



# small groups

Discussion Guide



## Becoming Disciplined

John 15:1-10

### Ice Breaker

(10 minutes)

This week we began a sermon series on our Life Marks. These are the characteristics that define a mature disciple of Jesus. IBC has a lot of verbiage about our mission, vision, values, etc. See how many of these your group can fill in:

**IBC's Mission:** \_\_\_\_\_.

**IBC's Strategy:** (Hint: this is the three-part sentence you hear most often) \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_.

**IBC's Six Core Values:** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

**The Life Marks of a Healthy Disciple:** \_\_\_\_\_-ing, \_\_\_\_\_-ing, and \_\_\_\_\_-ing like Jesus.

(Find answers at [www.irvingbible.org/about/mission-and-vision](http://www.irvingbible.org/about/mission-and-vision))

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# Lesson Review

*(35 minutes)*

Under each of the three Life Marks, there are two more specific tokens of discipleship, so that there are a total of six habits or virtues that characterize a mature disciple of Jesus. This six-part sermon series will use these as an outline. At IBC, a fully-formed disciple is:

- Regularly engaged in time with the Father
- Wholly devoted to God's perfect will
- Graciously disposed toward all
- Intimately connected to a few
- Passionately responsive to the needs of others
- Lovingly pursuing people far from God

## **Read Galatians 4:19**

Paul uses the metaphor of childbirth to express how intensely and painfully he is striving for the Galatians' growth.

### **Discuss**

- Who is going to great effort to see you grow in Christ?
- For whose growth are you taking pains?
- If you couldn't list a name in either category, should you take steps to grow in that area? What steps?

## **Read Mark 1:35-37**

Jesus set the example of prioritizing time with the Father.

## **Read John 15:1-16**

Jesus uses the word “abide” (“remain,” in some translations) 11 times in the first 10 verses of John 15. Barry drew out three implications of Jesus’ teaching here.

### **1. The abiding life is about relational dependence, not about trying harder.**

Barry told a story about caring for his father in his final days. He used to steady his dad on walks to the restroom and his dad would sing, *Leaning On the Everlasting Arms*.

### **2. The abiding life is about embracing our identity, not earning it.**

I am now utterly convinced that on judgment day the Lord Jesus is going to ask us one question, and only one question: “Did you believe that I loved you?” Jesus knows your whole life story. He knows everything you've ever done and everything that's ever been done to you. He knows your darkest shame and your deepest regrets. He knows your shallow faith, your feeble prayer life and your inconsistent discipleship. And his word to you is “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now abide in my love.”

—Brennan Manning

### **3. The abiding life is about loving obedience, not lifeless obligation.**

Barry used an illustration about two sons mowing the lawn. One son did so to gain his father’s approval; the other did it because of his father’s approval. Grace impels us to abide in Christ because we are loved by God, not as a maneuver to earn God’s love.

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## **Application**

*(15 minutes)*

Barry offered an immediate next step and a more long-term challenge. The immediate next step is to practice fixed-hour prayer. This is the habit of pausing at set times throughout the day to reorient our hearts to God. Barry mentioned Benedictine monks who pray seven times a day. A more manageable pattern may be to pray four times per day on this schedule:

Dawn (or whenever you first get up)

Day (sometime around midday)

Dusk (possibly after your work is done and you transition to home time)

Dark (before you go to bed)

**Discuss**

- Have you ever observed fixed-hour prayer? Did it seem to help you abide?
- If you're interested in trying fixed-hour prayer this week, commit to your group now so they can hold you accountable.

Your next step of discipleship may not be about prayer times. Barry recommended the Next Steps Inventory as a tool for prayerfully considering what God is calling you to next.

**Discuss**

- Have you done the Next Steps Inventory? (If you didn't get a card on Sunday, it's available online at [www.irvingbible.org/nextsteps](http://www.irvingbible.org/nextsteps))
- What steps did you mark? Or is God calling you to something that wasn't on the card?