings, you'll have some individual work to do. And it's all tucked into this one guide. So all you need is this guide you're holding and a Bible. If you don't have those things this week, look over a shoulder.

This study is called Dwell. It's all about learning to better connect with God. And we're pretty sure that if you want to connect with Him, you need to spend time with him—which usually means rearranging a few things in your life to make that happen. In other words, both the group time and individual work are mightily important to getting into a rhythm of dwelling. Then you'll be ready to dwell on your own. But your next seven weeks should look a bit different than they do right now. Expect more energy. Expect more peace. Expect new freedom.

Here we go.

## **TIME FOR A NEW PERSON TO READ OUT LOUD. FOR THE READING-OUT-LOUD SYSTEM, JUST GO AROUND THE CIRCLE.**

Let's go over a few tips for making this small group worth it. Even if you've met with this exact group before—even if you know each other's favorite rap artist from the '80s—listen with fresh ears to these ground rules for group time. It'll keep things running well, even for old friends.

Number 1:

Come to every small group meeting. Excuses are easy. Don't be easy.

Number 2:

Be nice to each other; really nice. Don't judge. Don't gossip. Earn people's trust.

Number 3:

Everyone should do some talking, and everyone should listen. And get ready to read out loud a whole lovin' lot.

Number 4:

Make an effort. It's easy to stay on the sideline, or to shrug off a question that makes you uncomfortable. But that's how your growth shuts down. So be real. Be open about what you think.

Number 5:

Give grace. Then give more grace. Because when people are being real, they need that sweet grace. And so do you.

## **NEXT PERSON START READING:**

- Everyone take a minute to answer this question:  
**When you hear that this study is about dwelling with God and being more connected with Him, what are the first thoughts that cross your mind?** Reader, you answer first, then everyone else go around and share.

We all have things that compete for our time and energy. So when we hear about dwelling with God, it could sound like a new demand. But the first thing we have to hear and be willing to experiment with, is that *staying connected to God is actually about freedom and relief*. He is not an add-on, and was never meant to be. He's the best inclusion to our daily lives. Because when God anchors each day we go through, our lives produce good things. We have a peace we would never feel, otherwise. We have purpose we would never feel, otherwise. We have a relationship that beats any 8th-grade BFF we ever had. But if we're disconnected from God or on a touch-and-go basis, we only experience a fraction of the good life he offers.

- **Someone open a Bible and read John 15:1-5.**

This is Jesus talking.

- **Now someone else take a stab at describing what you just heard.**

## NEW READER JUMP IN:

Jesus had huge demands on his life. Huge. He was followed by large crowds of people who demanded his time and energy. He had enormous responsibilities. He had a hard job. He would have had tons of Twitter action. And in the midst of managing this demanding life, maybe the same kind of life you lead, Jesus gave us the very key to success.

- **Someone read John 5:19-20.**

Every decision that Jesus had to make about where to spend time and who to invest in—every decision came directly from God. He didn't move until he heard his Father's voice. He worked and lived from a place of being connected with God. And because of Jesus' ability to hear from the Father (the same Father we have), his life produced amazing things. In the Bible, this is often called "fruit", which means goodness. And so Jesus' life produced fruit that he wouldn't have been capable of producing without a deep relationship with God.

- **Is it hard to believe that—just like Jesus—we can actually hear and do exactly what God wants us to do? Why or why not?**

Anyone can answer this question.

## NEXT PERSON READ:

Whether or not we've figured out how to include God in our daily lives, we all know what it's like to be influenced by someone.

Dwelling with God—being present with him—can be summed up as being in constant relationship with God. Being under His influence. But let's talk about the elephant in the room. God isn't flesh and blood right next to you, right? His voice doesn't sound like your average Joe. He doesn't pull up a chair. He probably isn't going to call you a cab after a rough night. So how do you stay connected to and influenced by someone like that?

You start by telling Him that you are open to his influence. You talk to Him with your regular voice about what's happening, even though you can't see him. You read the words He's written to you in the Bible. You listen for Him to teach you things through that Bible and through other people. And the connection to Him deepens. You begin to count on Him. And the fruit happens. The freedom comes, and even the bad days are anchored to Him.

## NEXT PERSON READ:

And we can get even more specific about learning to dwell. We're all wired differently, so we're all going to experience God more strongly depending on our environment. Maybe it's easiest for us to dwell with Him on the basketball court. Maybe it's when we're out in nature or in our homes, first thing in the morning. Right now, we're all going to circle some ways for connecting with God that are most exciting or natural to us. Grab a pen.

- **Turn the page, read through the options, and circle whatever stands out.**

- **We all connect with God in unique ways. Check out the descriptions below and circle any that sound exciting or natural to you.**

#### **NATURALIST.**

I feel and experience God in nature. It's times like taking a walk through the woods or just slipping out of the office to breathe fresh air when I feel most connected to God.

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#### **SENSATE.**

I feel and experience God through my senses—good music, great food, the perfect environment.

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#### **TRADITIONALIST.**

I feel and experience God through ritual, traditions and symbols. It's often when I'm in a church service, at a wedding, or taking communion that I feel most connected to Him.

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#### **ASCETICS.**

I connect with God most naturally when I'm in solitude or surrounded by sparse, simple surroundings. It helps for me to withdraw from others to best experience God.

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#### **ACTIVIST.**

I feel closest to God when I'm working to bring about social change or doing service projects.

#### **CAREGIVER.**

I feel and experience God when I'm taking care of others. I often visit friends or people who are sick or hurting, and this brings me close to Him.

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#### **ENTHUSIAST.**

I feel closest to God when I'm celebrating or being surrounded by large groups of people who are following God. I'd take a good community dinner any day of the week.

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#### **CONTEMPLATIVE.**

I connect with God most fully when I'm creating something (music, poetry, meals) and worshipping him through it.

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#### **INTELLECTUAL.**

I experience God most fully when I'm drawn into intellectual study about him—whether it's studying Biblical context, etymology, or anything that involves complex thought and exploration.

#### **WHEN EVERYONE IS FINISHED CIRCLING, NEXT PERSON READ:**

For your individual time this week, until you meet again, connect with God in one of the ways you circled. Afterwards, write down a note or two about how it went.

- **Right now, everyone call out the way you're choosing to connect with God, and an idea for how or when you'll do it.**

You'll also see a few other things in your individual work to look over before we meet again. Remember, dwelling with God is all about including God in your regular life. And it's about having a running conversation with Him. Before we go, let's each start a quick conversation with God. Just a line or two, out loud. You can tell Him what you're hoping for in this Dwell study. You can tell Him what you need. You can tell Him anything, even if it doesn't make sense to the people around you. Even if you've never done this before, no problem. Praying is just talking to God. No need to make it harder than it is, good people.

- **Everyone say something out loud to God.** Reader goes first.

OK, keep that conversation you just started alive, this week. Add on to it, day by day. You'll see space for it in the next few pages. And know that God is with you.

See you next week!

**END WEEK 1**





Need another conversation-starter? A helpful prayer tool:

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**P = PRAISE**

Starting your conversation with praise allows you to focus attention on the positive ways God has been active in your life.

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**R = REPENT**

This is the tough one. Anything that isn't in line with God's best for us is sin and can separate us from fully experiencing God. If we share these things with God and ask for his forgiveness through Jesus, he forgives anything. Anything. All we have to do is say we're sorry and begin changing direction.

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**A = ASK**

Just like a child openly asks their parents for help, we can ask anything of our God. He wants us to approach him with our needs. Even the smallest ones. Trust that He cares.

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**Y = YIELD**

God often speaks to us, but we don't often spend time listening. This involves being quiet. And not just for a second, but long enough to really listen for His voice in even the quietest of places in your heart.

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**E = EXPECT**

God hears us and answers us. It may not look or feel the way we hope, but it's always God's good and pleasing will. We can expect Him to respond.

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**R = RECEIVE**

Because we're used to reciprocity, we often have a hard time receiving from God, good or bad. It's important to let God give to us freely. We're His children, and as a father, he loves to share with us.

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• DWELL •  
**WEEK 2**  
• GROUP TIME •

**SOMEONE START READING OUT LOUD:**

Hello, small group. Good to have you back. We're going to start off by talking about fruit. So right now, **everyone go ahead and name their favorite.** (If someone says fig, don't believe them.)

The thing about fruit is that it tells you something about the health of the tree and the state of the soil. Have you ever eaten a bad cucumber? It's insane. Tastes like crunchy old water. It might have even looked good on the surface, until you bit into it. But a good cucumber? Magical.

Jesus talks a lot about fruit, which we began to look at the last time we met. He talks a lot about how we either produce stuff that's delicious—or stuff that's old cucumbers. Right now, we're going to read something a man named Paul wrote. He's a man who was deeply connected to Jesus and whose life produced lots of good fruit. So this is Paul teaching a community about how life looks when it's tied to God.

- **Someone read Galatians 5:13-26.** Then at least two people in the group talk about what you just heard.
- **Now everyone take a minute to do page 23.** You'll see two columns: the good fruit side and the non-edible fruit side. Check the fruit you especially want in your life right now. Then check the stuff you want to get rid of.

## WHEN EVERYONE'S FINISHED CIRCLING, NEXT PERSON READ:

- Looking at that list of good and bad fruit, **everyone give an example from your life of when you've felt one of those things from each column.**

When we're connected to God, life works. Fruit happens—the kind of good fruit we just circled. And the best way to see what a fruit-filled life looks like is to find a model. Jesus is our man for that.

- **Someone read John 14:8-12.**

This next question will take some brainstorming. Give yourself time, and stick with it.

- **As a group, talk about Jesus' character and the things he did.** For example, "He was generous" and "He fed people." Call out anything you can think of.
- Once you finish, go through these next few questions. Anyone who wants to, can answer.

**1. Is it hard to believe that Jesus only had a powerful life because of God working through him? Why or why not?**

**2. What do you think about the statement from Jesus, that if we have faith, we'll do what he did and greater things?**

**3. What would you do with that kind of power and influence from God?** Everyone can answer this one. Be bold. This is Jesus-level power we're talking about.

## NEXT PERSON READ:

It's amazing to think about all of the incredible things Jesus did—and to think that we could do even *half* of it. But that's what He says to us. And if we believe Him, we have no choice but to live with that expectation. So that thing you just mentioned about what you would do with a Jesus-like power and influence? Start believing it is possible. It is.

- **Someone read Romans 8:15-17, printed here:**

Romans 8:15-17 (New International Version)

*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

- **Now someone read this other translation of the same scripture.**

Romans 8:15-17 (The Message)

*This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!*

- **What if you were to ask this simple question for yourself: "What's next, Papa?" What part of your life would you ask it about? Everyone share their answer.**

## NEXT READER, PLEASE:

- Last week, we all tried connecting with God in a way that's most natural for us. **Everyone take a couple minutes to talk about how it went.** Reader go first.

Dwelling with God shouldn't be a chore. It takes discipline at times, sure, because any good relationship does. But if we're spending time with God out of guilt, or because we're trying to earn someone's favor, it's not a good mix. That's high school romance, not the goodness Jesus offers. Let your relationship with Him be built on love. It's what *He's* building from in his relationship with you.

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## NEW READER:

For our individual work this week, we're going to do some quick life-mapping. We'll check out the things we spend time and energy on. But before you get nervous that someone is going to judge how much time you spend watching the *Vampire Diaries*, remember that your group is full of grace. They might laugh at you, but they're full of grace.

So make sure you knock out the quick life-mapping before the next group. And keep picking up that ongoing conversation you're having with God. Keep writing it down, if it helps. Even if you checked out for a few days, jump back in. He's there.

**Whoever is up for having a conversation out loud with God, say a brief, encouraging prayer for the group.** Then see you next week.

END WEEK 2

## Check what you want.

### GOOD AND DELICIOUS FRUIT

- Ability to love people, despite their mistakes
- A sense of calm
- Good, authentic friendships
- Patience with others
- Strong connection to God
- Excitement for what's ahead
- Release of controlling ways
- Ability to forgive someone and move on
- Ability to face conflicts, head-on
- Making use of talents
- Feeling generous and acting on it
- Being considered as trustworthy
- Getting other people excited about Jesus
- Healthy confidence
- Bravery
- Self-controlled even when pushed to the edge
- Mental clarity
- Strong sense of purpose
- Steady, even if the day is a mess
- Kind-hearted
- Ability to speak with conviction
- Fun
- Freedom from fear
- Strong leadership
- Strong follow-ship
- Perseverance and follow-through
- Belief that you're known and loved

## Check what you want to get rid of.

### NON-EDIBLE FRUIT

- Easily angered
- Worrying through every detail
- Fear of telling people the truth
- Habit of manipulating others
- General anxiety
- Shame
- Inability to ask for help
- Obsession with body
- Lack of patience
- Afraid of losing everything
- Jealousy
- Holding in secrets
- Inflated self-image
- Self-worth tied to performance
- Self-worth tied to someone else's approval
- Melancholy
- Inability to trust
- Obsession with making money
- Desire to always be in charge
- Indifference
- Inconsistency of character
- Reckless ambition
- Money fears
- Lust
- Addiction
- Low self-confidence
- Mental confusion
- Feeling like you'll never have enough







# • DWELL • WEEK 3 • GROUP TIME •

## **SOMEONE START US OFF:**

Welcome back, everyone.

- Everyone spent time mapping out their life since we met. **As a group, spend some time talking about anything your map made you realize or want to change.**

This week we'll look at the roots of a successful life of dwelling. And to do this, we're going back to the beginning. The way, way beginning.

In Genesis 1, it describes how God created the world. Nine times, in that story, it's written that God's creation was good. GOOD. The word "good," translated in the original Hebrew language, means best and bountiful. God's original intention for how this earth would look and the rhythms we would follow, were the best. And they were bountiful.

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## **NEXT READER, PLEASE:**

- **Using your life map as a jumping off point, do you feel you're experiencing what's best and bountiful?** Everyone share your thoughts on that.

God had provided everything Adam and Eve needed. They lacked nothing. Then all of a sudden, the devil shows up.

- **Someone read Genesis 3:1-5. What does the devil accuse God of doing to Adam and Eve?** Anyone can answer.

## NEW READER:

Think about your life. No matter who you are, the devil wants to squeeze his way into it. And he's amazingly good at trying to fill our heads with doubts, fears and pride. The last thing the devil wants is for us to trust God 100%. He knows the power in that, and he can't stand it. If he can even get you to 99%, he's delighted.

- Here's the question we all get to answer: **Where does the devil have you at 99%? This could be a place of fear, doubt, unusual stress or pride in your life.** Remember, trust your group, and give each other grace. We want to grow, here.
- **Now someone read Genesis 2:8-9 and 2:15-17.**

God put the tree that would lead to Adam and Eve's downfall in the center of the garden. Right...smack...dab...in the middle. He didn't try to hide it. Why? God was more interested in having a real and trusting relationship with us, than he was in removing the possibility for us to make mistakes. He values a genuine relationship of trust with us that much. We can't fully dwell with God, if we don't fully trust him.

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## NEW READER:

Everyone look at the life map you worked on last week. Find one area where you want to more fully trust God. Somewhere on your map write down, specifically, what trusting would look like in that area.

- **When everyone is finished, share your new trust with the group.**
- **Someone read John 8:25-29.** Then someone else describe it in your own words.

Jesus spoke only what he heard God saying, because he considered his Father trustworthy. He knew God's voice like the way a child knows their own parent's footstep or laugh in a crowd. Jesus lived fully under his Father's influence.

Let's look at Jesus' life to see what he actually did to dwell.

- **Read these out loud, switching readers for each one:**

**Mark 1:35**

**Luke 6:12-13**

**Luke 4:42**

**Mark 6:31**

**John 11:40-43**

In these verses, we see how Jesus stayed connected with the Father. He withdrew and spent time alone. He spent both short and long moments in conversation with God. And He walked confidently in what he heard from his Father.

Think about the times in your life when you already withdraw. It could be physical—like closing a door on the family noise. Or withdrawing can be mental—like being in one conversation, but your mind's having its own internal dialogue. We all know how to withdraw and we're probably pretty good at it. So was Jesus.

- **Everyone share when and how you will withdraw and spend time connecting with God this week. It might help to reference your life map.**







• DWELL •  
**WEEK 4**  
• GROUP TIME •

**READ OUT LOUD:**

Hi, friends. Welcome back.

To start us off, everyone take a minute and describe any dwelling moments you had during the week. Reader, go first.

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**NEW READER, PLEASE:**

Let's do a quick recap of what we've been studying. Week #1 we talked about how the key to a fruitful life is truly dwelling with God and being more and more under his influence. Week #2, we studied the life of Jesus, and how he deepened his relationship with the Father by staying under his influence. Last week, we explored the creation story and trusting God. This week, we're talking about rest. Good, old-fashioned rest.

- **When you hear the word rest, what's your immediate response?** Everyone answer, off the cuff.
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**NEXT READER:**

It seems we all want more rest. And rightly so. We're a pretty exhausted culture, and there seems to be no end to it. And rest is exactly what God wants for your life. It just might look different than you imagine.

- **Why do you think God would want you to have rest?** Think about the kind of person you are when you're rested, and how that affects things. Then share with the group why God would want that for you.

## NEW READER:

- **Someone read Genesis 1:5, 1:8, 1:10, 1:13, 1:19, 1:23, 1:31. Someone else answer: What's the common theme of these verses?**

God's rhythm of a day begins with evening and ends with morning. Imagine that in your head for a minute. The day begins with evening. It ends with morning.

- **Imagine you begin your day in the evening with rest, and then finish it with work. How would that look for your life, even if just as a mental shift? Take a second to think about it, then share with the group what might be different.**
- **Now someone read Genesis 2:2-3.**

God creates this amazing earth, creates Adam and Eve, and on their first day EVER, they rest. They rest before engaging in any type of work. God fully supports and rests WITH them. Our Father values us resting with him. He wants us to experience the benefits of not working. It's a gift from Him. And, it really makes us more fruitful. It might sound backwards—but it's true.

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## NEW READER:

When we rest with God, we're connected to Him like the branch to the vine and therefore, we can produce good life-fruit.

- **Someone read Hebrews 4:9-10.**

We have access to this type of rest with our Father. In the Hebrew and Greek language, the word "Sabbath" means to cease. When we engage in sabbath, we stop striving, working or relying on our own productive efforts. In trust, we surrender to a good Father who wants to be our provider.

Stopping, ceasing and resting can be incredibly hard. But it's super important in being fully present with God.

## NEW READER:

Let's define rest. It's not necessarily laying still in your bed for an hour. It's engaging in anything that breaks you from your normal daily routine. It's something that brings you joy, and something you invite God into. It might have felt like rest in the first week when you connected with God in a way that felt natural to you. Or it could be reading a book when you normally clean the house. Or taking a 5-mile run when you normally work the extra hour. Rest will look different for most of us.

- **Everyone describe a few ways you like to rest—even if you haven't done it for awhile.**

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## NEW READER:

Depending on who we hang out with, how we were raised, or who we are married to, rest may or may not be valued. You might feel guilty for slowing down or doing something you enjoy. It might feel like laziness. You might worry what others will think if you do it.

- **Everyone describe any resistance you feel toward rest—or how others resist it on your behalf.** Reader go first.

**NEW READER:**

Let's take the idea of rest in a new direction for a minute, because there's another side to rest that we don't necessarily think about. Consider the difference between a person who holds tight—a person who's really good at defending their position, controlling the situation, or pushing an agenda. This isn't just the Type A person. We all can hold tight. We work hard to control and make things happen. It's not always a bad thing, but consider the opposite. Consider taking a rest. You let others make some decisions you normally would make. You rest from always winning the argument. You take a break from pushing your agenda or getting your way.

- **Everyone give an example of how you could rest in this way. Who would you let make decisions? What would you take a break from?**

**NEW READER:**

The individual work this week begins right now. Get a pen out, or start sharing one. Put a tiny X somewhere on your hand, wrist or body part that you're going to see very often. This hand-drawn tattoo isn't a statement, it's just a reminder. This week, it's about resting. You have two assignments: do something that's physical rest, and do some mental rest. The next few pages have reminders and space to write about how it goes. And try to keep your little X alive and well. Redraw it after hand washings and such.

God takes rest really seriously. Remember, we live from rest. So live this week. Rest, then work.

- **Someone take a few minutes to pray out loud for the strength to rest.**

Then see you next week.

**END WEEK 4**

**WEEK 4**  
**• INDIVIDUAL WORK SPACE •**

Your first step in physical rest is to plan it. Because if you're in serious need of rest (which is most of us), you'll only rest if it's on your calendar. So put it there in some permanent ink or ALL CAPS. And add the word "TRUST" next to it. Because it's going to require it.

Next, decide how you're going to rest. Be creative and honest.

**THE DAY I'M GOING TO REST:**

[Empty box for writing the day of rest]

**MY REST WILL BE:**

[Empty box for describing the rest]

So now you're scheduled and you've got direction.

When you begin your time of rest, spend ten minutes inviting God to rest with you. It makes rest completely different and sweeter, when He's around.

**THINGS I FELT OR HEARD FROM GOD WHEN I PHYSICALLY RESTED:**

[Lined area for journaling thoughts and feelings]





# . DWELL . WEEK 5 • GROUP TIME •

## **SOMEONE START US OFF:**

Hey everybody. Hope your resting went well this week.

- **Briefly share with the group how it went...or didn't. Was it easy? Interrupted? Boring? Great?** Remember you did both physical and mental rest.

Chances are, most of us found some—or maybe a lot—of challenge in this exercise. That's completely normal, because we're being trained. In training we find out our strengths and weaknesses. But in turning these things over to God and trying out new patterns of dwelling, he will grow us as we need to be grown.

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## **NEW READER:**

The bottom line: God's love for us is not contingent on our successes or failures. What God wants for us is to experience his best. A good dad (and God is the perfect one) is always giving. But we have to be open to receiving His influence and listening for his guidance.

- **Everyone take a moment to talk about how you're doing in the dwelling category. Have you felt more connected? Are you seeing any changes in your day or routine?** Reader go first.

## NEW READER:

It can be a struggle to be fully present with God. So before the enemy makes us think we're failures or just not cut out for it, let's reread something we read during Week 2.

- **Someone look up Romans 8:1-2 and read it out loud to the group. Someone else describe what you think it means.**

It's important to be on board with "no condemnation" as we look at what is potentially blocking our ability to rest.

- **Go around and share if or where you feel you're being blocked. Dive as deep as you and your group are comfortable.** Quick ground rules reminder: it's good to share the floor. Make sure everyone has a chance to talk and that no one's dominating all the conversation.
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## NEW READER, PLEASE:

Let's consider pruning for a minute. Someone read John 15:1-2 out loud. This part's worth repeating: "...every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be more fruitful." Pruning means cutting back. But not just dead branches—not just the obvious stuff in our life that doesn't make us feel good. But the overgrown branches, too.

- OK, turn back to your life map on page 25. Everyone there? Look at all your big circles and small words. **Take a few minutes to have a silent conversation with God. Ask Him to show you where anything might be overgrown or just dead. Be open to whatever you hear. Put a mark by those things. Only share this out loud if you want to.**

## NEXT READER:

Since the beginning of this study, we've been referring to God as our Father. And a good father prunes his children. Another way to say it, is that a good father disciplines his children.

- **Someone read Proverbs 3:11-12. Does that passage challenge or line up with your childhood experience with discipline? Share with the group.**
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## NEXT READER:

Ideally, when a child is disciplined, it happens with the parent and child in very close proximity to one another. Whether the correction is strictly verbal or requires physical action as well, the function of discipline is to get the child aligned with the parent. In regards to God as our Father, the purpose of discipline and pruning is to get us aligned with his best. His pruning of what's unhealthy or just overgrown brings us inside his love and to a place of dwelling and trust. So although it can feel counterintuitive, we must regularly seek God's pruning, so our growth's not stunted. Nobody wants to be a stunt.

- **Someone read Hebrews 12:7-11. Anyone can answer this: How do those words change your perception of dwelling with God as well as letting him prune?**

## NEXT READER:

From that passage in Hebrews, we can see how spending time in God's presence is when he can discipline us. And that results in "...a harvest of righteousness and peace" (Hebrews 12:11). But we should be aware there is someone who wants to keep us out of God's presence and who despises discipline. The same guy who wants to disrupt any trust we have in God. The enemy wants us to believe that God disciplines us because of his disappointment in us, or because he wants to withhold or micro-manage. Actually, it's because of God's deep, unending love for us that we are disciplined. As our enemy, the devil is satisfied with us being "roadblocked" from spending time with God. And roadblocks take on a lot of different forms.

Let's talk about some of the biggies.

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## NEW READER:

### Big Roadblock 1. "Doing" feels more important than "Being".

Whether your time with God is a quiet day at home or a long afternoon walk, it's easy to stack up a million other things that you could be doing.

#### **"Being" has to be our first posture. Doing follows. Here's what that looks like:**

"What is God saying to me?" (This is being with the Father.)

Then asking: "What am I going to do about it?" (This is doing with the Father.)

- With this being/doing structure in mind, consider what we just did by asking God to show us where our life is overgrown or needs pruning. That was the "being." The "doing" would come next. **Go around the group and share one way you could do something that stems from the being.**

## NEW READER:

### Big Roadblock 2. The idea of dwelling and resting can seem spiritual instead of authentic.

It's true, some people get really religious about spending time with God, and it puts a bad taste in our mouth. These people either tick you off or make you feel like you're a bad Christian. Sometimes it takes letting go of that baggage and getting centered just on you and God. Forget the others.

- **Anyone can answer: Do you ever worry about dwelling in the wrong way? What do you think that stems from?**
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## NEW READER:

### Big Roadblock 3. Unrepented Sin.

Day by day, we are constantly being made aware of feelings of fear, anger, bitterness, hatred, etc. These feelings manifest themselves in all kinds of ways and are a part of the human condition. They represent a brokenness in all of us that started back with Adam and Eve.

The good news is that God wants to forgive us, and help get us back on track to a fruit-producing life. This exchange between God and us is often called repenting—which means admitting the mistake and turning away from it. The choice is ours, of course. But we have to know that when we're living outside of God's will for us, we're not experiencing what's best and bountiful. We can't fully rest when our mistakes grate on us. We can't fully dwell.

- **Someone read Romans 8:38-39 over the group as a prayer and final blessing for this week's time together.**

Great work, and be sure to read this week's homework and give it a go!

**END WEEK 5**

# WEEK 5

## • INDIVIDUAL WORK SPACE •

“Confession” and “repentance” can be scary words and carry tons of baggage. Yet, confession is simply saying, “I’ve made a mistake and want to receive God’s forgiveness and his strength.”

Repentance may also be intimidating. And yet, it’s something people do all the time. The Greek word for repentance is “metanoia.” It means, “To change one’s mind”. In this case, you’re changing your mind from sin, to God.

Jesus talked a lot about this.

### **Mark 1:15 (Jesus speaking)**

“The time has come”, he said. “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

### **James 5:16**

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

The practice of confession and repentance help us connect deeply with our Father.

Spend some time asking the Father to reveal more to you around how you’re being roadblocked. Here are some verses to help guide your time around what He says about specific blocks.

### **Roadblock 1. DOING FEELS MORE IMPORTANT THAN BEING**

Psalm 27:4  
Psalm 46:10  
John 17:21-23

### **Roadblock 2. DWELLING HAS TO BE SUPER SPIRITUAL**

Exodus 20:8-11  
Galatians 3:26-29  
John 15:15-16

### **Roadblock 3. UNREPENTED SIN**

Acts 3:19  
James 5:16  
Psalm 19:12-13

If you’re up for it, share what you heard from the Lord with your spouse or a trusted friend. Ask for them to pray for you to turn from that roadblock.

p.s. If you’re extra comfortable, ask them to pray right there on the spot. Receive their prayer with the belief that the enemy will not win. If you try this, you are confessing sin, repenting from it, and are believing God’s truth for you.



. DWELL .  
**WEEK 6**  
• GROUP TIME •

**READ OUT LOUD:**

Hello, dwellers. We're in the home stretch of this study. Hopefully it's paying off for you, your relationship with God is deepening and you're becoming more aware of how you dwell.

- **To start, anyone can share how it went if you tried the individual assignment to repent or confess something.** If you didn't, repent that. (Kidding.) You don't have to share specifics, just how it went, in general.
- Last week we talked about roadblocks, and in your individual work you might have prayed through one or two of them. **Everyone take a minute to acknowledge any roadblocks you're facing and a way you could push through them.**

## NEW READER:

The first step in creating personal rhythms of dwelling is to realize and get super comfortable with the fact that it's a process. It has ups, downs, starts and stops. Some days will feel like dwelling perfection, some will feel dry as a bone. Spiritual growth is a process that takes time.

George MacDonald, a Scottish novelist, once said,

*To give us the spiritual gift we desire, God may have to begin far back in our spirit, in regions unknown to us, and do much work that we can be aware of only in the results...In the gulf of our unknown being, God works behind our consciousness. With His holy influence, with his own presence...He may be approaching our consciousness from behind, coming forward through regions of our darkness into our light, long before we begin to be aware that he is answering our request—has answered it, and is visiting his child.*

- Often, we expect obvious outcomes to follow our effort. **Anyone who's willing, give an example of when your hindsight was 20/20—when at first you couldn't see what God was doing, but you later saw His work in it.** Take a minute to think about it, then whoever wants can go first. If nothing comes to mind, no problem.

## NEW READER:

Slowing down and allowing ourselves time to grow in our relationship with God is an important part in creating sustainable patterns of dwelling. We have to face the fact that some days and months will be great, some not. But we push through, because we trust. Once our expectations are calibrated, we can begin to establish practices and routines that are unique to our relationship with God. Like the way we experimented with different dwelling environments in the first week, some of us need music; some need a car ride; some need two pots of coffee.

In order to make dwelling with God something that's going to last, it's important to consider and plan two things.

1. Carve out consistent time with God. This allows you to engage with energy and focus.
2. Dwell in a way you love. This reminds you that God is loving and good, and it keeps it fresh.

- **Everyone share your favorite time in the past six weeks of dwelling with God.**

## NEW READER:

As you're dwelling with God—and maybe part of that time is spent talking out loud or writing your conversation down in a journal—you can also spend time listening, being quiet, and paying attention to what God is speaking to your heart.

A great way to listen is to read God's words from the Bible. So let's try this, together. We'll be praying through scripture, which is an ancient practice called *Lectio Divina*. As we do this, we listen to a Bible verse as if we're in a conversation with God.

In this exercise, we break up our time into four parts:

- 1. We read.** We choose a particular Bible text to read.
- 2. We reflect.** We pray about the meaning of the text and how it applies to our lives.
- 3. We respond.** Many times this looks like repenting and worshipping.
- 4. We rest.** This is a time of being still and receiving from God.

There's no time requirement for any of these steps. And there's no expectation of intellectually figuring out the scriptures' meaning. The point of *Lectio Divina* is to fully experience an encounter with God through Bible and prayer.

So let's give it a try. We'll do one scripture passage.

## NEW READER:

- **Someone open your Bible to Psalms 46.** It's about halfway through your Bible.
  1. Before reading, begin by asking God to open up his words to your group and to allow each of you to experience him more fully.
  2. Read Psalms 46 out loud.
  3. Re-read Psalms 46 out loud—this time, listening for a word or phrase that captures your attention.
  4. For a few minutes, silently repeat the word or phrase that attracted you.
  5. Share that word or phrase out loud *with no elaboration*.
  6. Same person read the passage again.
  7. For a few minutes, think about the thoughts and feelings the word or phrase evokes. Ask, "How does this passage connect to my life today?" Share your experience.
  8. Read Psalms 46 again.
  9. Reflect on what God might be calling you to do or become through this passage. Share any insights.
  10. Spend a few minutes sitting silently, resting in the presence of God.
  11. End by sharing with the group anything that's on your mind because of this experience.







# • DWELL • WEEK 7 • GROUP TIME •

## READER, START US OFF:

This is it, crew. Our last week of the formal Dwell study, but of course, it's not the end.

- **Someone read Joshua 4:1-7.**

The nation of Israel has just crossed a parted Jordan River and God calls them to mark the moment. He asks 12 leaders to pick up stones from the dry river bed, to serve as a reminder to themselves and future generations of the Lord's goodness and provision.

Joy is the outflow of dwelling with our Father. Joy. We have amazing God moments and marking them helps remind us of God's faithfulness.

- Anyone who wants, **share a time recently that's felt like God-given joy.**

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## NEW READER:

The wonderful thing that drives our desire to dwell with God, is knowing we were created for constant communion with him. And the joy and deep abiding we feel as we pursue a relationship with Him is what we'll experience when he re-creates us in eternity.

He's promised that is what's coming. God wrote the end, before the beginning. What God originally created in the garden of Eden was his best. And He intends to get us back there. He's recreating his kingdom, every day. He's redeeming what's been lost and broken.

That's the good news about this story. Every time we engage with God, we're able to have confidence knowing that he ultimately has a plan. And that plan includes Him and us, living together in his best.

## NEW READER:

This constant communion with God is a beautiful hope. There'll be no more hurt. No more stress. No more wanting. No more working and striving and losing and fighting.

We'll have complete peace and fulfillment. We'll lack nothing. God will walk with us in the cool of His perfect creation.

- **As a group, of those promises we just read, which one stands out to you the most?** If it helps, reread them.
- **As a group, go around and pray for the promise you just mentioned.** Tell God you are looking forward to it. Ask Him to bring it to your life. No prayer is too bold. Reader, start off the prayer.

## NEW READER:

In John 14:1-4, Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

One day we'll abide perfectly. The way we did in the garden. Face-to-face, in paradise.

Tonight, when your house is quiet, spend time asking the Holy Spirit to give you a glimpse of what an eternity with God feels like. It's the kind of thing that will blow your mind. ***And that's what we have to look forward to.***

Until then, keep fighting the good fight.

## NEW READER:

- To finish off these seven weeks of study, everyone stay focused and grace-full for a few more minutes. We're going to take turns encouraging each other in the dwelling lifestyle. Call out strengths in each other and things you hope for each other. Speak freely and with confidence that your encouragement matters. Reader, start it off.

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## NEW READER:

Thanks, group, for being here and doing this. You have persisted. You have dwelled. Keep going, and remember that the result of dwelling is joy. Really amazing joy.

If you want, keep getting together. Maybe it's not every week, but decide if there's a way you want to stay connected. It'll help keep dwelling top-of-mind and create some accountability. Because doing life together is really the only way to do it.

Fare thee well, you treasured kids of God.

END WEEK 7













