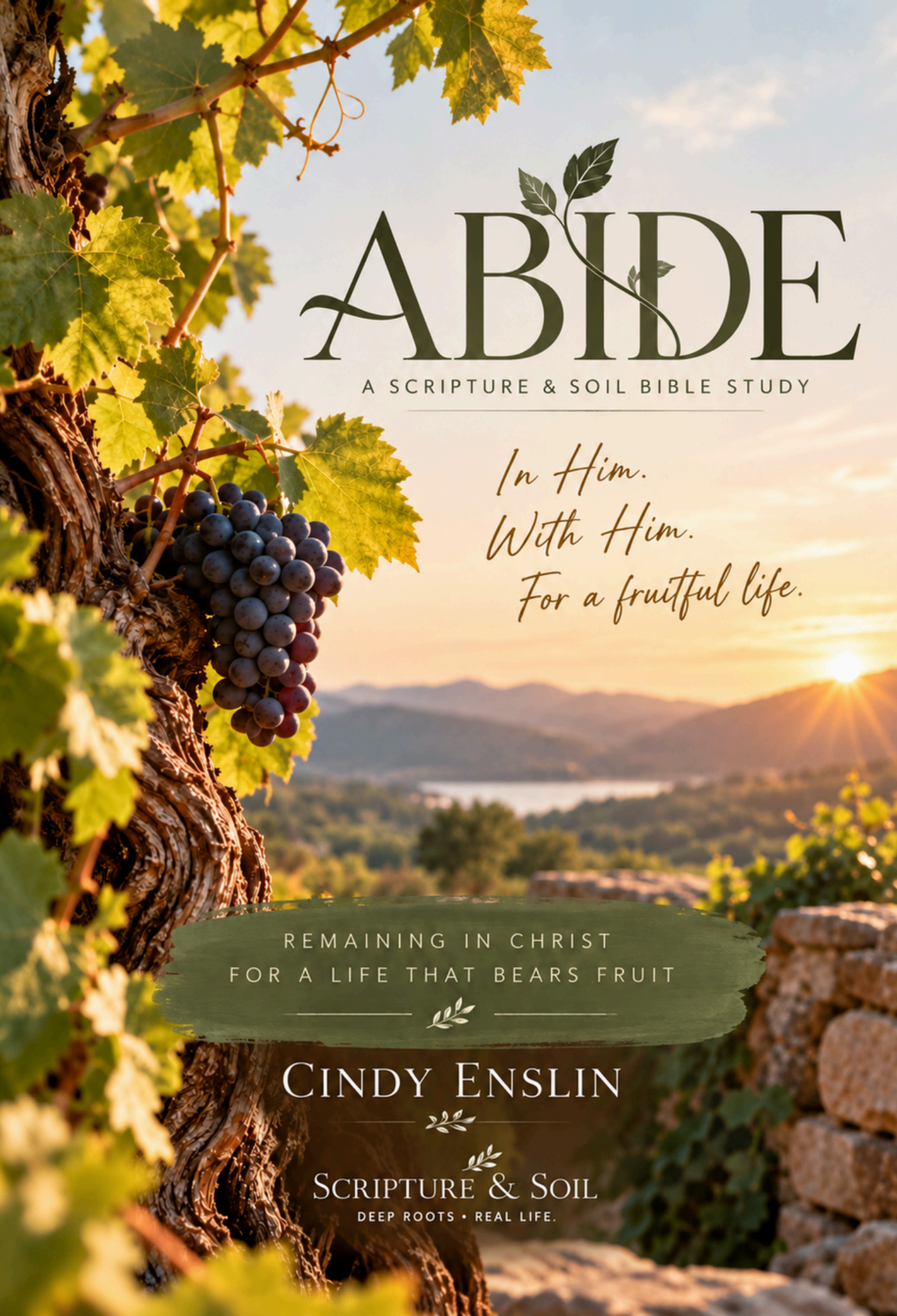

ABIDE
A SCRIPTURE & SOIL BIBLE STUDY
In Him.
With Him.
For a fruitful life.
REMAINING IN CHRIST
FOR A LIFE THAT BEARS FRUIT
CINDY ENSLIN
SCRIPTURE & SOIL
DEEP ROOTS • REAL LIFE.



ABIDE

A SCRIPTURE & SOIL BIBLE STUDY

Welcome

There is an invitation that runs through the story of discipleship. Before Jesus asked His disciples to carry His message, bear fruit, or participate in His mission, He called them to Himself.

Follow Me.

He invited them to walk with Him, listen to Him, learn from Him and share life with Him. Mark tells us that Jesus appointed the Twelve first "that they might be with Him" and then that He might send them out.

PRESENCE CAME BEFORE MISSION.

And later, as Jesus prepared His disciples for what lay ahead, His invitation became even deeper:

"Abide in Me."

The One who first called them to follow now called them to remain.

ABIDE is an invitation to explore what that means. It is a journey into the words of Jesus in John 15 and into the larger biblical story surrounding them. Together we will discover the Father who draws us to the Son, the Vine who becomes the source of our life, and the Father who lovingly tends His branches so that they bear fruit.

We will explore abiding, pruning, fruitfulness, love, obedience, prayer, joy and mission. But beneath every one of these themes lies one simple truth:

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE LIVED APART FROM CHRIST.

We do not remain in Jesus until we are strong enough to leave. We remain when He forms us. We remain when He prunes us. We remain when life is difficult. We remain when fruit begins to grow. And even when He sends us, we remain.

My prayer is that this study will not simply help you understand John 15 more deeply, but will draw you into a deeper awareness of the One who says:

"Abide in Me."

Let us open His Word, slow down, and learn what it means to remain.

IN HIM.
WITH HIM.
FOR A
FRUITFUL LIFE.

Cindy Enslin

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ABIDE

A SCRIPTURE & SOIL BIBLE STUDY

Introduction

CALLED TO HIM. INVITED TO REMAIN.



1 THE STORY BEGINS WITH GOD

The story of abiding does not begin with a branch trying to produce fruit. It begins with God. Throughout Scripture, God is the One who takes the initiative. Jesus says in John 6:44 that no one can come to Him unless the Father who sent Him draws them. Grace moves first.

> "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."
>
> JOHN 15:1

2 CALLED TO BE WITH HIM

When Jesus began calling His disciples, He did not begin by handing them a mission statement or giving them a list of tasks. He said:

> "Follow Me."
>
> MARK 1:17

Mark 3:14 gives us a remarkable glimpse into this purpose. Jesus appointed the Twelve "that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. Notice the order.

WITH HIM. THEN SENT.

Discipleship began with nearness.

3 A LIFE THAT REMAINS

Near the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus gathered His disciples and gave them an image that revealed just how dependent upon Him they would always remain: a vine and its branches.

> "Abide in Me, and I in you."
>
> JOHN 15:4

A branch does not receive life from the vine for a season and then graduate into independence. Its life exists because it remains connected. Its growth comes from that connection. Its fruit comes from that connection. And if it separates from the vine, it does not become independent — it withers.

4 MORE THAN A TASK

The Christian life was never meant to be lived apart from Christ. We can easily begin to treat the Christian life as though Jesus saves us, teaches us, strengthens us — and then sends us out to accomplish things for Him. But the picture Jesus gives us is radically different.

WE ARE NEVER SENT AWAY FROM THE VINE.

We are called by Him, formed in Him, sent by Him — and we continue to live from Him.

5 THE GOAL OF DISCIPLESHIP

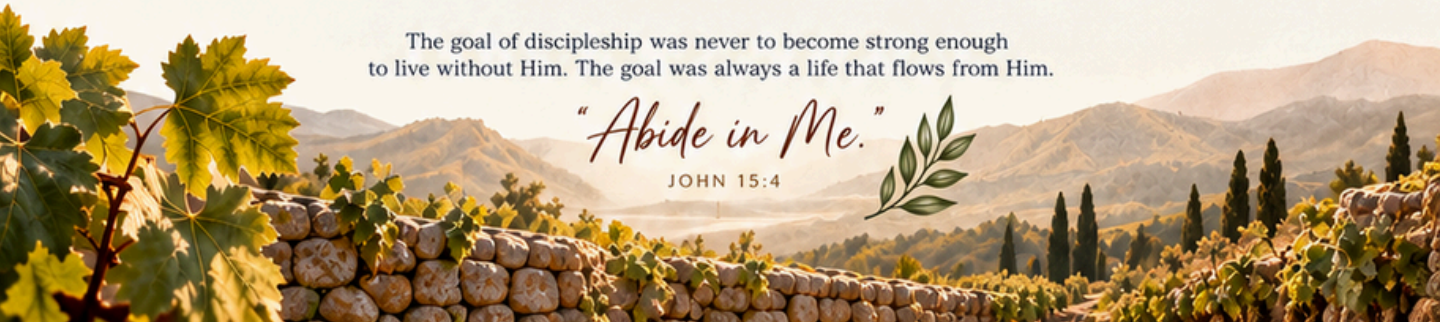
Christian maturity is not increasing independence from Jesus. It is deepening dependence upon Him. This changes how we understand fruitfulness, pruning, obedience, love, prayer, joy and mission. These are not disconnected Christian duties. They emerge from a life increasingly shaped by communion with Christ.

We do not abide until we are ready to be sent.
We are sent because we abide —
and we remain as we go.

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The goal of discipleship was never to become strong enough to live without Him. The goal was always a life that flows from Him.

> "Abide in Me."
>
> JOHN 15:4





1 DRAWN TO *Him*

GRACE BEGINS BEFORE OUR RESPONSE

JOHN 6:37-45 | JOHN 15:16

Before there was a decision to follow, there was a God who was already at work.

Jesus makes a remarkable statement in John 6:

> *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."*
> JOHN 6:44

The Christian story does not begin with humanity searching successfully for God. It begins with God taking the initiative. The Father draws us toward the Son. This matters deeply for our understanding of abiding, because abiding does not begin with our ability to hold tightly enough to Jesus. It begins with grace — with God moving toward us before we ever move toward Him.

THE FATHER GIVES.
THE FATHER DRAWS.
WE COME.
JESUS RECEIVES.

Grace is present before response.

IT BEGINS WITH GOD.

THE FATHER DRAWS US TOWARD THE SON.

GRACE MOVES FIRST.

1 THE FATHER DRAWS

The word translated "draws" in John 6:44 is the Greek word *helkō*, which means to draw, pull, or attract. In John 6, Jesus is explaining why coming to Him is ultimately dependent upon the Father's work. Just a few verses earlier He says:

> *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out."*
> JOHN 6:37

Notice the movement:

THE FATHER GIVES → THE FATHER DRAWS
WE COME → JESUS RECEIVES

Grace is present before response. This does not make our response meaningless. Jesus still speaks of coming, believing, hearing, and learning. But underneath our response lies the gracious initiative of God. We do not manufacture our way into relationship with Christ. We respond to the God who first draws near to us.

DIG DEEPER

Read John 6:37-45 slowly.
Notice every action attributed to the Father, every action attributed to Jesus, and every response described of the person who comes.

Then ask:

> *"What does this passage teach me about where my relationship with Jesus actually begins?"*

2 CHOSEN BEFORE FRUITFUL

This same pattern appears again in John 15. Later, after telling His disciples to abide in Him and bear fruit, Jesus reminds them:

> *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.."*
> JOHN 15:16

That order matters. Jesus does not say:
Bear enough fruit, and then I will choose you.

THE CHOOSING COMES BEFORE THE FRUIT.
THE RELATIONSHIP PRECEDES THE RESULT.
GRACE COMES BEFORE FRUITFULNESS.

And that protects abiding from becoming another form of spiritual performance. ABIDE is not: "Remain well enough, pray enough, obey enough and produce enough so that Jesus will keep you." It begins somewhere entirely different:

He called. He chose. The Father drew. We came.

3 FROM DRAWING TO DWELLING

The Father draws us to the Son. Jesus calls us to Himself. The disciples are appointed to be with Him. And then Jesus says: "Abide in Me." The direction has remained remarkably consistent:

TOWARD HIM. WITH HIM. IN HIM.

Abiding is not merely a Christian discipline we add to our lives. It is the continuing posture of a life that has been drawn into relationship with Christ. And perhaps that changes the way we hear the invitation: "Abide in Me." It is not the voice of a distant God demanding that we somehow find our way to Him. It is the voice of the One to whom the Father has already been drawing us saying:

Remain here.

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2 CALLED TO *Him*

FOLLOW ME

MARK 1:16-20 | MATTHEW 4:18-22 | LUKE 5:1-11

Jesus did not begin with a list of rules, a training programme or a mission statement. He began with an invitation:

"Follow Me."

MARK 1:17

The call to follow was a call to Himself. It was an invitation to leave what was familiar, step out in trust, and enter into a life of relationship with Jesus. He calls ordinary people — fishermen, a tax collector and a few others — and invites them to walk with Him, listen to Him, learn from Him and share life with Him.

"Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

MATTHEW 4:19

1 AN INVITATION, NOT JUST A TASK

When Jesus called the first disciples, He was not merely recruiting workers for a ministry. He was inviting them into His life. Matthew 4:19 shows the bigger picture — following Jesus would lead to participation in His mission, but it began with a personal call.

"Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

MATTHEW 4:19

The call to follow involves both a present and a future reality. It is an invitation to come now and a promise of transformation: "I will make you..."

2 LEAVING AND FOLLOWING

The disciples left their nets, their boats, their father, their tax booth. Following Jesus required a real response. It meant letting go of security, comfort and control. Yet they followed.

"Immediately they left their nets and followed Him."

MARK 1:18

Their response is a reminder that following Jesus always involves a decision, but it is a decision made in response to His call, not a decision driven by our own ability.

DIG DEEPER

Read Mark 1:16–20; Matthew 4:18–22 and Luke 5:1–11. Note the similarities and unique details in each account.

Then ask:

What does Jesus' call reveal about His heart, His kingdom and the kind of people He chooses?

3 A CALL TO BE WITH HIM

Mark 3:14 gives us remarkable insight into the purpose of this call. Jesus appointed the Twelve

"that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach."

MARK 3:14

Presence came before mission. The disciples were called to be with Jesus — to learn His ways, to see His character, to experience His love and to be formed by Him.

WITH HIM. THEN SENT.

4 HE STILL CALLS TODAY

The call to follow was not only for the first disciples. Jesus still calls people to Himself today. The invitation may look different, but the heart of the call remains the same: "Follow Me."

It is a call to a life of relationship, learning, obedience and mission — a call to walk with Jesus, to be formed by Him, and to participate in what He is doing in the world.

The same Jesus who called fishermen still calls today.

HE CALLS ORDINARY PEOPLE INTO AN EXTRAORDINARY RELATIONSHIP WITH HIMSELF.

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DEEP ROOTS REAL LIFE

PAUSE & Dig Deeper

DRAWN • CALLED • WITH HIM • ABIDING

Before we move deeper into John 15, pause and return to the Word. Trace the movement for yourself.

Read | John 6:37–45 | Mark 1:16–20 | Mark 3:13–15 | John 15:1–5

1 TRACE GOD'S INITIATIVE

Read John 6:37–45. Mark every action attributed to the Father and every action attributed to Jesus. Then mark the responses associated with the person who comes to Christ.

What does the passage reveal about where our relationship with Jesus begins?

2 FOLLOW THE INVITATION

Place these three statements beside one another and read the passages.

"Follow Me."	That they might be with Him."	"Abide in Me."
Mark 1:	Mark 3:14	John 15:4

What progression do you see? What does each statement reveal about the nature of discipleship?

3 LOOK AGAIN AT THE VINE

Read Psalm 80:8–19 and Isaiah 5:1–7 alongside John 15:1–5.

How does Israel's Old Testament vine imagery deepen your understanding of Jesus' declaration, "I am the true vine"?

4 FIND THE SOURCE

In John 15:1–5, underline everything the passage says about the Vine, circle everything it says about the branches, and place a box around every reference to fruit.

Where does the life of the branch come from? What can the branch produce apart from the Vine?

5 THINK THEOLOGICALLY

"Christian maturity is not increasing independence from Jesus, but deepening dependence upon Him."

Based on the passages you have read, why is abiding fundamentally different from spiritual self-improvement or simply trying harder to live for Jesus?

Pause & Reflect

Where have I begun treating Jesus as Someone I visit rather than the One in whom I remain?

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THE FATHER, *the Vinedresser*

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."
JOHN 15:1

Jesus' first description in the Vine discourse is not only about Himself, but He immediately points to the Father. The vineyard is not unattended. The Father is present, involved and purposeful in what belongs to Him.

The Father's work is not random, but intentional, for fruitfulness in His people.

IN THE WORD
WHAT DOES THE VINEDRESSER DO?

Read John 15:1–8.
Mark every reference to the Father / Vinedresser.

WHAT DOES THE FATHER DO?	WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT HIM?
John 15:1 He is the Vinedresser.	
John 15:2 He tends the branches.	
John 15:2 He prunes the unfruitful and cleans the fruitful.	
John 15:8 He is glorified by fruit.	

LOOK AGAIN
THE BIGGER PICTURE

Read John 15:1–2 and compare it with Isaiah 5:1–7.

What similarities do you notice between the vineyard owner in Isaiah 5 and the Vinedresser in John 15?

What important difference appears when Jesus identifies Himself as the True Vine?

Take Note:

John 15 gives us a picture of the Father's purposeful work in His people. It does not give us permission to label every painful circumstance in life as "God pruning me." We interpret pruning in the light of the whole counsel of Scripture and the character of the Father.

THE WORK OF A VINEDRESSER

In the ancient Near East, a vinedresser carefully cultivated, tended and pruned the vines to ensure health and fruitfulness. This gives us a window into the Father's heart and work in our lives.

OBSERVES
A vinedresser must know the condition of the vine.

TENDS
The vineyard receives deliberate attention and care.

PRUNES
Growth is intentionally directed toward fruitfulness.

CULTIVATES
Fruitfulness happens within the attentive care of the gardener.

BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT PRUNING ...

What changes when you realise that the hand which prunes the branch belongs to the Father who has been tending the vineyard all along?

The same hand that prunes, plants, protects and produces.

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