

# THE ABIDING CHALLENGE

## WEEK FOUR - DAY ONE

### JESUS – THE TRUE VINE

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** John 15:1

**READING:** John 15:5; Jeremiah 2:21; Exodus 3:14; Colossians 1:16-20

## INTRODUCTION

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the Gardener.”* John 15:1 TLB

*“I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer.”* John 15:1 MSG

*“I am a true sprouting vine, and the farmer who tends the vine is my Father.”* John 15:1 TPT

Jesus begins one of His most amazing statements with an analogy: “I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Gardener.” Then, four verses later, He adds, “you are the branches...” This is such a simple declaration, yet you can spend a lifetime plumbing the depths of it. Let’s explore its meaning.

Several Old Testament references speak of Israel being a Vine that is planted and tended by God. Yet instead of bearing good Fruit, it was degenerate. Jeremiah 2:21 says it was a false Vine. Against this backdrop, Jesus speaks of Himself as the true Vine, the One Who bears good Fruit to His Father’s approval and glory. Now we understand a bit more about our verse and why Jesus said He is the true Vine. Jesus is the true source of life for us believers. We are Branches connected to Him, drawing life from Him as Branches draw the necessary nutrients to survive and flourish.

But there is even more in this short statement. When Jesus says that He is the vine, it is the last of a series of statements He makes in the gospel of John using the same form: “I am the Bread of life, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the Resurrection and the Life.” The repeated use of “I Am” calls to mind the name God gave to Moses by which to call Him: “I am who I am” Exodus 3:14 NIV. “I Am” was the name that God used to identify Himself as Yahweh in the Old Testament. It speaks of His eternal personal nature and His self-sufficiency. God does not have to go outside Himself for anything because He is self-existent and unchangeable. “I Am” also indicates that God is eternal and uncreated. In Hebrew, the phrase “I Am” is expressed as “Ehyeh” and can mean both “I am” and “I will be.”

Jesus is saying that He is the Vine from which all life comes. He is saying that He is and will be to you whatever you need; indeed, God the Son is eternal, self-sufficient, and unchangeable. He is the source of life. *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”<sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.* 1 Colossians 1:16-20

John 1:4 AMP further explains Jesus as the true Vine: *“In Him was life [and the power to bestow life], and the life was the Light of men.”*

Every life in the created order came through Jesus (John 1:3), and the new life of the Kingdom now flows out of Him as well. At first glance, we may assume that Branches bear Fruit, but in another sense, it’s really the Vine that makes it all happen. There is such interconnectedness that while we are doing the work, Jesus is doing the work in us as well.

Paul explains in Galatians 2:20 NIV that we have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer we living, but Christ living in us; and the life that we now live in the flesh, we live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved us and gave Himself for us. Jesus is the Vine, the true source of life for us believers. We are Branches connected to Him, drawing that life from Him as Branches draw the necessary nutrients to survive and flourish. Jesus underscored His point even more strongly in John 15:5 NIV, saying, “Apart from Me you can do nothing.” In other words, we depend on Jesus for everything, starting with our very lives: “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28 NIV) — and including our reconciliation with God through Him (Romans 5:10 NIV).

### **RESPOND**

- **HOW CONNECTED ARE YOU TO JESUS, THE TRUE VINE?**

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- **DO YOU LOOK TO YOURSELF, TO OTHERS, OR JESUS FOR EVERYTHING?**  
**HOW ABOUT FOR PROVISION OR TO MEET YOUR NEEDS?**  
If anyone other than Jesus, who and why?

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- **REPENT FOR ANYTHING THAT MAKES YOU DEPEND ON YOURSELF OR OTHERS.**

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## PERSONAL REFLECTION

**John 15:5; Jeremiah 2:21; Exodus 3:14; Colossians 1:16-20.**

Meditate on the reading scriptures above and let the Lord speak to your heart. To meditate, you need to memorize, analyze, visualize, and personalize.

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# **THE ABIDING CHALLENGE**

## **WEEK FOUR - DAY TWO**

### **A CALL TO ABIDE IN CHRIST – TRUE VINE**

**KEY SCRIPTURE: John 15:4-5**

**READING: John 15:4–5; Romans 8:1; John 10:28–29; 1 John 2:5–6**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

To “ABIDE” is to “Live in,” continue, or remain; so, to ABIDE in Christ is to live in Him or remain in Him. When a person is saved, he or she is “in Christ” (Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV), held secure in a permanent relationship (John 10:28–29 NIV). Therefore, ABIDING in Christ is not a special level of Christian experience; rather, it is the position of all true believers. The phrase “ABIDING in Christ” refers to an intimate, close relationship, not a superficial acquaintance. In John 15:4-5 NKJV, Jesus tells His disciples that drawing life from Him is essential, using the example of how Branches are united to a Vine: “ABIDE in Me, and I in you. As the Branch cannot bear Fruit of itself unless it ABIDES in the Vine, neither can you unless you ABIDE in Me. I am the Vine, you are the Branches; he who ABIDES in Me and I in him, he bears much Fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.”

Jesus warns us that apart from Him, we can do nothing. On our own, we are completely devoid of strength. We need an eternal source so that we can have abundant and continual Fruit. He also directs us to the method of our ABIDING. We build a life centered on our relationship with Jesus. We make time for Him every day. We meet with Him in His Word, meditating on it day and night. Jesus speaks the truth our souls need to hear. We take Him in like water for our thirsty souls. While the world seeks to conform us to its pattern, Jesus seeks to transform us by the renewal of our minds. ABIDING not only renews our minds — it also transforms our desires. We begin to seek more out of life, not less. We want His name to be glorified, His will to be done, and His kingdom to come. We hope to bear much Fruit, not for our own glory, but to glorify God in all that we do.

ABIDING in Jesus also connects us to other Branches. We are not meant to live apart from others any more than we live apart from Jesus. We need one another. We study the Word together. We celebrate communion together. We meet regularly, encouraging one another. We love one another. To ABIDE in Christ is to participate in the life of His body, which is the church.

When we ABIDE, we surrender to the will of God for our lives. When we ABIDE, we trust in Jesus, our true Vine. When we ABIDE, we will live by faith and not by sight. When we ABIDE, we will live or practice the culture of love. When we ABIDE, hope will come alive in us. When we ABIDE, obedience becomes easy. When we ABIDE, we will hunger for His presence. When we ABIDE, we will desire to be like Christ, because we sap His life (Vine) to flow into ours (Branch). When we ABIDE, we will live purpose-driven lives. When we ABIDE, we will live for God’s Glory. When we ABIDE, we will embrace the Person of the Holy Spirit. When we ABIDE, we will emulate Jesus’ relationship with the Father, our Master Gardener. In Christ — and Christ alone — we find our strength.

So, no matter how busy life gets or how many things you need to do each day, make time for Jesus. Do not delay. He is the only fountain that can fill the voids and longings of our souls. He is the only source that can satisfy. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. With Him, we can do all things (Philippians 4:13).

### **RESPOND**

How effectively are you staying, remaining, in Jesus as your source of life and growth?

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What could you do to stay in Him as the pressures of life seek to separate you from Him?

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## **EVIDENCE OF AN ABIDING LIFE**

### **PERSONAL LIFE REFLECTIONS**

**GOD’S WILL** - When we ABIDE, we surrender to God’s will for our lives.

**TRUST** - When we ABIDE, we trust in Jesus, our Vine.

**FAITH** - When we ABIDE, we will live by faith and not by sight.

**LOVE** - When we ABIDE, we live love, walk in love, and love God.

**HOPE** - When we ABIDE, hope comes alive.

**HUNGER** - When we ABIDE, we will hunger for God and His Presence.

**OBEDIENCE** – When we ABIDE, obedience comes easily.

**CHRISTLIKE** - When we ABIDE, we desire to be like Christ because we sap from His life (Vine).

**GOD’S GLORY** - When we ABIDE, we will live for God’s Glory.

**PURPOSE** – When we ABIDE, we will live a purpose-driven life.

**HOLY SPIRIT** - When we ABIDE, we will embrace the Person of the Holy Spirit.

**ABBA FATHER** - When we ABIDE, we will emulate Jesus’ relationship with the Father/

**From the list above, are you living an ABIDING life?**

- **Which behaviors/practices are evident in your life?**
- **Which ones are works-in-progress?**

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# THE ABIDING CHALLENGE

## WEEK FOUR - DAY THREE

### JESUS – THE TRUE VINE

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** Colossians 1:15-17

**READING:** John 14:6; John 10:11,14; John 11:25; John 10:7,9; 15:1,5

#### INTRODUCTION

ABIDING begins with seeing Jesus for who He is. When you know who Jesus is and His role in your life, it will be easier to ABIDE in Him as the true Vine. It is difficult to trust or entrust your life to a stranger. It is easier to trust and entrust your life to someone you know and love. Let's remind ourselves who Jesus really is and why it is important to ABIDE in Him.

**JESUS is Co-Creator.** Genesis 1:26 AMP says: *“Then God said, ‘Let Us (Father, **Son**, Holy Spirit) make man in Our image, according to Our likeness [not physical, but a spiritual personality and moral likeness]; and let them have complete authority over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, and over the entire earth, and over everything that creeps and crawls on the earth.’ ”*

**JESUS is Pre-Existent.** In John 8:58-59 NIV, Jesus claims pre-existence, an attribute of God: *“‘Very truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’”* In response to this statement, the Jews again took up stones to stone Jesus. In claiming pre-existence, Jesus applied a name for God to Himself: “I AM” (see Exodus 3:14 AMP).

**JESUS is the “I Am.”** In Judaism, “I Am” is unquestionably understood as a name for God. It conveys His dominion over all things, the source of His power, and His eternal nature: “I Am” means He is the self-sufficient, self-sustaining God Who was, Who is, and Who will be. Below is a list of Jesus’ seven “I Am” statements in the book of John:

**“I am the true vine.”** (John 15:1, 5 NIV) By attaching ourselves to Christ, we enable His life to flow in and through us. When we abide, we cannot help but bear fruit for the Father’s glory.

**“I am the bread of life.”** (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51 NIV) As bread sustains physical life, so Christ offers and sustains spiritual life.

**“I am the light of the world.”** (John 8:12 NIV) To a world lost in darkness, Christ offers Himself as a guide.

**“I am the door of the sheep.”** (John 10:7 NIV) Jesus protects His followers as shepherds protect their flocks from predators.

**“I am the resurrection and the life.”** (John 11:25 NIV) Death is not the final word for those in Christ.

**“I am the good shepherd.”** (John 10:11, 14 NIV) Jesus is committed to caring for and watching over those who are His.

**“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** (John 14:6 NIV) Jesus is the source of all truth and knowledge about God.

**JESUS is the only Savior.** (Compare Hosea 13:4 NIV with 1 Timothy 2:3 NIV). If Jesus is to be the Savior, then He must be God. Jesus had to be God because the Messiah was promised to be the “Holy One” (Isaiah 49:7 NIV). Since no one on Earth is righteous before God (Psalms 53:1 NIV and 143:2 NIV), God Himself had to enter the world as a human.

**JESUS is my Redeemer.** A redeemer is someone entrusted with securing one’s release from oppression, harm, evil, enslavement, or some other binding obligation. A redeemer restores the lost rights and freedoms of another by avenging any wrongs and paying the price that is required to set that person free. The role of “Redeemer” is uniquely assigned to Jesus Christ, who rescues believers “from the dominion of darkness” and delivers them into God’s kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13-14 NIV).

**JESUS is the Image of the invisible God.** “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.” (Colossians 1:15-16 NASB)

**JESUS is before all things** – “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:17 NASB) He is first and deserves the first place in your life. Before you were, Jesus was!

**JESUS holds all things together** – He holds nations, your life, your family, your home, nations, your marriage, your past, present, and future, creation, and every living thing that moves on this planet together.

**JESUS is Head of the Church (His Body)** – “He is also head of the body - the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He will come to have first place in everything.” (Colossians 1:18 NASB). The head is where the brain is to think, the mouth is to speak, the ears are to hear, the nose is to discern, and the hair signifies glory. And we are a part of His body and therefore depend on the Head, which is Christ, to live.

In conclusion, Who Jesus is qualifies Him to be the true Vine. It also qualifies Him to deserve your total trust, be trusted by you, and for you to ABIDE IN HIM.



## RESPOND

Jesus made seven “I Am” statements in the book of John.

- **“I am the true Vine.”** (John 15:1, 5) Is Jesus your true Vine? Yes / No
- **“I am the bread of life.”** (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51) Is Jesus your bread of life? Yes / No
- **“I am the light of the world.”** (John 8:12 NIV) Is Jesus your light in this dark world? Yes / No
- **“I am the door of the sheep.”** (John 10:7,9) Is Jesus your protection from predators? Yes / No
- **“I am the resurrection and the life.”** (John 11:25 NASB) Do you trust that Jesus’s resurrection is your assurance, that death is not final, and that you will live with Him in eternity when you die? Yes / No
- **“I am the good shepherd.”** (John 10:11,14 NASB) Is Jesus your good shepherd? Do you believe He cares and watches over you? Yes / No
- **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** (John 14:6 NASB) Is Jesus your source of all truth and knowledge about God? Yes / No

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

**John 14:6; John 10:11, 14; John 11:25; John 10:7,9; John 15:1,5**

**Meditate on the reading scriptures above and let the Lord speak to your heart.**

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# THE ABIDING CHALLENGE

## WEEK FOUR - DAY FOUR

### JESUS – THE TRUE VINE

### [HIS LOVE, SACRIFICE, AND SUFFERING FOR YOU]

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 53:3-5

**READING:** Isaiah 53:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 5:8; Mark 10:45

#### INTRODUCTION

*“He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”* Isaiah 53:3-5 NKJV

*“For our sake He made Him to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”* 2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

*“Although He was the Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered.”* Hebrews 5:8 EHV

The story of Jesus’s crucifixion has become so familiar to us Christians that it’s easy to take for granted what He endured on the cross when He paid the price for our sins. Jesus endured physical torment, emotional trauma, and spiritual agony. Jesus, “The Son of Man came... to give His life as a ransom for many,” says Mark 10:45 ESV. He knew what His mission was and was ready to lay down His life as a ransom payment for many. He was prepared to pay a costly price to redeem those who would believe in Him for salvation. Over and over, Jesus was deserted by His friends, slandered by the religious leaders, convicted unjustly by the government, and mocked by all sorts of people. Why did Jesus allow Himself to be subjected to such an ordeal? The book of Hebrews gives us the answer:

*“For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Hebrews 12:2 NIV

He endured all of this because of “the joy set before Him. I believe that joy was threefold:

#### **1. Pleasing the Father in total obedience.**

He knew His sacrifice would be pleasing to the Father, and that brought Him great joy (John 6:38).

#### **2. Saving you and me.**

We were the joy set before Him. If He chose us and loved us before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5), you can be sure He had you and me in mind, along with every other believer throughout time, as He hung on the cross. And that brought Him joy amid the agony.

**3. Restoring and reconciling us back in fellowship with the Father.** 2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV says: *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* And in 2 Corinthians 5:18 NKJV, we read, *“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”*

It is love that drove Jesus to the cross, and it is love that draws us into an ABIDING relationship with Him. John 15:9-10 NKJV says: “*As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; ABIDE in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will ABIDE in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and ABIDE in His love.*” Remember: The word ABIDE denotes remaining fixed or stable and enduring without yielding.

## RESPOND

Let’s examine these three scripture verses, considering the price Jesus paid for you to ABIDE in Him.

### ISAIAH 53:3-5 ESV

- a. Jesus was despised and rejected by men because of **you**.
- b. Jesus was sorrowful and acquainted with grief because of **you**.
- c. Many hid their faces from Him because of **you**.
- d. Jesus was despised and was not esteemed because of **you**.
- e. Jesus bore **your** griefs and carried **your** sorrows.
- f. Jesus was struck down, smitten by God, and afflicted because of **you**.
- g. Jesus was wounded for **your** transgressions.
- h. Jesus was crushed for **your** iniquities.
- i. Jesus was chastised for **your** peace.
- j. Jesus’ stripes were for **your** healing.

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### 2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

*“For our sake He made Him to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

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### Hebrews 5:8 ESV

*“Although He was the Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered.”*

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## PERSONAL REFLECTION

**Isaiah 53:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 5:8; Mark 10:45**

Meditate on the reading scriptures above and let the Lord speak to your heart.

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# THE ABIDING CHALLENGE

## WEEK FOUR - DAY FIVE

### JESUS – THE TRUE VINE VS. FALSE VINES

**KEY SCRIPTURE:** John 15:1

**READING:** John 14:6; John 15:5; Psalm 139:23-24

#### INTRODUCTION

*“I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Gardener.*

John 15:1 NIV

When Jesus said, “I am the ‘true’ vine,” that suggests there are also false vines. He also emphasized the word “the” in other words, He is the only true Vine. In John 14:6 TPT, Jesus explained, “I am the Way, I am the Truth, and I am the Life. No one comes next to the Father except through union with Me. To know Me is to know My Father too.” In verse 7, Jesus said, “And from now on you will realize that you have seen him and experienced him,” not “to know me is to abide in me.”

In the Bible, Israel is referred to as the “False Vine” in contrast to Jesus, Who is identified as the “True Vine.”

**Israel as the False Vine:** In the Old Testament, Israel was planted and tended by God, but instead of bearing good Fruit, it was degenerate. Israel was expected to be a nation of priests and bring the people to worship, but it failed to do so.

**Jesus as the True Vine:** In the Gospel of John, Jesus identifies Himself as the “True Vine” Who will bear good Fruit to God’s glory. Jesus’s statement in John 15:5, “I am the Vine; you are the Branches” (John 15:5 NIV), teaches that believers must ABIDE in Christ and bear Fruit to fulfill their purpose. There are other false vines, but before we identify them, let’s define what a vine is and its relationship to the branches. A vine is a plant that climbs by using tendrils or twining stems. It acts as the primary source of life and sustenance, providing the branches with water and nutrients necessary for them to grow and produce fruit, essentially serving as the “backbone” that supports the entire plant. This metaphor is often used in the Bible where Jesus is referred to as the Vine and believers as the Branches, signifying their dependence on Him for spiritual life. Consider these key points about vines and branches:

**Life source:** The vine provides the essential nutrients and water that the branches need to survive and thrive.

**Interdependence:** Just like a vine and its branches rely on each other, the metaphor highlights the importance of a close connection between the source of life (the Vine) and those who receive it (the Branches).

**Fruitfulness:** As in a growing plant, the Branches are expected to produce Fruit, which is seen as a representation of good deeds or spiritual growth, and this fruitfulness is directly dependent on their connection to the Vine. So, a false vine is anything you look to as your backbone: dependency, support, a sense of fruitfulness; anything you idolize or look to for sustenance other than Christ. Some examples of false vines may include your job or business; your finances or education; your family or other significant person, your government, and even your denomination or your faith [spiritual pride].

God is our source, and everything He created for us is a resource, an avenue, or a means. Remember, Jesus said, “I Am the TRUE VINE,” so everything else in your life that tries to take the place of Christ is a false vine (idol).

## **RESPOND FALSE VINES**

**ASK THE LORD TO SEARCH YOUR HEART AND REVEAL ALL FALSE VINES IN YOUR LIFE.** *“Search me, God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”* Psalm 139:23-24 NIV

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• **LIST ALL FALSE VINES** – Make note of anything or anyone who is vying for the role of Christ (Vine) in your life!

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## **PRAYER**

### **Prayer for A Deep Connection with Christ, the True Vine**

- Take some time and go before the Lord,
- Repent for all the false vines in your life.
- Release and renounce each of them.
- Ask the Lord to heal and restore your soul.
- Invite Him to come take His place in your heart – Enthroned!
- Ask Him to take over all the affairs of your life.
- Ask Him to draw you into a deeper union with Him – Intimacy!
- Thanks, Praise, and Worship Him!

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

**JESUS AS YOUR BACKBONE:** He is the “backbone” that supports your entire life and your dependence on Him for spiritual life.

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**JESUS AS YOUR LIFE SOURCE:** A life source provides the essential nutrients and water that the Branches need to survive and thrive.

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**JESUS AS YOUR ONLY DEPENDENT** – Are you interdependent on Him, just like the Branch relies on the Vine? How important is your relationship [close connection] with Jesus, the source of life?

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**IS YOUR FRUITFULNESS A RESULT OF ABIDING IN THE VINE?**

Branches are expected to produce Fruit, which is seen as a representation of good deeds or spiritual growth, and this fruitfulness is directly dependent on their connection to Jesus, the Vine.

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