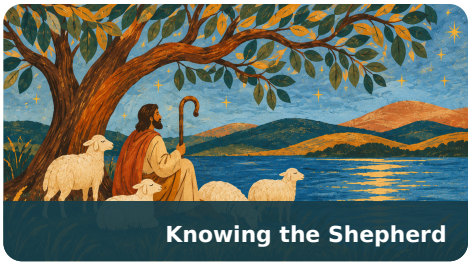
RS JOURNEYS
Go Deeper. Become More.

CHAPTER 4

Indwelling God



CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The God who is high above all things is also the God who wants to live with his people. From the garden to the tabernacle, from Bethlehem to Pentecost, Scripture tells the story of a God who makes his home among us and, astonishingly, within us. This isn’t a distant presence we have to reach for. He has come near. In these encounters, we’ll follow the story of God’s dwelling—and discover what it means to live as people in whom the Shepherd himself abides.

ENCOUNTER 1

Made for His Presence

PREPARE

The Bible gives us a surprisingly ordinary picture of God's presence: God walking in a garden in the cool of the day. But sin has disrupted the relationship. When the man and woman hear God approaching, rather than welcoming him, they hide.

As you read, notice what they do when they hear God approaching and how he responds. Then consider God's later promise to Israel and what it reveals about the relationship he desires with his people.

READ

Genesis 3:8–13 · Leviticus 26:11–13

PONDER

1. When Adam and Eve hear God approaching, they hide. What does their response reveal about the effect of sin on their relationship with him? What do God's words and actions reveal about his response to their hiding?
1. In Leviticus 26:11–13, God promises to dwell among his people and walk among them, to be their God. How does this promise illuminate the earlier scene in Genesis? What does it reveal about God's continuing desire for relationship despite humanity's rebellion?

LOOK AGAIN

Did you notice the connection between God's movement in these two passages?

In Genesis 3:8, Adam and Eve hear God walking in the garden. In Leviticus 26:12, God promises to walk among his people.

The passages use the same Hebrew verb for walking. The God who walked in the garden says he will walk among his people again. What the story lost in Genesis 3, God sets out to restore.

Return to these verses and consider what this connection reveals about the what story the Bible is telling.

PRACTICE

Take a short walk today, even if only for a few minutes, and treat it as time with God.

You don't need to fill the time with words. Simply remember that God desires communion with his people.

If you become aware of something you've been reluctant to bring before him, acknowledge it honestly. Practice approaching rather than hiding.

PRAYER

Talk with God about anything you've been tempted to hide from him. Thank him that he continues to seek and restore relationship with people out rather than waiting for them to clean themselves up. Ask him to deepen your awareness of his presence and your willingness to live openly before him.

ENCOUNTER 2

A Tent in the Wilderness

PREPARE

Israel has been rescued from Egypt, but they’re still in the wilderness. And it's here that God commands them to build a sanctuary, explaining why he wants it constructed.

As you read, notice the purpose of the sanctuary, what happens when God's glory fills it, and how his presence accompanies Israel throughout their journey.

PONDER

1. In Exodus 25:8, God explains that the sanctuary is to be built so that he may dwell among his people. What does this reveal about the God who has rescued Israel? How does his willingness to dwell among a people still learning to trust and follow him deepen your understanding of his character?
1. At the end of Exodus (Exodus 40:34-35), God's glory fills the tabernacle so completely that Moses cannot enter. Yet the same presence guides Israel throughout their journey. What do these two aspects of God's presence reveal about his holiness and his care? How do you hold together God’s nearness and his overwhelming glory? Which one do you tend to forget?

READ

Exodus 25:8–9 · Exodus 40:34–38

LOOK AGAIN

Return to Exodus 40:36–38.

When the cloud lifts, Israel sets out. When it remains, they stay.

The God who dwells among them is also the God who leads them. His presence isn't merely a comfort in the camp; it guides the journey.

Think back to Jesus' description of the Shepherd who goes ahead of his sheep in John 10:4. What do these passages reveal about the God who leads his people by walking ahead of them instead of just pointing the way?

PRACTICE

Choose a quiet place and a few minutes today to attend deliberately to God's presence.

Read Exodus 25:8 once more, remembering that God himself initiated this relationship.

Rather than asking first for guidance about what you should do, spend a moment simply acknowledging who he is and his desire to be with his people.

PRAYER

Thank God for choosing to dwell among his people and accompany them in the middle of unfinished journeys. Ask him to deepen your attentiveness to his presence and your willingness to follow his leading.

ENCOUNTER 3

Will God Really Dwell on Earth?

PREPARE

Generations after the tabernacle, Solomon builds a magnificent temple, and God's glory fills it as it once filled the tent in the wilderness. But during the dedication, Solomon asks a remarkable question about the God for whom he has built this house. As you read, notice what Solomon says about God's greatness and what he asks God to do for those who approach him.

PONDER

1. In 1 Kings 8:27, Solomon asks whether God will really dwell on earth, acknowledging that even the highest heavens can’t contain him. What does this reveal about the One who nevertheless chooses to make his presence known in the temple? How does it deepen the portrait of God's greatness you've encountered throughout this Journey?
1. Solomon asks God to hear from heaven, his dwelling place, as He watches over this house. How do those two ideas fit together? What does this reveal about the relationship between God's transcendence and his attentiveness to his people? How might it shape the way you approach him?

READ

1 Kings 8:10–13; 8:27–30

LOOK AGAIN

Compare 1 Kings 8:13 with verse 27 (1 Kings 8:27).

Solomon speaks of building a house for God to dwell in while acknowledging that even heaven cannot contain him. The temple is not a place where humanity has managed to confine God. It is a place where God has graciously chosen to make his presence known.

Consider what this reveals about the difference between God’s presence and our attempts to contain or control him.

PRACTICE

Spend a few quiet minutes in prayer today. Begin by considering the greatness of the God whom heaven itself cannot contain. Then remember that this same God hears the prayers of his people.

Bring one concern before him, approaching with both reverence for his greatness and confidence in his attentiveness. Ask him to help you see his presence in the temple as a gift rather than a box.

PRAYER

Praise God for his incomparable greatness and his willingness to draw near. Thank him for hearing the prayers of his people. Ask him to deepen both your reverence and your confidence in his care.

ENCOUNTER 4

The Dwelling Place of God

PREPARE

The temple stood at the center of Israel's worship as the place associated with God's presence.

But when Jesus visits the temple in Jerusalem, he makes a surprising statement about its destruction and rebuilding. His listeners misunderstand him, and John later explains what Jesus meant.

As you read, notice what Jesus says about the temple, what John reveals about his words, and how Jesus later describes the relationship he desires with his followers.

PONDER

1. When Jesus speaks about destroying and raising the temple, his listeners assume he means the building. What does John's explanation reveal about Jesus' identity? How does this deepen your understanding of the God who once made his presence known in the tabernacle and temple? Which part of this is hardest for you to take in?
1. In John 14:18–23, Jesus promises that he will not leave his disciples as orphans and that the Father and Son will make their home with those who love him. What do these promises reveal about the relationship Jesus intends to establish with his followers?

READ

John 2:13–22 · John 14:18–23

LOOK AGAIN

Did you notice when Jesus' disciples finally understood his words about the temple?

John 2:22 says that after Jesus was raised from the dead, they remembered what he had said and believed the Scripture and his word.

Now return to John 14:20, where Jesus speaks of the coming day when his disciples will know that he is in the Father, they are in him, and he is in them.

Consider how Jesus' resurrection and his promise of continuing presence illuminate one another. What do they reveal about the new relationship he is establishing with his people?

PRACTICE

Remember Jesus's promise in John 14:18: "I will not leave you as orphans."

Spend a few moments considering what this reveals about his character and his commitment to those who follow him.

As you move through the day, return to that promise when you feel alone, uncertain, or tempted to think of God as distant.

PRAYER

Thank Jesus that he has not left his people alone. Praise him for revealing God's presence in his own life, death, and resurrection.

Ask him to deepen your understanding of what it means to belong to him and to live in the relationship he has made possible.

ENCOUNTER 5

Breath in the Bones

PREPARE

Ezekiel receives a vision of a valley filled with dry bones. God later explains that these bones represent Israel, a people devastated by exile who believe their hope is gone.

As you read, notice how God addresses their hopelessness, what Ezekiel is instructed to do, and what brings the bones to life. Then consider the promise through Joel that God will pour out his Spirit upon his people.

PONDER

1. God asks Ezekiel whether the dry bones can live. How does Ezekiel respond, and what does his answer reveal about his understanding of God's power? What do God's promises in verses 11–14 (Ezekiel 37:1-14) reveal about his determination to restore a people who have lost hope?
1. Ezekiel describes God placing his Spirit within his people (Ezekiel 37:14), while Joel promises an outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29) upon sons and daughters, young and old. What do these promises reveal about the kind of relationship God intends to establish with his people? How does the gift of his own Spirit deepen your understanding of his restoring love?

READ

Ezekiel 37:1–14 · Joel 2:28–29

LOOK AGAIN

Did you notice In Ezekiel 37:7–8 that the bones come together before they come alive? The bones acquire sinews, flesh, and skin, but there is still no breath in them. Only when breath enters do they live.

The Hebrew word *ruach* can mean breath, wind, or spirit. Ezekiel's vision draws on these meanings as God promises to put his own Spirit within his people.

Return to verses 9–14 (Ezekiel 37:9-14). What does this connection reveal about the difference between restoring what has been broken and giving life itself?

PRACTICE

Think of a situation in your life, your church, or the world around you that seems beyond repair. Rather than beginning with what you can accomplish, return to Ezekiel's answer in verse 3: "O Lord God, you know."

Bring that situation before God, acknowledging both your limitations and his power to give life. Spend a few moments praying for the work of his Spirit.

PRAYER

Thank God that his restoring purposes are not limited by human strength or possibility. Bring before him a place of discouragement or hopelessness, and ask him to deepen your confidence in his life-giving Spirit.

ENCOUNTER 6

Another Helper

PREPARE

On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus tells his disciples that he is going away. But he promises that they will not be abandoned and left alone.

As you read, pay attention to what Jesus says about the Spirit, where the Spirit will be, and what the Spirit will do. Notice also how Jesus describes the relationship between himself, the Father, and those who love him.

PONDER

1. Jesus promises to send the Spirit as another Helper (John 14:16) who will remain with his disciples forever. (Some translations say "Advocate" instead of "Helper".) What does this reveal about Jesus' continuing commitment to his followers? How do his promises about the Spirit deepen your understanding of the Shepherd who knows his sheep and calls them by name?
1. In John 16:13–14, Jesus says the Spirit will teach, remind, and guide his followers into truth, taking what belongs to Christ and making it known. What does this reveal about the Spirit's relationship to Jesus? How might it reshape the way you understand learning to recognize the Shepherd's voice?

READ

John 14:15–27 · John 16:12–15

LOOK AGAIN

Go back and look carefully at John 14:17. Jesus says the Spirit dwells with his disciples and will be in them.

Now return to verse 23 (John 14:23). Jesus promises that the Father and Son will come and make their home with those who love him.

Notice that Jesus isn't simply promising assistance from a distance. Through the Spirit, his followers are drawn into an extraordinary relationship with the Father and the Son.

How does that deepen your sense of what the Shepherd’s nearness means and the closeness God desires with his people?

PRACTICE

Choose one saying of Jesus you've encountered during this Journey—perhaps from John 10 or John 14.

Read it slowly, asking the Holy Spirit to deepen your understanding of what Jesus reveals about the Father's character.

Carry those words into your day. When an opportunity arises to respond to them, pause and consider how the Spirit may be helping you remember and follow the Shepherd's teaching.

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for promising the Holy Spirit and for not leaving his people alone.

Ask the Spirit to help you remember Jesus's words, recognize his character, and respond faithfully to his teaching. Pray for a growing attentiveness to God's presence within you and voice guiding you.

ENCOUNTER 7

Power from on High

PREPARE

Jesus told his followers to wait in Jerusalem for the promised gift of the Father. That promise arrives at the Festival of Pentecost.

As you read, notice the signs accompanying the Spirit's coming, how Peter explains what has happened, and who he says the promise is for.

PONDER

1. Wind, fire, and speech accompany the Spirit's coming at Pentecost in Acts 2:1–4. What do these signs suggest about God's presence and activity? How does this moment connect with what you've encountered about God's dwelling among Israel in the tabernacle and temple?
1. Peter explains Pentecost by quoting from Joel's promise that God will pour out his Spirit upon all kinds of people (Joel 2:28-32). What does the breadth of this promise reveal about God's purposes? How might it challenge assumptions about who can receive his Spirit and participate in his work?

READ

Acts 2:1–4; 2:14–18; 2:37–39

LOOK AGAIN

Think back to Exodus 40 (Exodus 40:34-38), where God's glory filled the tabernacle, and to the fire that accompanied his presence among Israel.

Now return to Acts 2:3–4. The disciples see what appear to be tongues of fire resting on each of them, and they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Notice the difference. God's presence is not being confined to another sacred structure. The Spirit is being poured out upon the gathered followers of Jesus. And notice, too, the end of Acts 2:39: the promise is “for you and for your children and for all who are far off.”

What does this connection reveal about the kind of people God is forming as his dwelling place?

PRACTICE

Take a few moments to consider what it means that God has given his Spirit to his people—including you, if you belong to Christ. You are not simply someone who admires God's work from a distance. He has invited you to participate in it.

Throughout your day, ask the Holy Spirit to make you attentive to his presence and willing to serve as a witness to Christ. Then look for one opportunity to speak or act in a way that makes something of Jesus's character known to another person.

PRAYER

Thank God for pouring out his Spirit on all kinds of people, including you. Speak honestly about fears or doubts that make it difficult to approach him with confidence. Ask the Spirit to deepen your trust in the Father's love and to lead you faithfully in the Shepherd's ways.

Ask him to fill you afresh, to open your eyes to the ways he’s at work in others, and to make you part of a community that bears witness to him.

ENCOUNTER 8

The Spirit Gives Assurance

PREPARE

Paul writes to believers who may wonder whether they truly belong to God. He describes the extraordinary relationship made possible through the Spirit. Those who belong to Christ are not merely people who follow God's instructions from a distance. They are God's children, indwelt and led by his Spirit.

As you read, notice what Paul says about the Spirit's presence, the relationship believers have with God, and the difference between fear and the confidence of belonging.

PONDER

1. In Romans 8:9–11, Paul says that anyone who belongs to Christ has the Spirit living in them. What does he describe as the significance of that presence? What difference does Paul say this makes? How does it deepen your understanding of the Shepherd's commitment to his people?
1. Paul describes believers Romans 8:15,"receiving the Spirit of adoption and crying out, “Abba, Father.”" In Galatians (Galatians 4:4-7), he describes the Father sending both his Son and the Spirit so that we might become his children. What do these passages reveal about God's initiative in bringing us into his family? How might this change the way you approach him when you feel uncertain, inadequate, or afraid?

READ

Romans 8:9–17 · Galatians 4:4-7

LOOK AGAIN

Did you notice that both Paul’s letters describe the Spirit crying out, “Abba, Father”? But look carefully at who is doing the crying. In Romans 8:15, we cry out by the Spirit. In Galatians 4:6, the Spirit of his Son cries out in our hearts.

These aren't competing descriptions. Paul shows us both sides of the relationship: the Spirit enables our response to God and is himself at work within us.

What does this reveal about the Shepherd's desire for us to know him—not merely as a distant Lord, but as our Father?

PRACTICE

Set aside a few quiet minutes to pray using the words "Abba, Father." Rather than beginning with requests, remember the relationship Paul describes. You are approaching God as one welcomed into his family through Christ and the Spirit.

If fear, uncertainty, or doubt arises, bring it honestly before him. Return to Romans 8:15–16 and allow Paul's words to guide your prayer.

PRAYER

Thank God for welcoming believers as his children and giving the Spirit who bears witness to that relationship.

Speak honestly about fears or doubts that make it difficult to approach him with confidence. Ask the Spirit to deepen your trust in the Father's love and to lead you faithfully in the Shepherd's ways.

ENCOUNTER 9

Abide in Me

PREPARE

Jesus uses a vine and its branches to describe the relationship he desires with his followers. As you read, notice what makes the branches fruitful, what happens when they become disconnected from the vine, and how Jesus connects abiding with his love, his words, and obedience.

PONDER

1. Jesus says that apart from him we can do nothing. What does the relationship between the vine and branches reveal about the source of spiritual fruitfulness? How might it challenge the ways you ordinarily approach spiritual growth? Where do you find yourself trying to produce results on your own?
1. Jesus connects abiding with his words remaining in us, with prayer, with keeping his commandments, and with remaining in his love. How do these belong together? What do they reveal about the kind of relationship Jesus desires with those who follow him?

READ

John 15:1–11

LOOK AGAIN

Did you notice how often Jesus uses the word abide in John 15:1–11? Depending on the translation, you may see remain instead. Read the passage again, paying attention to what Jesus says about abiding in him, his words abiding in us, and abiding in his love.

The Greek word John uses for abiding (*menō*) is closely related to the word for a dwelling place (*moné*). Return to John 14:23, where Jesus promises that he and the Father will make their "home" (*moné*) with those who love him. The noun and verb share the same root.

Now consider the connection: Jesus promises to make his home with his people, and he invites them to make their home in him.

How does this deepen your understanding of abiding—not simply as something you do, but as a continuing relationship of mutual dwelling and love?

PRACTICE

What would abiding in Christ look like in the ordinary rhythms of your life?

Think about the activities that fill your day—work, conversations, responsibilities, meals, or moments of rest. Choose two or three natural points in that rhythm when you can pause and remember Jesus' invitation: "Abide in my love."

In those moments, turn your attention toward Christ. Consider how his words and love might shape what you're about to do, and ask for his grace to respond accordingly.

The goal isn't to interrupt your ordinary life to spend time with Jesus, but to learn to live your ordinary life in communion with him.

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for inviting you to remain in his love. Speak honestly about the places where you rely on your own strength or lose attentiveness to his presence.

Ask him to deepen your communion with him and to make your life increasingly fruitful through his grace.

ENCOUNTER 10

The Fruit of the Spirit

PREPARE

Paul writes to Christians struggling with how to live faithfully. Some are tempted to rely on religious rules, while others misuse their freedom or habitually give in to their wrong desires.

Paul describes a different way of life: walking by the Spirit.

As you read, notice the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, and pay attention to how Paul describes the relationship between the Spirit's work and our response.

PONDER

1. Compare the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. What differences do you notice in the kinds of relationships and communities each produces? What does the fruit reveal about the character of the God whose Spirit produces it? Which items in either list do you recognize most readily in your own experience?
1. Paul says those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh (Galatians 5:24). Believers are to walk by the Spirit and keep in step with him. What does this suggest about the relationship between God's transforming work and our willing response? How might it change the way you approach an area of your life where you desire to become more Christlike?

READ

Galatians 5:16–26

LOOK AGAIN

Did you notice that in Galatians 5:19–23 Paul speaks of the *works* of the flesh but the *fruit* of the Spirit? The works are plural, a list of separate actions, while the fruit is singular—a unified character with many dimensions.

Think back to Jesus' image of the vine and branches in John 15. *Branches don't manufacture fruit; they bear it* only as long as they remain connected to the vine.

Now notice Paul's instruction in Galatians 5:16 to "walk by the Spirit." Recall God's walking in the garden and his promise to walk among his people. Here, that relationship takes shape in a life directed and transformed by the Spirit.

What might it mean to grow in Christlike character by abiding in him and walking with his Spirit, rather than trying to assemble these qualities through your own efforts?

PRACTICE

Consider the character the Spirit is forming in you. Which quality do you most desire to see grow in your life?

Think of a relationship or situation where that quality is especially needed. Rather than simply resolving to try harder, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what may be hindering its growth and to reshape your desires and responses.

As you move through your day, watch for an opportunity to practice that quality. When it comes, pause and deliberately respond in step with the Spirit.

Remember, fruit grows through abiding, but it becomes visible in how we live.

PRAYER

Thank the Holy Spirit for His work in forming Christ's character in you.

Confess where the works of the flesh remain evident in your life. Ask the Spirit to reshape your desires and habits, and give you grace to walk faithfully in step with Him.

ENCOUNTER 11

You Are His Temple

PREPARE

In the story you've traced, God's dwelling moves from the tent to the temple to Christ. Now Paul says something startling: God's temple is now his people. As you read, notice who Paul says the temple is and what he draws from that truth.

PONDER

1. Paul says God's Spirit dwells in his people and that they are his temple. What does it mean that the place where God lives is no longer a building but people? How should that shape the way you see yourself and other believers?
2. In 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, Paul connects the Spirit's presence with how we treat our bodies. In Ephesians 2:19–22, he describes believers being built together into a dwelling place for God. What do these passages say about the personal and communal sides of being his temple?

READ

1 Corinthians 3:16–17 · 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 · Ephesians 2:19–22

LOOK AGAIN

In 1 Corinthians 3:16, the "you" Paul uses is plural. He isn't only speaking to individuals; he's speaking to a whole church, the community together.

Then read Ephesians 2:21–22 again: "being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

Both are true: God lives in each believer, and he lives among his people together.

How might remembering both change the way you think about your own life, and about your commitment to the church?

PRACTICE

Do one thing today to honor God with your body as a place where his Spirit lives—rest, nourishment, movement, or care you've been neglecting.

Then do one thing to build up another believer, as part of the same temple: a message, a prayer, a word of encouragement, or a practical act of help.

PRAYER

Thank God for choosing to live in people rather than buildings. Ask him to help you honor him with your body and your life. Pray for the church, that God would build his people together as a place where his presence is known.

ENCOUNTER 12

God With Us Forever

PREPARE

We began this Journey listening to Jesus describe himself as the Good Shepherd whose sheep know his voice. Along the way, we've met the God who knows us, pursues us, calls us to holiness, and makes his home in us.

Now Revelation shows where it all leads. As you read, notice where God's dwelling is, who is there, and what has changed. Listen for echoes of Genesis 3:8, Psalm 23:6, and John 10:27.

PONDER

1. In Revelation 21:3, a voice declares that God's dwelling place is now with humanity and that he will dwell with them. How does this fulfill the story you've traced from the garden through the tabernacle, the temple, Christ, and the Spirit? What does it suggest about what God has wanted all along?
2. Think back over the Shepherd you've come to know in this Journey. Which part of his character, or which encounter, has most changed how you recognize his voice, trust his heart, or follow his ways? What do you want to carry forward?

READ

Revelation 21:1–5 · Revelation 22:3–5

LOOK AGAIN

Notice a few details in Revelation 22:3–5. There's no longer any curse. God's servants "will see his face." And his name is on their foreheads.

Compare this with Exodus 40:35, where Moses couldn't enter the tent because of the glory, and with Genesis 3:8, where the man and woman hid.

Then recall Revelation 21:4: God will wipe away every tear, just as in Revelation 7:17, where the Lamb at the center of the throne is the Shepherd.

The distance is gone. What hiding and hesitation could never reach, God's presence finally does.

PRACTICE

Take some unhurried time today to look back over your Journey. Page through the passages you've marked, the thoughts you've written, and the practices that mattered.

Choose one image of the Shepherd, one promise, and one next step. Write them down in a place you'll see them. Then take that step.

PRAYER

Thank God for the Shepherd who sought you, called you, and made his home in you. Tell him what you've discovered and where you've been changed. Ask him to keep forming you into someone who recognizes his voice, trusts his heart, and follows his ways until the day he dwells with his people forever.