

Priorities of Faith

DAY 1 — LESS IS MORE

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” (Eph. 5:15, 16, ESV)

Is More Truly More?

Our lives are packed to the brim with so many things we want to pursue. In a society that is madly driven by consumerism and marketing, we are easily lured into believing that the more we have, the happier we are. Because of the tempting advertisements all around us, we wrongly desire to have it all. Sometimes we extend this thinking even to our work for God. We want to serve God, but at the same time, we don't want to miss out on anything else that crosses our path. And so we desperately try to harmonize our desire to serve God with the endless pursuit of more and more things. This leads to a whirlwind of activities. In a restless hurry, we fool ourselves into believing that we can follow God without letting go of everything else that vies for our attention. When we apply this false thinking to our walk with God, we are deceived.

Being Willing to Let Go

We cannot have it all—we cannot embrace both the world and its luring pleasures and the blessings of God. To think so is a fatal mistake. This mentality of consumerism infects our thinking and inflicts disastrous effects on our spiritual lives. We cannot have God on top of everything else, like icing on the cake, without purposefully making room for Him in the crowdedness of our hectic lives. We first must be willing to live with *less* to experience the blessings of things that matter *more*. We must let go of the things that distract us from God's presence and deplete our physical, mental, and spiritual energies. When we try to juggle jam-packed schedules at ever-increasing speeds as our to-do lists grow longer and longer, we quickly find ourselves exhausted physically and deeply depleted spiritually.

Live With Less

Is the clutter in your life holding you back from fully living for God? Crowded lives leave little room for the Creator of the universe. We must understand that less is more. We cannot experience more spiritual blessings, more prayer time, more of anything in our spiritual life if we only try to add it to an already full plate. Such overcrowding only leads to more emptiness. Instead, we must make an intentional decision to live purposefully with less so that we can enjoy more of what matters to God. Less is more!

Let's pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)

All prayer groups have different ways of praying together. We encourage you to spend the next 30-45 minutes in united prayer, in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads. We encourage short conversational prayers (1-3 sentences). This allows for more people to pray multiple times. Below are some examples of praying through Scripture based on the theme. You may pray through other passages also and include other subjects in your prayer time. See the Leader's Guide and World Church Prayer Requests for prayer ideas.

Praying God's Word — Eph. 5:15, 16

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."

"Look Carefully Then How You Walk, Not as Unwise but as Wise"

God, in our brokenness, we seek Your grace and provisions. We have filled our lives with too many activities and distractions. We need a reformation, a cleansing, a re-prioritization of the things that truly matter. Teach us what it means to live with less so we can focus on what matters most. We desire to be wise with wisdom from above. Guide us, we pray. Amen.

"Making the Best Use of the Time"

Precious Jesus, You always have perfect timing, and You know what needs to be said and done at each time in history. Thank You for Your perfect ministry to this world. Please teach us how we can make the best use of our time for You, especially in the context of the last days. Reveal to us where we waste our time and give us victory over the things we know are taking up too much space in our lives. Amen.

"Because the Days Are Evil"

God, we understand that the world is coming to an end very soon. The signs are all around us. Yet, at times we get so distracted by our busyness, or deceptions, that we forget that we are on the edge of eternity. Lead us into a total commitment to You and the ministry You have for us individually. Recalibrate our lives to be in tune with Your will. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Pray for regional and world church needs (see separate sheet with requests).

Local Requests: Pray for current needs of church members, family, and neighbors.

Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Fill My Cup, Lord (#493); We Would See Jesus (#494); Take Time to Be Holy (#500)

Other Songs: Change My Heart, O God; Seek Ye First; Into My Heart

Priorities of Faith

DAY 2 — THE DANGER OF BEING BUSY FOR GOD

“The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.” (Mark 6:30–32, ESV)

Busyness in the Work for God

Busyness is king in our world. Modern society and high-pressure consumerism have drilled one belief into us: the busier we are, the more respected we become. Busyness has become an indicator of our diligence and eagerness to do good and get ahead. But while we are busy *making a living*, we have forgotten to *live* and enjoy life, which is tragic. Perhaps even more tragic is the subtle danger that many committed followers of Christ have adopted: a mindset of busyness in their work for God. We often do it for the best possible reasons. We know that time is short. We want to accomplish the most for Him. Therefore, we strive to be busy. We want to be good stewards of our time and talents. It feels good to be busy for God, and sometimes we are tempted to think that God will reward our busyness for Him, only to discover that in our busyness for God, we have lost our living connection with our Redeemer. We are doing good things out of habit, not in the power of the Holy Spirit. And the busier we get, the more we deem ourselves in line with God’s purpose. Busy becomes the new norm. We are so busy glorifying how busy we are that we miss the moments in life that really matter. Busyness crushes our spiritual vitality. Hurry is the enemy of any love relationship, especially our relationship with the living God of Scripture. Love demands the attention of unhurried time.

The Duty to Rest

No wonder that the God of Scripture repeatedly calls us to stand still, to pause, to watch what He will do for His people (2 Chron. 20:17; Psalm 37:7). God encourages His children to un-hurry. He knows how quickly we lose sight of Him when our minds are wrapped in a whirlwind of human activities. One of the most beautiful insights into the danger of constant busyness for God is found when our Lord Jesus took the liberty in His own ministry to rest. Ellen White beautifully captures this important aspect of His ministry with His disciples: “They had been putting their whole souls into labor for the people, and this was exhausting their physical and mental strength. It was their duty to rest” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 360).

Busyness crushes our spiritual vigor and effectiveness. Hurry is the great enemy of our love for God. Rather than adding more items to our calendar, let’s intentionally reduce and make room for meaningful, soul-invigorating quiet time with our Creator and Savior.

Let’s pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)

All prayer groups have different ways of praying together. We encourage you to spend the next 30-45 minutes in united prayer, in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads. We encourage short conversational prayers (1-3 sentences). This allows for more people to pray multiple times. Below are some examples of praying through Scripture based on the theme. You may pray through other passages also and include other subjects in your prayer time. See the Leader's Guide and World Church Prayer Requests for prayer ideas.

Praying God's Word — Mark 6:30–32

"The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves."

"Come Away"

Father, we have been so busy doing Your work that we have forgotten it is your work. Thank You for reminding us of our need to come away, to take a break, to take a breath. Thank You that we are not machines but human beings. Forgive us when we have made our busyness an idol or when we have built our worth on how much we accomplish for You. Please turn our busyness into faithfulness. Amen.

"To a Desolate Place"

God, we have surrounded ourselves with too much noise, too many things, too many distractions. Whether we spend our time working for the church or engaged in other endeavors, we recognize our need to step away and spend time reflecting and resting away from the busyness of life. Please give us the grace needed to carve out time alone with You daily to breathe and focus on what truly matters. Amen.

"Rest a While"

Loving Jesus, when You walked this Earth, You understood humanity's need for rest. Thank You for exemplifying the balanced life we ought to live. Show us what proper rest looks like and how we can rest regularly to recharge and refocus. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Pray for regional and world church needs (see separate sheet with requests).

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Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: In the Garden (#487); Near to the Heart of God (#495); He Hideth My Soul (#520)

Other Songs: I Cast All My Cares Upon You; You Are My Hiding Place; All in All

Priorities of Faith

DAY 3 — THE BLESSING OF WAITING

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10, ESV)

The Biblical Virtue of Slowing Down

In an age of constant movement and noise pollution, nothing is more critical than stillness and quiet. In our hectic modern life, daily urgencies demand our attention. We have become accustomed to a fast-food mentality where we expect things the quickest possible way. We have forgotten how to wait patiently, and this impatience can leak into our spiritual walk with devastating effects. The visual impulses and acoustic distractions of this hyper-connected age make it even harder to slow down and become still. Learning to wait in quietness and focusing our thoughts on divine matters as we talk with God may seem like a strange practice for many people today, but it is a biblical virtue that needs to be revived. Cultivating a quiet space that is not crowded with other urgencies and preserving unclaimed time is crucial to connecting with God. To slow down, to sit still, to breathe, to remind ourselves of God’s tender care, to patiently wait, and not to get nervous if God does not immediately answer our prayers—these are arts that we need to learn afresh.

Benefits of Waiting

Throughout Scripture, we encounter God’s people in an attentive attitude of waiting. Biblical writers often express their waiting expectation with a question: “How long, O Lord?” (Hab. 1:2; Dan. 8:13). There is no hope without waiting (Titus 2:13). There is no endurance without waiting (Rom. 5:3, 4). There is no patience without waiting (Rev. 14:12). There is no longing without waiting (Psalm 42:1). There is no life without waiting. There is no human history without waiting. Waiting is part of human existence.

While waiting, we often focus on the problems that are unpleasant and hope they will pass away. But waiting does not mean sitting passively, doing nothing, and hoping that an unpleasant situation will somehow disappear. From a biblical perspective, the primary purpose of waiting is to bring to light who I am and who I am becoming while I wait. The experience of waiting confronts me with a significant spiritual decision: In my impatience and doubt do I question God’s goodness and omnipotence? Or do I recognize that in waiting, I am confronted with a unique opportunity that will help me to become the person God wishes me to be? Through the experience of waiting, I can become the person I would never have been otherwise.

If we look at it this way, waiting becomes God’s means of transformation, to change us according to His will. Thus, waiting is truly an expression of God’s goodness and grace. It helps us to become more like God, who waits in great patience, not wanting anyone to be lost who could still be saved.

Let’s pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**Praying God's Word — Psalm 46:10**

"Be still, and know that I am God."

"Be Still"

God, we have been restless. We have allowed ourselves to become so busy and stressed, thinking that if we are not, then we are somehow worth less. Oh, God, we need Your help to slow down, to learn to simply be still. Our minds have been wired by social expectations to always be racing toward something. Help us to appreciate the virtue of stillness and to gain the blessings it brings. Speak the words "Be still" into our impatient hearts. Amen.

"Know that I Am God"

Dear Jesus, the fact that You are our God and Lord has massive implications for our lives. Yet we seem hesitant to make You Lord of all of our life. We desire control, and we can't seem to stop doing what we are doing. Teach us that You, the Almighty Creator, the One who fills eternity, are Lord; that You are able to take us and our plans beyond anything we can imagine if we only become still, wait, and recognize You for who You are. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Pray for regional and world church needs (see separate sheet with requests).

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Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Have Thine Own Way, Lord (#567); Be Still, My Soul (#461); Leaning on the Everlasting Arms (#469)

Other Songs: In His Time; In Moments Like These; Open My Eyes, Lord

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DAY 4 — THE FREEDOM OF A FOCUSED LIFE OF SIMPLICITY

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matt. 6:16–18, ESV)

Fasting Makes Space

One way of creating space to live a life focused on God is fasting. Fasting means decluttering our minds and lives by deliberately making room for the movement of the Holy Spirit in us and by focusing on God and His Word. The Bible often mentions fasting in connection with prayer. Jesus fasted before He started His public ministry (Matt. 4:2; Luke 4:2). The apostles fasted and prayed to be guided by God (Acts 13:2, 3), and in the Old Testament, fasting was frequently practiced among believing men and women (1 Kings 21:9, 12; 2 Chron. 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Esther 4:3, 16; Isa. 58:6; Jer. 36:9; Dan. 9:3; Joel 2:12; John 3:5; etc.).

In contrast to wellness fasting, biblical fasting is not about observing a specific diet designed for weight loss and well-being. Instead, it is the conscious decision to abstain from food and distracting activities for a period of time to pray and commune with God. By temporarily giving up the familiar, we gain new spiritual freedom. During fasting and prayer, the focus of daily life changes: away from satisfying our own needs, away from our own works, and toward obedient listening to God. Biblical fasting expresses our desire to increase our dependence on God and pay attention to spiritual things that matter. This encompasses more than not eating; in fact, it challenges every area of our lives. In fasting, we acknowledge that we want to make space for God by reducing any distractions that crowd our attention and desire. We indicate that we want to seek and treasure God’s presence in our lives more than anything else.

Abstain and Include

How can we live this life of simplicity, where we learn to concentrate on things that truly matter? Just as we need to watch what we eat, we must be mindful of what we put before our eyes and what enters our ears. What we hear affects our thoughts just as much as what we see. What types of music, books, podcasts, or websites cause toxic thoughts or occupy your precious time with vanity? In addition to abstaining from certain things, you may need to deliberately include new habits to help you build up and create healthy, healing thoughts.

A life of simplicity, a mind unfrazzled, does not come from what the world tells us to pursue. A content heart comes from trusting God. When we learn to focus on Him, rather than on what others are doing, and when we practice letting go of things that distract us, we discover a simpler life of rest and peace with our Creator and Redeemer.

Let’s pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**Praying God's Word — Matt. 6:16–18**

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

“When You Fast”

Our loving Heavenly Father, thank You for providing us with whatever we actually need. In our excess and abundance, we often forget that too much of something is never good. Lord, fasting does not come naturally, and so we plead for Your strength to choose to abstain from indulgence and abstain from anything harmful, whether food, music, movies, shopping, etc. Also, show us how we can be more intentional in replacing what is not beneficial with what is. Help us to choose a holistic, healthy lifestyle. Amen.

“Like the Hypocrites”

Oh God, we desire a heart transformation. Forgive us for our hypocrisy, for whenever we say, teach, or preach one way, but live another way. We want to do the things we do for You from a heart that is surrendered to You, a heart that is motivated by love, a heart that is renewed by Your mercy and grace and the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit. May our fasting, and all our spiritual and daily activities, be a true expression of Your holy presence in our hearts. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

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Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: I Surrender All (#309); I'd Rather Have Jesus (#327); Be Thou My Vision (#547)

Other Songs: As the Deer; Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord; Unto Thee, O Lord

Priorities of Faith

DAY 5 — FOCUSING ON THINGS THAT MATTER IN OUR PRAYERS

“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’” (Matt. 6:9, 10, ESV)

A New Focus in Prayer

Focusing on God and things that matter is important in our prayer life as well. Often our prayers are weak and ineffective because they center only around ourselves. We pray to God about what *we* wish to have. We focus on *our* needs and the challenges *we* face rather than on God.

Prayer that is pleasing to God has a refreshingly different focus. The focal point is no longer our “want-to-have list” but God Himself. This perspective is the key to a new prayer experience. Prayer that is pleasing to God first recognizes God as my faithful friend whose companionship I seek because *He* is important to me, not because I want something from Him. *Who He is*, is much more important than the things He gives me. Knowing Him is the reason I want to talk to Him in the first place. Without Him, my life is de-centered and lacks the proper perspective. More important than anything I can ask for should be my desire to be with Him. His presence and who He is become the center of true prayer.

God-centered Prayer Transforms

Prayer that is pleasing to God begins with a desire to be with Him. It does not start with my wishes and requests. When my prayer requests are not anchored in this loving relationship with Him, they circle more around myself than God and His will. Once I understand that my relationship with God is the center of prayer, my requests gain a totally new focus. I begin to think and pray from God’s perspective. I start to view my requests, my wishes, my yearnings, and my whole life through His eyes. This perspective ennobles prayer. Remove the relationship aspect from prayer, and prayer becomes one-sided, selfish, and wrong. God-centered prayer frees my thoughts from revolving around myself. It allows me to become honest with God. In the light of His love and holiness, I begin to see myself differently. The true purpose of prayer is not the fulfillment of my wishes but deepening my relationship with the life-changing God. It is so easy to ask God for something before I have enjoyed His companionship.

When I consciously think about God’s character, His qualities, and what He is able to do, and when I express my adoration in my own words, my prayers are filled with spiritual life, admiration, and awe. No longer are my prayers centered on my problems but on God, who is the Master of all my needs. Such prayer lifts me up into His presence. It does not change God; it changes me. Why not start praying like that? It will change your life.

Let’s pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**Praying God's Word — Matt. 6:9, 10**

"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'"

"Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed Be Your Name"

Our kind Heavenly Father, You are God. You are almighty, all-knowing, wonderful, and magnificent. You are beautiful and marvelous. You are Truth, Righteousness, and Love. We desire to know You so much more. We want to daily appreciate Your character, Your abilities, Your personality, and Your will. Free us from our selfish focus, and make our prayers centered around You. Amen.

"Your Kingdom Come, Your Will Be Done"

Lord, Your kingdom is the only governmental entity we want to pledge our full allegiance to. You reign in love, truth, justice, and righteousness. Our ideas, plans, and methods are imperfect, but Your will is always perfect. Spread out Your kingdom in our hearts and lives today. Make known to us who You are. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

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Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Holy, Holy, Holy (#73); How Great Thou Art (#86); Sweet Hour of Prayer (#478)

Other Songs: Father, I Adore You; His Name is Wonderful; Is He Worthy?; Jesus, Name Above All Names

Priorities of Faith

DAY 6 — GRIT, PASSION, AND PERSEVERANCE

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” (Gal. 6:9, ESV)

Spiritual Grit

Grit is something we don't often associate with spiritual matters. But it is just as important in our daily pursuit of holiness as it is in other areas of life, from sports to learning to successful business transactions. Without grit, success is unlikely. Grit is the passion and perseverance of pursuing a goal we deeply care about. In order to reach our goal, we organize our lives in such a way that nothing distracts us. We need such grit in our spiritual walk with God, and we need it in a special way in our prayer life. Too often, we do not see the results of our prayer requests because we are not persistent in our prayers. Perhaps we get distracted or discouraged, or we give up in our hearts and do not believe that God can hear and act in ways far beyond our comprehension. In Luke 18, Jesus tells His disciples the story of a widow who persistently brought her case to an unjust judge. Although this judge had no regard for God or the woman, he eventually granted the widow's request because of her persistence (Luke 18:1-7). God, however, is not indifferent to our prayer requests as the unjust judge was. God is eager to help far more than we can even understand (Jer. 33:3).

What we need today, in our marriages, in our classrooms and dormitories, in our churches and homes, are people who pray. Not just those who talk about prayer, those who say they believe in prayer, or even those who can give nice explanations about prayer. We need people who actually take the time and pray!

Persistence

God does not work on the premise of faster and cheaper. Often in the great controversy between God and Satan we need persistent prayer. We must be passionate and persistent in our prayers because God's timetables often don't line up with our human understanding. God rarely takes the path of least resistance when working out His divine solutions. He is not interested in the easy way out but in the best way through! In our prayers, let us not settle for less or remain satisfied with shortsighted goals. God is pleased when we persevere in our prayers.

In the study room of my father, who was a successful evangelist and pastor, he had a quote from Ellen G. White that left a deep impression on me: “The greatest victories to the church of Christ or to the individual Christian are not those that are gained by talent or education, by wealth or the favor of men. They are those victories that are gained *in the audience chamber with God*, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 203, emphasis supplied).

Let's pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**Praying God's Word — Gal. 6:9**

"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

"Let Us Not Grow Weary of Doing Good"

Jesus, You are the most persevering Being in the universe. You did not give up in Your ministry of interceding and intervention. No matter what Satan and sinners throw at You, You are still You, and in love, You give Yourself to us. We are in awe, oh God. Teach us such spiritual, selfless persistence, especially in our prayer life. Make us prayer warriors who do not give up. Amen.

"In Due Season We Will Reap"

Our loving God, we praise You for allowing us to participate in Your mission on this planet. Thank You for the joy of service and the joy of engaging in the work of bringing people to You. Sometimes we feel discouraged and ready to give up, but we pray that You will give us the perseverance and spiritual grit needed to do the work You have called us to do. Thank You that You will bless and that we will see the fruit of this blessed ministry. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

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Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Work, for the Night Is Coming (#375); Trust and Obey (#590); Higher Ground (#625)

Other Songs: I Shall Not Be Moved; Dare to Be a Daniel; He's Able

Priorities of Faith

DAY 7 — THE VALUE OF BEING KIND

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35, ESV)

The Defining Quality

At the end of your life, if you could be remembered for just one character quality, what would that be? If just one trait depicted what you stood for and what you valued most, what would you choose? Many answers are possible, but one key aspect of God’s character should be reflected in all of our lives. In Titus 3:4, the Bible tells us that the kindness of God, our Savior, appeared to us when His love saved us.

Kindness! The kindness of God. Kindness is a universal language that can be understood by old and young, rich and poor, male and female, deaf or blind. Kindness knows no language barrier. It has a universal appeal, like music. A friendly smile, a helping hand in times of need, support when we feel discouraged, and a word of encouragement—all go a long way to make the hardships of our lives easier and more bearable. Kindness does not cost you very much, but it can make a huge difference in the lives of those who experience it, as well as in the lives of those who share it. Kindness is a win-win situation.

A Lovable Christian

Jesus knew that the kindness of His followers would serve as a powerful testimony of their faith. Shortly before His betrayal and death, after washing His disciples’ feet, Jesus told them, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Ellen White echoes this insight: “The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470). When we deal with others in kindness, our love can reach hearts in unique ways beyond the borders of religion, ethnicity, and social status. I believe God created us with the desire to receive and share kindness, and doing so reflects the character of the God we adore. In Jonah 4:2 we read that God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness. The theme of God’s lovingkindness permeates the entire Bible, Old and New Testament.

Our acts of kindness bring comfort and joy not only to human beings but also to the heart of God. Kindness does not focus on the negative situations around us or on other people. Instead, it mirrors God’s character and the way He deals with us. Let us focus on what matters in life and be known as people who are kind to all.

Let’s pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**Praying God's Word — John 13:35**

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

"By This All People Will Know That You Are My Disciples"

God, how often is our mission outreach unbalanced? We make theology, prophecy, fundamental beliefs, lifestyle, etc. the main focus. And while these things are good, true, important, and have a vital role and place, You clearly preached and, most importantly, lived out the reality that love is the strongest revelation of truth. Help us to live love and kindness together with truth, as You have for eternity. Amen.

"If You Have Love for One Another"

Dear Jesus, forgive us for our lack of selfless love. We truly have not fathomed Calvary-love. Forgive us for how we think about each other, what we say about each other, and how we treat each other. Please, Lord, fill us with Your divine love. Make us ambassadors of love and kindness. May people see Jesus in us and in how we treat each other. Bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, we pray. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

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Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Lord, I Want to Be a Christian (#319); So Send I You (#578); 'Tis Love That Makes Us Happy (#579)

Other Songs: Make Me a Servant; We Are His Hands; Micah 6:8 Scripture Song

Priorities of Faith

DAY 8 — PRACTICING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

“Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe.” (Heb. 12:28, NASB95)

An Affirmative Mindset

There is a mindset that matters significantly to God. In the Bible, we are repeatedly encouraged to practice this particular behavior because it is pleasing to God and a blessing to us. This attitude is gratitude. The book of Hebrews says, “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28, NASB). Gratitude pleases God and positively impacts our own lives because it helps us focus on what is positive. Like a muscle, it strengthens when you exercise it purposefully by acknowledging your blessings.

God invites His children to be people of gratitude. In 1 Thess. 5:18 (NASB), the apostle Paul writes, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” Giving thanks means remembering that someone has done something good for us and expressing that gratitude in thoughtful words. Developing an attitude of gratitude opens our eyes to beautiful details in nature and in other people. Gratitude allows us to be thankful for simple blessings without demanding perfection. This is important because, on this side of eternity, life will never run entirely smoothly. But life doesn’t have to be perfect to be enjoyed! Beauty meets and greets us in many ways. The fragrant smell of a flower, the grandeur of the starry sky on a clear night, the affectionate twinkle in a friend’s eyes—each reminds us of the beauty God has prepared for those who love Him.

A Shift of Our Attention

By practicing gratitude, we shift our attention from the imaginary things we don’t have to the real blessings we do enjoy. Gratitude grows out of an awareness of God’s generosity and involves a curiosity to explore the specific ways He reveals His love to us. Such gratitude widens the horizon of life and increases our capacity to experience pleasure and satisfaction.

Recent studies show that gratitude not only improves the well-being of the giver and the recipient but may also be good for those who witness it. Watching an act of gratitude between two people can cause observers to feel more warmth and affinity toward them both, according to a recent *New York Times* article.* Why not practice what God has called us to do: developing an attitude of gratitude that will change our encounters with the people around us for the better and make the world a bit more pleasant. Thank God for the gift of gratitude.

Let’s pray together.

*Christina Caron, “Gratitude Really is Good for You,” *New York Times*, June 8, 2023.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**Praying God's Word — Heb. 12:28**

"Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe."

"Let Us Show Gratitude"

Our loving God, we struggle when it comes to returning to You an appropriate amount of gratitude for all You have done for us. Eternity is not long enough to give You the thanks due. Yet, we pray You will be pleased with our thanksgiving. We also ask You to help us lay aside cynicism, judgmentalism, and pride, so we can recognize the blessings for which we can be grateful. Help us take time to express gratitude to You and others more than we express our complaints and requests. Develop in us a genuine attitude of gratitude. Amen.

"Since We Receive a Kingdom Which Cannot Be Shaken"

Lord, You are a generous God. Not only offering us salvation at an eternal cost to You but also giving us Your kingdom. We don't realize the extent of the privileges You provide for us. Please show us daily what an honor it is to be Your child. Thank You for this immense love and blessing. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Pray for regional and world church needs (see separate sheet with requests).

Local Requests: Pray for current needs of church members, family, and neighbors.

Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Joyful, Joyful (#12); Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart (#27); Come, Ye Thankful People (#557)

Other Songs: Give Thanks With a Grateful Heart; Thank You, Lord, for Saving My Soul; Count Your Blessings

Priorities of Faith

DAY 9 — THE BLESSING OF THE SABBATH

“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isa. 58:13, 14, ESV)

Sign of Our Identity

One blessing that truly matters for human life is Sabbath rest. The Sabbath day reminds us of our origin and that God is our Creator (Exod. 20:8-11). It also testifies to God’s graciousness as the loving Savior who delivered His people from the bondage of slavery (Deut. 5:12-15). As such, Sabbath celebration is a powerful sign of our identity as human beings. This identity is not derived from economic success or our level of productivity. Nor is our identity determined by whether we are employers or employees. The Sabbath is God’s invitation to rest in Him and enjoy what He has graciously provided.

The Sabbath, rightly understood, is an exercise in un-hurry. It teaches us to rest from rushing, performing, and achieving. It is a weekly declaration by my heart and mind that God is more important than my to-do list and my output. It acknowledges a shift in my priorities and makes visible my loyalties. Sabbath allows me to slow down and rest in God’s presence. It lets me enjoy His promise that He is enough. Although not engaging in mundane business activities on Sabbath is an important expression of our loyalty to God, resting in God’s love and care is far more than abstaining from work. Sabbath rest is fulfilled in our deliberate and meaningful communion with our Creator. When we learn to rest in the reality of God’s unfailing love, and when His goodness becomes our focus, we experience joy, shalom, and a desire to worship God with our entire being.

Thus, the joyful and faithful keeping of the Sabbath becomes a significant sign of who we are and whom we belong to. To practice Sabbath spirituality with moments of peace, joy, and calm requires much more than abstaining from work on the seventh day. It involves deliberate planning that prepares us during the week for the highlight of Sabbath shalom. As such, the Sabbath creates a meaningful counterculture that becomes visible in a distinctly different lifestyle. The Sabbath protects us from becoming driven by consumerism. Rather than striving to gain more and more in an endless race for power and dominion, we are invited to pause and honor God and His goodness and grace. This is a stark contrast to our pride and selfishness. By practicing the Sabbath, we become apprentices of Jesus Christ, who kept the Sabbath as was His custom (Luke 4:16).

To keep the Sabbath holy, to set it apart, and to dedicate it to God for His special purpose helps us to focus on what really matters in our spiritual walk with Jesus. Sabbath is not just a day to sleep in and do nothing; instead, it is a day to worship the only true God and thus becomes a meaningful sign that we have reoriented our lives toward the living God of Scripture.

Let’s pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**Praying God's Word — Isa. 58:13, 14**

"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

"Call the Sabbath a Delight"

Father, what an incredible gift You have given us in the Sabbath. Thank You that we are not destined for a life of 24/7 busyness but that we were created to experience communion, shalom, and peace with You in a special way every seventh day. God, too often, we have made Sabbath the busiest day of the week and have lost sight of its purpose. Forgive us, please. Teach us how to keep the Sabbath holy and make it a delight for all in our sphere of influence. Amen.

"Not . . . Talking Idly"

Jesus, we give You honor and glory, for You are holy and worthy. Thank You that the Sabbath is a day in which we are freed to focus on You, Your Word, Your Creation, and being a blessing to others. Yet, too often, we have spent these holy hours filled with idle conversations and activities that do not honor You. Please forgive us. Teach us how to make the Sabbath uplifting, beautiful, and holy. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Pray for regional and world church needs (see separate sheet with requests).

Local Requests: Pray for current needs of church members, family, and neighbors.

Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Day Is Dying in the West (#51); O Day of Rest and Gladness (#382); Wonderful Peace (#466)

Other Songs: This Is the Day; Surely the Presence of the Lord, A Temple Made of Time

Priorities of Faith

DAY 10 — BE RICH IN WHAT MATTERS — BE MORE ANALOG

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Heb. 10:24, 25, ESV)

Analog Spirituality

Biblical spirituality is analog, not digital. It is based on personal and tangible practices between real people and the living God. Tangible things are by their very nature analog, not virtual. While the God of the Bible is invisible to the human eye, He has called us to practice very specific analog things that express our relationship with Him. Take our works, for example. The practical things we do for God or for other human beings are always analog in character. Or think about our Sabbath observance. To keep the Sabbath holy involves several specific analog practices like rest or worship. Resting from our mundane activities and making choices that reflect the holiness of the Sabbath day is never a virtual experience; it is always analog. This holds true for worship experiences in fellowship with real human beings in church on Sabbath mornings. While it is possible to join a digital worship service via the Internet, the ultimate worship experience finds fulfillment in analog commitments and participation with real people in physical places. Practical and real acts of kindness, grace, forgiveness, compassion, awe, and adoration are meaningful only when we experience them analog. No virtual reality can replace or surpass an analog human touch, kiss, helping hand, the comfort of a heartfelt embrace, the joy of physically felt laughter, or the firmness of a welcoming handshake. You cannot celebrate the practice of foot-washing, or eating and drinking the emblems of communion virtually. What Jesus has instituted through His own example is to be remembered physically in a way we can touch and taste.

Tangible Faith

Even the practice of prayer and fasting, encouraged throughout Scripture, is an analog act in time and space. Our faith in God always has an analog dimension in which it becomes visible. While we human beings can do all kinds of things virtually, our relationship with God and the expression of our spiritual walk with Jesus can never be reduced to virtual reality.

Consider all the blessings that real-life, analog acts can bring. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver” (Prov. 25:11, ESV). A helping hand in support of a tangible need; a gentle touch that signals “You are not alone!”; the value of a handwritten postcard or letter that you hold in your hands; the extension of undeserved forgiveness and grace that results in a transformed personal relationship; the sharing of food with those who are hungry; the experience of hospitality by those who are traveling or do not have a place to stay. These and many other blessings want to be experienced analog. Enjoy the accomplishments of the digital world—but remember to be more analog in your faith.

Let's pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**Praying God's Word — Heb. 10:24, 25**

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

"Stir Up One Another to Love and Good Works"

God, Thank You for revealing to us what true love is. Thank You for becoming human and showing us through Jesus a love supreme. Thank You, that You stepped into our world and lived an analog life with us and for us. In this digital day and age, remind us of the absolute necessity to be engaged in the analog world with acts of love and kindness. God, we are too often addicted to our devices and the online world. Free us, so we can live for You by serving others. Amen.

"Not Neglecting to Meet Together"

Father, the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the isolation which the digital world had already been leading us into for years. The illusion of true connection through virtual means will never replace the importance and blessing of real face-to-face interactions. Now that the pandemic is over help us to prioritize direct human connections, showing kindness, love, care, and support through tangible acts, words, and touch. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Pray for regional and world church needs (see separate sheet with requests).

Local Requests: Pray for current needs of church members, family, and neighbors.

Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Blest Be the Tie that Binds (#350); Let Us Break Bread Together (#403); We Have This Hope (#214)

Other Songs: Bind Us Together, Lord; We Are One in the Spirit; Side by Side