

THE JOURNAL

A RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

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Pray



ON THE COVER

A relationship with Jesus is the foundation of everything we do or believe—but how can we deepen that relationship in the midst of our hectic lives? In this issue you'll meet several authors who share their "secrets" to a closer bond with our Lord.



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HOW LONG DO YOU PRAY FOR AN ANSWER?

HAVE YOU WONDERED how long you need to pray about something? I have—many times!

Here's one thing I've learned: if I don't have peace that I can stop praying, then I need to keep praying until I do.

It was the first Sabbath of camp meeting. The prayer team met to pray before the meetings started. We prayed for people to be blessed, for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, and for the programming and the technical equipment to work well.

We were just finishing when a pastor abruptly opened the door. "You can't stop praying!" he said. "We need you to pray for the audiovisual booth. It's all new equipment, and we can't connect to the satellite. It's almost time for us to go on air. Church members all over the conference will be waiting for the worship service."

We started praying again, pleading with God to make the satellite connection work. After about 15 minutes, one prayer partner said, "I think we have prayed enough. I need to see if my friends have arrived."

Through the years, I have found that people who pray are also people who witness and invite friends to camp meeting.

Everyone stood up to leave. I prayed silently, "Lord, are we done? Do we need to keep praying?" I had no peace about stopping. So, I said, "If anyone still has no peace about this problem, please stay by if you can and keep praying with me."

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving."

Colossians 4:2, NKJV

Four of us continued to pray. This time, we asked God how we should pray. We felt God was telling us to spend more time in praise and thanksgiving. We stopped asking and started worshiping God, thanking Him for the ways He had worked at previous camp meetings and praising Him for the people who had been converted.

One young man thanked God for the time He used him to answer someone's prayer at a previous camp meeting. Early on a Sunday, the day after the camp meeting closed, God woke him up. Walking around the campground, he asked God, "Why did you wake me up so early? What do you want me to do?" As he walked by the media booth he heard stressed voices, so he went in.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Our printer is out of ink, and we have hundreds of labels to make for copies of the sermons people ordered. And others will be anxious to buy copies before they leave for their homes," they answered.

Looking at the printer, the young man said, "I think my printer uses the same kind of ink cartridge." He ran back to where he was staying and retrieved the cartridge. It worked!


Now, with four of us still praying on another camp meeting morning, we thanked God for His perfect timing. We also started praying for God to send someone to the audiovisual booth who could fix the connection problem.

While we were praying, a man sitting in the audience began to have a strong urge to go to the media booth. He didn't know why and fought against it for about 15 minutes. *People will think I'm crazy*, he thought.

But God wouldn't leave him alone. He told his wife, "I have to go to the audiovisual booth." She asked why. "I don't know," he said.

He knocked on the door of the booth, feeling really uncomfortable. "What do you want?" someone yelled. He opened the door and said, "I know a little about this kind of equipment. Do you need help?" "Yes, we do need help!" they answered. In less than five minutes the problem was solved.

I could tell many more stories of persisting in prayer until we have peace about the problem. I find it is so important to ask God *how* I should pray. I ask Him what Bible promises I should claim for the situation or the person's life I am praying for.

In this issue you'll find several articles with creative ideas for praying and experiencing God. I pray that you will be blessed! 

Janet Page serves as associate ministerial secretary for pastoral spouses, families, and prayer.



FROM LUKEWARM TO *Spirit-led*

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS AGO I was sitting in my office on St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, Australia, with one dollar to my name. I had been searching for meaning and purpose all my life through many different religions, denominations, and lifestyles. That night I cried out to God in tears to reveal Himself to me and to tell me where His true church was. Two weeks later, while I was walking on Bondi Beach in Sydney, some young people gave me a book on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and their predictions about the kingdoms of the world until the end of time. I was challenged by what I read, and eventually I was led to receive Bible studies from a local Adventist pastor in Victoria. I became convinced that what I was learning was true, and six months later I was baptized.

I joined a local Adventist church that was mostly lukewarm. I sat in the pews weekly, paid my tithe when it was convenient, and even studied my Sabbath School lesson occasionally. There were very few victories over the besetting sins in my life. I prayed and read the Bible occasionally but never led one person to Jesus in 12 years. I thought I was OK because I was in God's remnant last-day church. I didn't realize that I was in Laodicea.

PRAYING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

It took another crisis for God to get my attention. I left the church for about a year, but I knew in my heart that the Adventist Church was God's last-day church, as described in prophecy. I started attending services again, but then something amazing happened. I reluctantly went to a revival weekend focusing on our need for the Holy Spirit. I hadn't previously heard much about the Holy Spirit from

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”

John 14:16, KJV

the pulpit, apart from the dangers of the counterfeit. The presenter for the weekend, Pastor Dennis Smith from the United States, challenged us to study about this wonderful gift, for which Jesus had prayed to His Father in John 14:16.

I began reading Pastor Smith’s 40-day devotional book, which challenged me to ask daily for the Holy Spirit. Initially I thought I had already received the Holy Spirit and that it was a one-time filling when I was baptized in water. But as I read the book of Acts and also Ephesians 5:18, where Paul commanded us to be filled with the Spirit or to “let yourself be continually and repeatedly refilled with the Spirit” (Johannes Mager), I came to a new understanding.

After that, everything changed for me. I had a greater desire to pray, a greater desire to read God’s Word and the writings of Ellen White, a greater desire to witness and lead

people to Jesus, and even a desire to preach about the things I had learned. The Holy Spirit also put a new desire in my heart for lifestyle changes, and, as Jesus promised, He began to give me victories over the besetting sins in my life. I could relate to Paul, who said about himself, “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31).

I remember a friend of mine saying that Satan can counterfeit the gifts of the Holy Spirit but not the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 5:9). I believe that we as Seventh-day Adventists must focus on receiving the true daily baptism of the Holy Spirit of Christ. When we do this, the Spirit’s fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, righteousness, goodness, and so forth will be seen in the lives of God’s people and the church.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Adventists have been preaching for more than 150 years about our need for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit in order to share the three angels’ messages of the everlasting gospel in power. But the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy plainly tell us that unless we grow into the likeness of Jesus through the early rain of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18) and are

PROMISES TO PRAY FOR RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Luke 11:13: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

Acts 5:32: “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

John 7:37: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”

John 7:38, 39: “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive.”

Galatians 5:16: “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

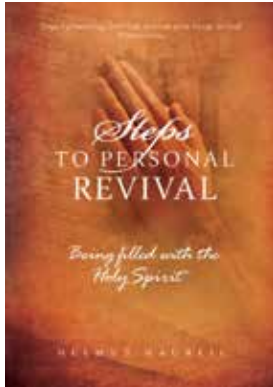
Ephesians 3:16, 17, 19: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts

through faith: that you, being rooted and grounded in love . . . may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Ephesians 5:18: “Be filled with the Spirit” or “let yourself be continually and repeatedly refilled with the Spirit” (Johannes Mager, *Auf den Spuren des Heiligen Geistes*, Lüneburg, 1999, Seite 101).

Acts 1:8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me.”

From Lukewarm to Spirit-led



Editor's Note: For further study on being filled with the Holy Spirit, you can download free the book *Steps to Personal Revival* at <https://steps-to-personal-revival.info/>

transformed into His image from glory to glory—which has been available since Pentecost—the latter rain will not fall, and many of us will miss out.

Seventh-day Adventists have been given the last message for the world, and we all want to go home to heaven—but we have work to do. Just like the early disciples, we need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to witness and finish the work: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8, NKJV). It always amazes me when I read what Jesus said in John 14:12, that we will do the same works as Jesus. He then goes on to explain that He and the Father will dwell with us and in us through the Holy Spirit so we will be able to do the same works that He did.

I believe God is preparing us now to receive the true early-rain daily baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is “Christ in you,

the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27, NKJV), to prepare us for the latter rain and the harvest. We have a choice: we can either be like the wise virgins of Matthew 25 who had extra oil in their lamps and vessels—or like the foolish virgins who missed out on this blessing out of fear of being deceived by Satan’s counterfeit spiritual activities or by their Laodicean attitude of “I’m OK and in need of nothing.” We must trust God’s Spirit and His Word to guide us into the truth of the Spirit’s working.

For seven years now, I have been praying daily for the promises in God’s Word, and everything has changed!

Download for free Baptism of the Holy Spirit: A 10 Day Devotional Study by Dennis Smith at <http://youth.adventist.org/books>

***Colin Hone** has been representing Holy Spirit Ministries for the past 10 years and preaching in many conferences around the world on revival and reformation. Colin was also the prayer coordinator for the North New South Wales Conference from 2016 to 2018. He is currently planting a church on the Central Coast in New South Wales, Australia, with a team of full-time LE young adults in OYIM (One Year in Mission). This article originally appeared in Adventist Record, August 9, 2016.*

MARRIED TO A PASTOR?

Discover a safe place to fellowship, ask questions and learn from others on Facebook and Twitter!

Official groups for Ministry Spouses online: [ministerialspouses](#) [@ministryspouses](#)



Special Quotes

There is no danger that the Lord will neglect the prayers of His people. The danger is that in temptation and trial they will become discouraged, and fail to persevere in prayer.

—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 175

When we are humble and contrite we stand where God can and will manifest Himself to us. He is well pleased when we urge past mercies and blessings as a reason why He should bestow on us greater blessings.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 513

As you ask the Lord to help you, honor your Savior by believing that you do receive His blessing. All power, all wisdom, are at our command. We have only to ask.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 514

We, too, must have times set apart for meditation and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the power and efficacy of prayer as we should.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509

From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells.

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 300

In praying for the sick, it is essential to have faith; for it is in accordance with the word of God.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16. So we cannot discard praying for the sick, and we should feel very sad if we could not have the privilege of approaching God, to lay before Him all our weaknesses and our infirmities, to tell the compassionate Savior all about these things, believing that He hears our petitions. Sometimes answers to our prayers come immediately; sometimes we have to wait patiently and continue earnestly to plead for the things that we need, our cases being illustrated by the case of the importunate solicitor for bread.

"Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight," etc. This lesson means more than we can imagine. We are to keep on asking, even if we do not realize the immediate response to our prayers. "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Luke 11:9.

—*Prayer*, p. 234

In praying for the sick, it is no sign that we are unbelieving to keep saying, "If it can be for Thy glory, to do this for us, we will praise Thee, and magnify Thy holy name."

—*Upward Look*, p. 375

Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish.

—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509

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

He is well pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name. They may expect large things if they have faith in His promises.

—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668



FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

WHILE STUDYING THE BOOK OF JOB, I was intrigued by this verse: “So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did regularly” (Job 1:5, NKJV).

When was the last time you asked God to forgive someone else?

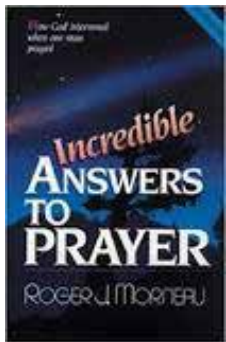
- Did you ask Him to turn away from punishing those who deserve it and instead to forgive and redeem them?
- Did you offer burnt offerings, so to speak? Did you cry out for the sins of others?
- Did you intercede on behalf of someone who doesn’t know that you are pleading their case before God?

Is it possible that such an exercise has merit, both for the person you pray for and for you personally?

As Jesus is dying on the cross He makes an extraordinary statement of intercession and forgiveness for the sins of His executioners: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Amazing! He chooses to forgive those who haven’t even asked to be forgiven! Jesus’ plea is not only for His executioners but for the sins of all who—by their transgressions—have nailed God to the tree.

On my heart lately has been the thought of crying out to God as Job did, asking His forgiveness not only for my sins but for those of a child, a spouse, a brother or sister—even those who seem to have no remorse or no desire to walk with God. Some of these people might laugh in scorn or even become angry that they are being lifted before God in intercessory prayer.

Scripture convinces me that the prayer of a sinner on behalf of another sinner is a transformationally powerful and effective gift from God—a gift that I have failed to exercise regularly.



Editor's Note: A powerful book on prayer is *Incredible Answers to Prayer* by Roger J. Morneau.

Your faith in action will not be in vain.

Recently, one of my prayer partners shared this: “I was cleaning out a long border of flowers along our fence. It was taken over by weeds and a tiny little vine that starts at the base so thin and pretty and innocent but grows and twists and overpowers and chokes.

As I weeded, the fence row became my altar for confessing the sins of my children. With each yank at weeds and vines, I cried out to God. The dirt that crept under my fingernails and covered my hands and knees seemed so fitting. Afterward, the reward [was] a tidy, clean fence row . . . with plants that had breathing room and nothing choking them.”

Job is not the only one who interceded for others. Many prophets and leaders in the Old Testament pleaded for God to be merciful to others who weren’t even asking for grace. Throughout Scripture we see a pattern: an impossible problem presents itself, often a problem caused by the sins of a person or the nation, and then one of God’s leaders lifts up a prayer for forgiveness and restoration. Wonderfully, God responds to these prayers with abundant mercy!

Is God placing anyone on your heart to cry out for? It may be a person in your family, a church member or coworker, or even your nation. Your faith in action will not be in vain. God hears and is moved by humble hearts. ■

Malinda Haley is a pastor’s wife, the mother of three grown children, a maternal/infant care nurse, and—above all—His humble servant. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, Steve, who is president of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference.

TIPS TO SURVIVE THRIVE

Have you ever heard a person say, “I read the Bible every day, but I don’t pray very much. I know I should pray more.” Perhaps Bible reading can be a very real way to pray. Have you ever prayed about the various things on your heart and then said, “I want to hear from you, Lord . . . I’m waiting. I’m waiting.” But you hear nothing?

Prayer is to be a conversation with the Lord—a time for us to speak to Him and hear Him speak to us. The Bible is the Word of God; therefore, His voice comes to us through His written words. Words are one of the most important ways to communicate.

So before starting to read the Bible, we can ask the Lord to show us things to “talk about” with Him. When we come to a certain verse we might think, “Oh, Lord, I love this! Thank you for saying that to me!” God has just spoken to us through the reading of His Word. We may respond to Him by dwelling on the verse and sharing more of our thoughts with Him. He may even reveal other things as we meditate.

After reading on, we might find another passage in which God speaks to us. This time we might say, “Oh, dear Lord, this verse is talking about me! This is one of my besetting sins. Please help me to be an overcomer. I want to be free of this sin.” We can then think of Him being in heaven, pleading on our behalf and offering His help to us. Continuing to read, we may find help in overcoming, or comfort in knowing He understands and offers forgiveness, help, and love.

We can also ask God to help us remember our morning prayer experience as we go through the day, and we can meditate on our conversation with Him as we work. He can keep bringing new thoughts on the subject to our minds. God longs for conversation with us! He wants to be our Friend, and His words in the Bible are His personal words to us. ■

Evelyn Griffin is a retired pastor’s wife. She and her pastor-husband have four children and 14 grandchildren.



EIGHT CREATIVE PRAYER DATES

FRESH WAYS TO CONNECT

AFTERNOON WAS GIVING WAY to evening as three carefree college girls and their significant others wound their way up a pleasant, pre-chosen hillside that faced the soon-to-be-setting sun. It was the start of a carefully planned progressive date.

Cheerfully playing the part of a restaurant server, a friend with towel over his arm waited undetected behind nearby shrubbery. He was ready to emerge at the proper moment with an elegant tray containing fine grape juice and glasses for the double trio. From there the group continued to a nearby home, where the chattering guests savored a mouthwatering pasta dish served on an elaborately set table. The details of the dessert segment have been forgotten, but the memories made that evening still linger.

New, shared experiences tend to draw us closer; similarly, simple strategies for our personal prayer time can spark exciting, bonding moments in our friendship with our Almighty God.

With a heart bursting with love, God is tirelessly, intentionally, pursuing every single person on our planet, yet He still craves alone time with you and me. God promises this: *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you”* (James 4:8, NKJV).

CONVERSING WITH GOD

While serving overseas as a single young adult, I sometimes felt far away from home and family. Walking out to the sea, I would talk aloud to God in desperation, my voice lost in the sound of the crashing waves. He became so real to me. Since then, the sense of wonder at the reality that I can actually converse with God has not dimmed.

“Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise.”

Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, p. 251

Here are some easy-to-implement ideas that have been the catalyst for pulling me into Jesus' presence time and time again.

1. **Go outside.** George Mueller, widely known for providing for thousands of orphans by prayer and faith alone, confessed that he often found his mind wandering when he prayed. One day he walked outside as he read and prayed—and everything changed. In the booklet *Soul Nourishment* First he writes, “I have likewise combined the being out in the open air for an hour . . . for two hours, before breakfast, walking about in the fields. . . . I find it very beneficial to my health to walk thus for meditation before breakfast.”

A well-known preacher tells about a young man who struggled to keep focused in prayer. His prayer would go something like this: “Dear Lord, bless Aunt Mary, Mary, Mary, marry . . . Lord, whom should I marry?” Sound familiar? Ellen White writes, “We should accustom ourselves to often lift the thoughts to God in prayer. If the mind wanders, we must bring it back; by persevering effort, habit will finally make it easy” (*Messages to Young People*, p. 115).

Personally, I find that there are fewer distractions when I'm out in nature,

and I can detect God's voice much more easily. Jesus, of course, was our example of communing with God in nature alone: “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (Mark 1:35, NKJV).

2. **Praise.** The best 10-step exercise program is to take 10 steps out your front door, and then you'll be well on your way to a great walk and too far to turn back. It's the same with praising God. Especially when you don't feel like it, start off by writing down or saying aloud at least 10 things for which you are thankful. Or start a list of names and/or attributes of God, such as King of kings, Shepherd, Father, and Friend. Consider how He will be *your* King, Shepherd, Father, or Friend in the situation you're currently facing. According to a 2012 study, grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and report feeling healthier than other people.¹ “Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise” (White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251).
3. **Try a new prayer pattern.** Often it is helpful to use a planned prayer progression. The ACTS prayer is popular: **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, and **S**upplication. A book called *The Hour That Changes the World* by Dick Eastman revolutionized my alone time with Jesus with its 12 prayer steps and accompanying verses on which to meditate. You can spend one minute on each step and pray for 12 minutes, or five minutes on each and pray for an hour. The steps, in order, are Praise, Waiting, Confession, Scripture Praying, Watching, Intercession, Petition, Thanksgiving, Singing, Meditation, Listening, and Praise.² I have these connected in a chain from one text to the next in my Bible. Honestly, when I start I get so caught up in the initial ones that I very seldom get through all the steps!
4. **Sing.** Whether you wake up on the wrong side of the bed or not, sing! “Song is a weapon that we can always use against discouragement” (White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 254). Today I lingered at the piano, singing praises and confessions to Jesus through familiar songs. I came away with a soft heart and a lighter load. Even if you “can't sing,” perhaps you can play an instrument or listen to a song and sing along with it as you commute. Many songs can also be prayers.





5. **Create.** Like the psalmists, or Mary when she was the soon-to-be mother of Jesus, or Hannah when pleading to God for a child, we, too, can pour out our hearts to God in poetry. Consider recording your prayers word-for-word or in point form in a prayer journal. It's fun to go back later and scribble a checkmark and the date that God answers specific prayer requests. Alternately, record memorable experiences with God and answered to prayer in an "Ebenezer Book," which might be a notebook or journal, a file on your computer, or a voice recording app. This idea comes from 1 Samuel 7:12: "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us'" (NKJV).
6. **Pray Scripture.** Why not pray the powerful prayers in Scripture as your own? Take the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), for example. Pull apart every phrase, talking it over with God. There are also the prayers of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10) or the book of Psalms. You can also choose a scripture and pray God's words back to Him, earnestly asking Him to make the promise true in your life. "Every promise in the word of God furnishes us with subject matter for prayer" (White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 133).
7. **Use Spirit of Prophecy prayers.** Here are some examples: "Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul" (White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 159). "Let your daily prayer be,

'Lord, teach me to do my best. Teach me how to do better work. Give me energy and cheerfulness'" (White, *Child Guidance*, p. 148).

8. **Listen quietly.** "Christ is ever sending messages to those who listen for His voice" (White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509). Don't you wonder what those are? I do. We can find out! While we need to exercise wise caution on this point, if we wait, anticipating that God will speak, He will direct our thoughts to scriptures with which He wants to impress us. "Truly my soul silently waits for God" (Psalm 62:1, NKJV). Often at the end of my prayer time I ask, "Lord Jesus, what do You want to tell me today?" Into my thoughts come such words as these: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1, NKJV). "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4, NKJV).

"What else, Lord?" I ask.

"Walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7, NKJV). "I will do for and in you more than you could ask or imagine" (see Ephesians 3:20).

"Thank you, Jesus," I smile. "You are carrying me today."

In the gift of Jesus, God has lavishly poured out all of heaven for us. He wants, invites, and urges us to pray always. Different prayer strategies keep our friendship with Jesus vibrant as He convicts, comforts, and encourages us. As we look forward to new adventures in prayer and spend alone time with Him, we will see changes in our lives.

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."³ Let's take hold of the unbelievable opportunity we have for fellowship with the Almighty God. Why wait? I invite you to set aside time for a prayer date with Jesus today. 7

¹ Study published in "Personality and Individual Differences," reported in *Psychology Today*, April 3, 2015, "7 Scientifically Proven Benefits of Gratitude," by Amy Morin.

² Verses for the 12 Steps: Ps. 63:3; Ps. 46:10; Ps. 139:23; Jer. 23:29; Col. 4:2; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2; Matt. 7:7; 1 Thess. 5:18; Psalm 100:2; Josh. 1:8; Eccl. 5:2; Ps. 52:9.

³ Alfred Lord Tennyson.

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Love Is Like That

WHEN RUTHIE AND I WERE DATING, I was pastoring a church in central Ohio. Ruthie was working in nursing administration in a large hospital. It was a time of high intensity for both of us, but we worked hard at staying in touch. As often as I could, I'd stop by the hospital cafeteria and we'd have lunch together. Sometimes I'd stop by her place for supper, or she'd stop by mine. Sometimes a friend would invite us both to their house for a meal.

Because we both had early morning duties, we would always head for home before it got late. But inevitably, we'd hardly be inside the door before one of us would phone the other. We might talk for an hour. She was busy; I was busy. I was a single dad with two teenage boys. Yet we made time to stay connected. Looking back on that time, I can understand the reason: we were very much in love. We took every opportunity to talk. We wanted to get better acquainted. I wanted to know her; she wanted to know me. We both wanted to know us. Love is like that.

Not long ago, nearly half a century later, we decided to sell our second car. Not only was it an expense but it made it convenient for us to do a lot of things separately. I could run errands in one direction and she in another. With one car, we run our errands together. Now I understand there are seasons in every family's journey where this is not a practical idea, but for us it was. Going together takes twice as long and it's twice as much fun. Love is like that.

MOTIVATED BY LOVE

Our new strategy has also given me a more measured response to the inquiry I sometimes hear: "Pastor, it just seems like I don't have as much time as I would like for my quiet time with God. We've got jobs and kids and

deadlines and chores and more. I'm just really busy." But love makes a way. Love measures priorities. Love sets boundaries. Love drives us to keep in touch.

Think about how this mindset of love reshapes our prayer vocabulary. Who of us hasn't said something like this: "Wow, I pray through my needs and wants, and before you know it, I'm out of things to pray about." But what if our driving motive is to get acquainted with our amazing God? To ask Him questions and wait for His answers? Have you ever prayed, "God, what's on Your heart tonight? What do You want me to pray about? Who has a special target on their back that You want me to pray for? What is there in me that You want to clean up, that maybe I don't even see yet?" We're going to need a bit more time than just the generic "bless the missionaries and colporteurs in the foreign fields" prayers that so easily fall from our lips. Praying isn't really about getting things from God; it's about getting better acquainted. Love is like that. ■

Don Jacobsen is married to Ruthie, and the couple has two grown sons, two adult granddaughters, and six great-grandchildren. Don is a native of the Pacific Northwest and has served as an ordained clergyman for more than 60 years. This article appeared initially as a blog (Hope-Heals.org/sermon-starters-and-blogs) on the NAD Prayer Ministries website, June 4, 2019.



JOYFUL STRESS

"It's not stress that kills us. It is our reaction to it."

Hans Selye

THE CLOSER WE GOT to the event, the more anxious I became. There were so many "what ifs."

What if the main speaker didn't present the topic well? She was a new addition to our church and not even a member yet. But her personal health journey story was so impressive. At least the bits and pieces she told various ones of us in casual conversations had sparked enthusiasm in our church's health committee. And she had agreed to tell her story at our next health program. But that was several months ago. Would she even show up?

What if the nine really good cooks from our church, whom we had invited to bring food to the program, ended up bringing recipe samples that weren't appealing to the audience? We had planned to focus on a plant-based diet as our main theme, as it was the diet of choice of our guest speaker—a diet that had significantly improved her life.

What if there wasn't enough help to set up and decorate the fellowship hall? Or to clean up afterward?

What if we set up too many or too few chairs? Or made too many or too few handout materials? Or prepared too little or too much food and drink?

What if NO GUESTS SHOWED UP? Our previous two health programs had resulted in only a handful of attendees. We, as a committee, were discouraged, but not defeated. In spite of our uncertainties, anxieties, confusion, and, yes, all the stress involved, we were determined not to give up. But we decided we would wait for some sort of inspiration to hit us before planning another event.

Then along came the new woman with a life-experience story that blew us away.

LIFE = STRESS

We hear a lot about stress and how detrimental it can be to health, well-being, and longevity. However, stress is a normal part of life, and our bodies were designed to experience and deal with it. With any significant change in life or routine, our bodies can react physically, mentally, and emotionally to help us survive and adjust. Stress can be helpful by keeping us watchful and alert, motivated and ready to avoid negative situations and danger.

Stress that is detrimental to health is that which is ongoing without relief. This then becomes a situation called "distress," which over time disturbs the body's internal balance, resulting in a host of potential physical and emotional problems such as headaches, gastric upset, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, sleep disturbances, depression, panic and anxiety attacks, and a worsening of pre-existing diseases.

Chronic and debilitating stress is directly associated with six of the leading causes of death, including heart disease, cancer, lung illnesses, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide.

STRESS CAN = JOY

Seriously?

Yes, indeed! Just take a look at some of the high-stress occupations people actually choose as their life work:

1. Emergency department nurse or physician
2. Emergency medical services (ambulance drivers and rescue personnel)
3. Police officer
4. Air traffic controller
5. Firefighter
6. Commercial airline pilot
7. Educator (classroom teacher)
8. Social worker
9. Active military personnel
10. Event planner
11. Powerline installer
12. Parent

We could ask ourselves, “Who in their right mind would choose the high stress, extreme challenges, and periodic dangers of any of these professions as their lifetime occupations?” It comes down to joy of service, love of a challenge, personal fulfillment, opportunity for continued learning, and outcome reward. Also, what would be detrimentally stressful to one person may not be so to another.

STRESS BUSTERS

Any occupation or situation life throws at us can contain its own level of stress. The key to surviving, whether the stress is short-term or continual, is *how we choose to deal with it*. A few suggestions that have proven helpful:

- Start each day with God. Read, pray, and enjoy His presence and peace. Take time to worship with others.
- Look for ways to infuse joy and expressions of thankfulness into the events of each day.
- Keep a sense of humor. Laugh a lot.
- Reframe problems as challenges.
- Do something to brighten someone else’s day.
- Keep a clear conscience.
- Communicate. Be more assertive (in a nice way). Discuss your opinions, ideas, and feelings with others.
- Make your health a priority. Take a walk. Breathe fresh air. Eat good-for-you food. Get enough sleep. Drink water. Watch your weight. Keep in touch with family and friends. Take time to relax. Get those annual checkups.
- Set limits. It’s OK to say “No” to requests that would create excessive stress in your life.
- Make time for hobbies, creativity, and learning something new.
- Surround yourself with order and splashes of beauty.
- Seek counseling if overwhelmed.



THE REST OF THE STORY

The day of the event finally arrived. All our fears and anxieties melted away as one by one each component of the program fell effectually into place.

The decorators and room arrangers made

everything look welcoming and attractive. All the cooks arrived with their wonderfully prepared and appetizing dishes—and all plant-based. At the end there were only crumbs left of the delicious meal. The guest speaker arrived on time. Her presentation was well-prepared and effectively delivered. Many people came, and a good clean-up crew stayed behind to put everything back in order.

WARNING: JOYFUL STRESS CAN BE ADDICTIVE

We basked in the many comments of appreciation for a helpful, educational program. Our health committee came away from the experience highly excited and eager to begin planning something similar for the near future. Lessons learned would make aspects of the task easier. And the stress from all the work involved and the uncertainties and fears of failure had been forgotten in the JOY of ministry and of accomplishment.

Success had been worth it all!



INFORMATION SOURCES:

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Rae Lee Cooper is a registered nurse. She and her husband, Lowell, have two adult married children and three adorable grandchildren. She spent most of her childhood in the Far East and then worked as a missionary with her husband in India for 16 years. She enjoys music, creative arts, cooking, and reading.



Fasting and Prayer COULD SAVE YOUR MARRIAGE

**A COUPLE'S
JOURNEY
FROM
DESPAIR TO
RESTORATION
IS AMONG
THE STORIES
TO EMERGE
FROM 100
DAYS OF
PRAYER 2015.**

I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN PRAYER, and I have always prayed. However, it wasn't until the past few years that I've really discovered the power available when we, in earnest faith, cling to the promises of God's Word in prayer.

Because of how prayer has changed my own life, it was a great privilege to write for the 100 Days of Prayer initiative on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist world church. It was also thrilling as testimonies started coming in from around the world on how the 100 Days of Prayer helped change lives. If there is going to be a greater corporate revival and outpouring of the Holy Spirit, there needs to be a greater personal revival as well.

Some testimonies from the 100 Days of Prayer in 2015:

Gemechis Jafe, president of the South West Ethiopia Field: "My words cannot explain how much I am blessed so far by the 100 Days of Prayer. It is really uplifting the soul. I have announced [the program] to all churches in my local field, and most of them are praying. Some of you are expecting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after 90 days of prayer, but I am getting filled starting from the first day of prayer. Praise the Lord!"

A young man named Eden from the Philippines: "God allowed me to subscribe to this 100 Days of Prayer initiative because He knows that I'm searching for Him. Honestly, I have changed a lot. He changed me by His Word. I have grown spiritually, and He has changed my life completely. I know that He is preparing me for His second coming."

Angela from Ghana: "This 100 Days of Prayer has been so much of a blessing that I wish we could do it every day forever."

Many tweeted pictures of prayer groups of all ages and sizes (#100days2015), while one girl from Sydney, Australia, shared how God brought her church's choir into greater unity as they prayed together during the 100 Days of Prayer.

However, one of my favorite testimonies of how God changed lives during the 100 days comes from South Africa. The testimony started when I received a personal e-mail from a stranger. I will call her Laura to protect her privacy. Her e-mail was essentially a desperate plea for help:

"I need someone to pray for me and advise me on how to fast and pray. Please pray for me. My marriage has serious problems, which is leaving me emotionally broken. And because of that, I am struggling spiritually. I feel I am going deeper and deeper into things which are not good. I can't pray. I can't read the Bible no matter how much I want to (I know it sounds crazy!). I don't know who I am anymore, and my life is falling apart."

Join us for 100 days of prayer starting March 27
Revivalandreformation.org/100days

I wrote Laura back, promising that I would be praying for her. I also sent her some of my resources on fasting and prayer. After that, I didn't hear more from her, so I wasn't sure what had happened.

Then she e-mailed again. I had no idea what to expect as I opened the message. Would she be asking for more prayer? Did she have more issues she needed to tell me about?

Her e-mail flooded my heart with joy as I once again saw that we serve an amazing God who hears and answers prayer. The following are excerpts from her e-mail, which she gave us permission to publish anonymously:

"For six years my husband and I have been struggling with many issues in our marriage. We tried getting counseling from our pastor. It didn't work. We went for marital counseling. It didn't work. Marriage seminars didn't work. Nothing was working.

"From outside, our marriage looked perfect. People would tell us how wonderful we were. But inside we both knew that we were not connected. Our love had faded away, and this problem affected me seriously. Knowing that I was not loved by my husband made me feel empty, sad, very confused, and very lost—to the point where I could not pray.

"The more I was not praying, the more horrible I felt! I was becoming more and more depressed!

"To give you some background, my husband is more spiritual than [I am]. He has been my spiritual mentor since we met. Many things I know about God are from him. When I told him about your blog on 100 Days of Prayer regarding prayer and fasting for 21 days, he was very skeptical. He gave me all the reasons why I should not do it. But I was not convinced. I knew for sure I needed to do it right away, even if it meant I would do it alone.

"It was a Sunday early in the morning when I told my husband to pray for me because I was going to start the 21 days of prayer and fasting. Guess what? Without any hesitation he told me, 'I am doing it with you!'

"That was my first miracle! You see, before we got married we used to pray together, but after our wedding everything faded away. One would hardly see us praying together. Now my husband and I were going to do 21 days of prayer and fasting together! It was like a dream come true for me!

"And so we began. During the 21 days of prayer my greatest request was 'Lord, change my life. I want to fall in love with Jesus again.' I knew very well that if I don't have the love of Jesus in my heart, the love of my husband that I was looking for could never fill my heart.

"The Bible says in Psalm 38:4, 'Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.'

"God is so good and so merciful; His love endures forever. I can testify to it. God has healed my marriage and brought peace and happiness into our marriage again. My husband is crazy in love with me, more than you can imagine.

"But the greatest miracle God did is the work He did in my spiritual life. I fell in love with the Word of God again, and I love being in His presence.

"If I wrote everything that has happened, it would take forever. Just know that I am not the same woman who wrote you that first message a little over a month ago! Jesus came to my heart, and this time He has come to stay."

Of course, we can't take any credit for what God did for Laura and her husband. All we can do is share what God has done in our own lives. But as we share our testimonies, God can use this to help others. That's one reason why I'm sharing Laura's testimony. Her story is evidence of what the Holy Spirit can do in the heart of a couple that is truly seeking the help that only God can give.

Yes, prayer works, and fasting and prayer could save your marriage.

Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White tells us, "Every promise in the Word of God is for us. In your prayers, present the pledged word of Jehovah and by faith claim His promises. His word is the assurance that if you ask in faith, you will receive all spiritual blessings. Continue to ask, and you will receive exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. Educate yourself to have unlimited confidence in God. Cast all your care upon Him. Wait patiently for Him, and He will bring it to pass" (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 71).

Another 100 Days of Prayer will begin on March 27, 2020. Join millions around the globe in pleading for this experience as we move through the General Conference Session and into the future!
revivalandreformation.org/100days



Raluca Ril was a blogger for the 100 Days of Prayer 2015 devotionals. This appeared in Adventist Review online June 3, 2015.



“Great” GRANDPARENTS

BEING A GRANDPARENT is an amazing opportunity to pass on your love and spiritual heritage to the next generation, just as Lois in the Bible shared her faith with her daughter, Eunice, and grandson, Timothy. Today many grandparents also become step-grandparents when children remarry, or even surrogate parents when their grandchildren need another family for a while.

Whatever your family situation, you can have a significant role in your grandchildren’s spiritual development. You can pray, share your faith stories, open their eyes to God’s love, help them to discover the wonder in God’s creation, and nurture their character strengths.

Even if you don’t have grandchildren, you can be an “adoptive” grandparent for a family that doesn’t have nearby grandparents, for a single-parent family, or for an immigrant family. You can make a big difference by being a stable influence in the life of a child and by supporting their parents.

CONNECTED GRANDPARENTS

- Stay warmly connected to your grandchildren whenever possible. You’re a secure base when they face challenges during their teen years, or if their relationship with their parents becomes shaky for a while.
- Find out what makes your grandchildren feel especially loved, then do those things as often as you can.
- Look for creative ways to love and bless your grandchildren through appreciation, affirmation, support, and encouragement.
- Be good listeners when they chatter away. Take notes about their friends, their strengths, their interests, their struggles, and their dreams.

PRAYING GRANDPARENTS

- Prayer is an amazing gift that you can give your grandchildren every day.
- Pray that they will know Jesus, follow Him, and make good life choices.
- Pray that their parents will parent with wisdom and love and grow closer to God through the experience of parenting. If your own children are currently taking a break from church, the Holy Spirit can use your grandchildren to touch their hearts again.

- Write and illustrate prayers for your grandchildren and mail your prayers to them.
- Say a short blessing over them when you put them to bed or when saying goodbye on the phone.

SPIRITUALLY-NURTURING GRANDPARENTS

- Tell your grandchildren about your own spiritual journey, the difference your faith makes in your life, and how God has answered your prayers.
- Make worship kits for your grandchildren because ready-made worship kits are a blessing when you're busy. Visit *The Journal* website and search for the children's pages in the archives. Look for any ideas that your grandchild might enjoy, write out the instructions for the worship activity, gather together all the supplies needed, and put everything in a resealable bag.
- Make story bags. These are cloth drawstring bags containing a Bible storybook and all the materials needed to tell the story. For example: the Lost Sheep story bag could be in a green cotton bag (which doubles as a field). The bag could contain a piece of tan fabric (such as burlap) to represent a desert, gray foam shapes to represent rocks, several sheep, and a shepherd. Wooden popsicle sticks can be used to create a sheepfold or the shepherd's house.
- Come up with challenges that help children use their hobbies and interests to explore Bible topics.
- Help them memorize Bible verses by turning it into a fun game. Write each word of a verse on separate cards and ask them to arrange the cards in the right order.
- Write a Bible verse on an appropriate picture, cut the picture into pieces, and mail them all the pieces to arrange correctly.
- When you tell your grandchild a Bible story, use these open-ended questions:
 - o What did you like best about the story?
 - o What was the most important message in the story for you?
 - o Which part of the story seemed most about you? Or where are you in this story?
 - o What does this story show about how much God loves us?

CHARACTER-BUILDING GRANDPARENTS


- Make a list of positive character strengths that you would like your grandchildren to develop. Print off the "Periodic Table of Character Strengths" at www.letitripple.org.

- Spot your grandchildren demonstrating one of their character strengths, and let them know that you noticed: "When you did . . . you were being so kind/patient/brave/wise, etc. You made a great choice!"
- Explore the character strengths of Bible characters and talk about fun ways your grandchildren can develop their own character strengths.
- Plan activities that help children to be creative, work as a team, be hopeful and optimistic, and grow positive values.

SUPPORTIVE GRANDPARENTS

- Parents appreciate grandparents who support their style of parenting and their values. Ask how you can be most helpful, learn how they discipline their children, and find out how to support their routines for mealtime and bedtime.
- Fit around the family's routines and be respectful of their parenting choices. Many parenting practices that were popular when we parented young children have been replaced by new approaches. We may need to let go of our old ideas and embrace some new and better ones!

GIVING GRANDPARENTS

- Give your grandchildren inspiring books, perhaps the stories you enjoyed as a child. Ask a children's librarian for some good book recommendations, and read the stories before buying a copy for your grandchild.
- Other great gifts are Christian DVDs, books, and games; nature, science, and craft activities; good construction toys that develop fine motor skills, creativity, and imagination; outdoor toys that encourage healthy activity; and good quality wooden toys that have enduring and creative play value.
- Give experiences instead of toys, such as season tickets to the zoo; knitting or woodworking lessons; or a camping trip together. Or you might pay for music lessons, sports club fees, language classes, or whatever else they are keen to learn. 

Karen Holford is a grandma to Zara, Leo, and Max. She loves watching their faith grow.



Fasting for a Reason

AS I TRAVEL, TEACH, AND PREACH, I am often asked, “What does it mean to fast? What is the purpose of fasting, and how does one go about it?”

In more than 50 references to fasting in the Old and New Testaments, with the exception of the Day of Atonement, there is no specific command to fast. In the New Testament, however, it was assumed that fasting would be part of the believer’s normal devotional life.

About fasting, Jesus said, “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full” (Matthew 6:16, NIV). He also said, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast” (Matthew 9:15, NIV).

These verses indicate that fasting should be a normal discipline in the church. It must, however, be God-centered, God-intended, and God-ordained as an expression of grief, distress, or repentance; as preparation for God’s guidance and renewal (Exodus 24; Daniel 9); to reveal things that hinder our intimacy with God; to remind us that we are sustained by “every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4); and to help keep our lives in balance.

Going without food and sometimes water, generally for religious purposes, is the basic concept of fasting. But it should be voluntary when practicing any of these four types of fasting referred to in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White:

1. *Normal fasting*: going without food for up to 40 days (Exodus 34:28; Daniel 6:18; Luke 2:37; Mark 2:18; Matthew 4:2; Acts 13:2, 3, 14-23; and others).
2. *Partial fasting*: abstaining from certain foods (Daniel 10:3).

Monitor your inner thoughts and maintain a worshipful attitude.

3. *Absolute fasting*: going without food and water for up to three days (Esther 4:16).
4. *Voluntary group fasting*: for a specific reason by a specific group of people (Ezra 8:21, 23; 1 Samuel 7:6; 2 Chronicles 20:3; Jonah 3:5; and others).

The practice of fasting can be experienced as:


- *Occasional fasting*: eating a light meal (fruit, vegetables, yogurt, etc.). One can skip two or three meals and drink lots of water. When it's time to break the fast, do so with fruit juices followed by a light meal. Avoid oils, dressings, and starch for a couple of meals.
- *Regular discipline of fasting*: Begin slowly with a partial 24-hour (two meals) fast once a week over several weeks. During this time, drink fruit juices. After succeeding with this for several weeks, one can move to a 36-hour (three meal) fast. Such fasts should be broken with a light meal of soup, fruits, and/or vegetables.
- *Optional fasting*: If skipping meals is not possible, one should try fasting from certain food types (sweets, soft drinks, etc.) or leisure activities (TV, sports, shopping, etc.).

Regardless of how you choose to fast, remember to (1) monitor your inner thoughts and maintain a worshipful attitude; (2) be careful not to call attention to what you are doing; (3) devote this fasting time to devotional activities, such as praying, reading devotional materials, and studying special topics in the Bible; and (4) seek the Lord.

Consult your physician regarding extended fasting (up to 40 days), and remember that

the major work of scriptural fasting is in the realm of one's spirit.

As our church struggles with many complicated issues, I urge our members to fast and pray. Here is a statement from Ellen White that I find most helpful:

"I was shown that advocates of truth should not seek discussions. And whenever it is necessary for the advancement of the cause of truth and the glory of God that an opponent be met, how carefully and with what humility should they go into the conflict. *With heart-searching, confession of sin, and earnest prayer, and often fasting for a time, they should entreat that God would especially help them and give His saving, precious truth a glorious victory, that error might appear in its true deformity and its advocates be completely discomfited. Those who battle for the truth, against its opposers, should realize that they are not meeting merely men, but that they are contending with Satan and his angels, who are determined that error and darkness shall retain the field and the truth be covered up with error*" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 624, emphasis supplied). 

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Basking in His Word

A FEW YEARS AGO, my walk with God was transformed. Not only did this transformation impact my life personally but also the lives of my husband and my three children in unexpected, incredible ways. I pray that this message changes your life as well.

As a busy mom and a new pastor's wife, I've always had much to juggle. Although I've always desired to spend quality daily time with God in His Word, it hasn't always been easy. Sometimes obligation has driven me to read a chapter in my Bible each day, just to appease my conscience. Other times I've simply left my Bible beside my bed, knowing I should open it but not really knowing where to start. I've felt the distractions, the tiredness, and the busyness of motherhood—hoping that a quick prayer on the run would sustain me. I've gone through the motions but still felt as if I was in a spiritual desert.

I know God has never left my side, but when I took time to slowly and humbly search His Word, I realized just how depleted my walk with the Lord had become.

LIFE-CHANGING WORDS

God's words are incredibly powerful, and we hold them in our hands in the form of the Bible. These words are alive and relevant (Hebrews 4:12; John 6:63; Psalm 119:50). They help both the mind and heart (Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2). They are pure, solid truth in a postmodern, changing world (John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Psalm 12:6; Psalm 33:4, 5).

God's Word works in our hearts to change and save us (James 1:21). It will stand forever (Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 119:89) and ultimately lead us to Jesus Christ.

These ancient words tell us where we are in our walk with God and how we can improve and deepen this relationship. But do you ever wonder how to move beyond a hasty reading of the Bible to a deeper, more personal understanding of God's messages and how they relate to you?

BEGIN BY ASKING

Although I grew up in a nurturing Adventist home, some years ago I found myself longing for more in my Bible study time. I talked with God about this one evening as I lay in bed, tired from being a full-time mom with young children as well as working in the evenings. "Lord, I want to spend more time with You! Help me to find ways to do this!"

The next morning I woke very early from a deep sleep, wondering if all was OK in the house. After staring into the darkness for a few moments, I rolled over and tried to go back to sleep. Then I remembered my prayer. I swung my legs over the edge of my bed; took my Bible, journal, and pen; and started to pray. As I spent time talking to the Lord and reading His words to me, the time slipped away. Finally, as the sun rose and light began to shimmer on the grass outside, I thought about how truly wonderful it was to bring His light (His Word) into my life. I wanted His Word to linger with me all day!

I believe God waits for us, like a patient Father, wanting to sit down and talk with us through His Word. Psalm 27:8, 9 says, "When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek'" (NKJV). When we seek Him first and direct our freshest thoughts toward Him each morning, it is truly life-changing. I believe the Bible speaks to us

in very real, tangible, and often unexpected ways. Ultimately, our relationship with God will deepen beyond what we ever thought possible when we bask in His Word.

DEEPENING YOUR BIBLE STUDY EXPERIENCE

Here are a few gems I've discovered that have helped me in my Bible study time. Hopefully, they will encourage you too:

- The devil will do all he can to keep our Bibles closed. Ellen White tells us that "Satan employs every possible device to prevent [people] from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 593). This is why so many of us keep our Bibles closed, even though we may have good intentions.
- Pray that God will speak a message to you through His Word that you need for the day ahead. Come to Him in humility and ask for this, and He will answer.
- If we read our Bibles only when we feel like it, we will probably read it rarely. Ask God to plant a desire in your heart to know Him better, to seek Him more fully in His Word. Pray about this, and make a commitment to spend time more with Him. Then just do it!
- I believe the difference between simply reading our Bible and studying it comes down to *writing*. When we write, God's message to us moves from the page to our minds, then to our pens, and then into our hearts. We are much more likely to remember something we've written down, and also more likely to share it and encourage someone else during the day.
- Sometimes we need to dig deeply, really deeply, and read a passage more than once before God speaks to us. There's always something there, but sometimes we have to search for it. Don't give up after a quick read!
- The way we approach God's Word makes all the difference in how God can speak into our lives. If we come in prayerful humility, with open hearts and minds, seeking a daily message, God *will* speak. If we come in haste or with a know-it-all attitude, we will usually walk away empty.

CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

The change in the life of my family has been incredible. My husband and I love sharing with each other what we've discovered in our personal devotions, which brings an amazing closeness unlike anything else can do. We pour into each other's lives the words that have changed our own hearts in our personal reading. We've also been teaching

our children how to meaningfully and simply study their own Bibles. We've seen the effects of this flow into other areas of their lives as well, from changes in character to unprompted witnessing and sharing what they've discovered in their Bibles.

For pastoral families, one of the unspoken assumptions is that you will be abiding in God's Word. Perhaps your spouse (the church leader) is actually just going through the motions of keeping the ministry afloat. He or she loves God but at times is just stretched, rushing through the days, troubleshooting the urgent but sometimes forgetting the important. If this is true of your spouse today, I encourage you to make time with God a central part of *your* day. Your spouse will see this, and it will speak to him or her of what may be lacking in their life. Time with God will impact your countenance like nothing else can, and by spending quality time with God, you are choosing to invite Him into your home and your marriage.

The Lord patiently waits for us to come to Him, to spend time with Him, to be with Him (Revelation 3:20). He is ready and willing to give good things to His children (Matthew 7:11). And He promises that "My word . . . that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

When we abide in Christ through His Word daily, we'll naturally and passionately live from the overflow of our time with Him. This is a relationship I simply can't live without. It's the lifeblood of my days and the sustenance of my being.

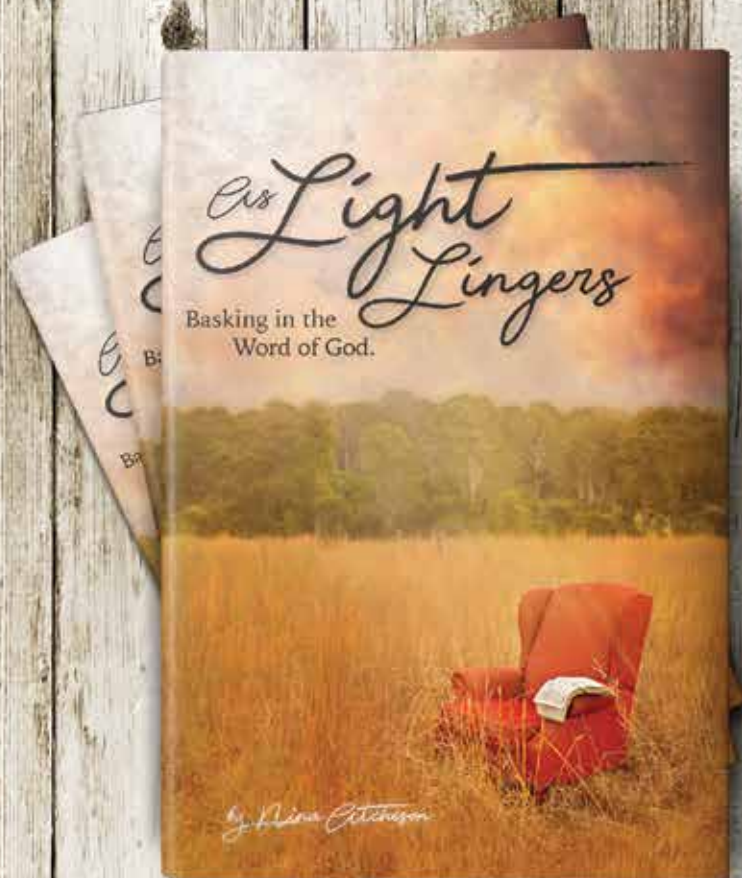
God longs to have a deeper walk with you and me. How will we respond?

For more on this topic, including practical examples and bookmarks for adults and children, see the book As Light Lingers: Basking in the Word of God (available at all Adventist Book Centers and Amazon) by Nina Atcheson. Also see www.aslightlingers.com. ■

Nina Atcheson is a passionate follower of Jesus Christ and an educator, curriculum writer, international speaker, and mother who lives to inspire her family and others to live in a close relationship with Christ through His Word daily. She is currently the Adventist Identity Officer for Adventist Schools Australia. She is author of the high school Encounter Bible curriculum and the book As Light Lingers: Basking in the Word of God. Her family brings her the greatest joy, and she particularly loves hiking and traveling with her husband, Matt, and their three children.

Reinvigorate your Bible study time!

The message of the Bible holds the keys to unlock a life filled with meaning and purpose. Yet many professed followers of Jesus spend very little time with Him through reading His Word. This personal, practical book will inspire and equip you to study the Bible in a more meaningful way, and to cultivate a vibrant experience with God.



This book is a must-read for anyone who desires to know Jesus personally.

Every church member, teenager, parent, teacher, elder, pastor and especially every leader needs this book to nurture their walk with God, so they can disciple others.

You *can* have a life-changing, living experience with God by immersing yourself in His Word. Please read this book! You will be blessed!



— Jerry Page, Ministerial Secretary,
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Available at your Adventist Book Center or on Amazon Kindle
www.adventistbookcenter.com



Jesus and Me!

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR OWN special times with Jesus, all by yourself! Reading your Bible and exploring it creatively can help you become more like Him. You can spend time with God in many different ways. Pick your favorite ideas, read your favorite story, and get started!

PRAYERFUL READING

Whenever you read your Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to help you discover what He wants you to learn today. Read the story of the Good Samaritan and ask God how He wants you to be kind and caring toward others.

Or read the parable of the Sower and the Seed and ask God how you can grow more like Him today. Write down any ideas that come to mind, and then put them into action.



WRITE YOUR OWN BOOK

Make a miniature book by folding and stapling paper together and writing the Bible story in your own words. Illustrate with your own pictures. Then read your story to someone in your family. Jesus told lots of stories called parables, and these are perfect for turning into mini-books. Make a whole collection of little Bible storybooks for a younger child.



NOISY STORIES

Read a Bible story and imagine all the sound effects in the story, such as sheep (*baa*), walking on stones (*crunch*), water (*splash*), eating (*yum, yum*), being filled with wonder (*wow!*), etc. Collect things to help you make the best sounds. Then tell the Bible story in your own words and add the sound effects to bring the story to life. Ask Mom or Dad to record your story. Share your recorded stories with your friends and family members through social media, or with your Sabbath School class. Try the story of Creation, Noah's ark, the lost sheep, Moses and the children of Israel escaping through the Red Sea, or the story of Jesus' birth.

POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST

Find some blank postcards or cut cardstock to the size of a postcard. Draw a picture from a Bible story on one side of the card. On the other side write a postcard-type message from one of the people in the Bible story. What do you think they learned about God in this story, and how might they write about their experience to one of their friends or family members?



THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION!



Read a Bible story, then answer the following questions for yourself. What did you like best about the story? What was the most important lesson in the story for you today? Which person in the story is most like you, or which part of the story is most about you? What did you learn about God's love for you in this story? You can ask these good questions about any Bible story. They help the story to come alive in your life, and they help you to understand how much God loves you.

GROWING GREAT!

Read a Bible story and list the character strengths of each person in the story.

Character strengths are things like courage, wisdom, kindness, patience, generosity, gratitude, teamwork, perseverance, self-control, putting others first, and humility. Which of these character strengths would you like to grow in your life, and what will you do to practice those strengths today?



BE CREATIVE

After reading a Bible story, make anything you like as your response to the story. You can use craft materials, write a poem, or turn your favorite text into a poster. Making something or writing something down helps you to think about the story in a new way. It doesn't have to be perfect; just enjoy being creative.



PICK A VERSE

Choose a Bible verse that means something special to you. Write it down and decorate it. Put your finished creation where you will see it every day, and practice learning the verse.

LEAD FAMILY WORSHIP

Choose a Bible story and create a special family worship. Give each person a character from the story and ask them to describe what happened from their perspective, or how they felt about the experience. Ask them to search for objects from the story. Or ask, "What does this story tell you about God?"



OBJECT LESSONS

Read a Bible story or a chapter such as Psalm 23. Then find objects to illustrate the story, such as toy sheep, a glass of water, grass, a shepherd, a stick, a cup, etc. Lay them out in the order that they appear in the story. See if someone else in your family can guess which story the items illustrate.

STORIES FILLED WITH TREASURE

Jesus' stories are like treasure chests. Each time you read a parable there are new thoughts and ideas to be discovered. Read one of Jesus' parables and ask yourself what this story tells you about God, about you, about God's hopes for your life, and about His love for you. Draw a picture to represent each parable you read, and write a list of the "treasures" that you find in each story.




TROPHY TIME

Plan an award ceremony for your three favorite Bible characters. Design a trophy for each one out of recycled materials, or draw the trophies on paper. List the characters' greatest achievements on their trophies. Write an acceptance speech for each character, where they describe how God helped them to be a hero. Present the award ceremony to your family. How can you become more like these characters?

WISDOM FOR TODAY

Read a chapter of Proverbs. Some proverbs are funny, some sound really strange to us today, and some are filled with amazing wisdom for your life. Choose a proverb and find a way to share it with your family: draw a picture, create an arrangement of objects, practice a mime, or write out a new version of the proverb that makes it relevant to your life today.



Whenever you find an idea that helps you explore the Bible, why not tell your friends and classmates? Or the kids in your Sabbath School class? You might be able to do the activity together! 

Karen Holford is the family ministries director for the Trans-European Division, and she is passionate about the every-week evangelistic opportunities of intergenerational worship services. She is the author of the book *Altogether Wonderful*, available from Advent Source.



— DEAR DEBORAH

Dear Deborah,

Recently, I saw the following social media post: “Pray—it’s one of the most important things you can do for your husband this year.”

The statement immediately convicted me of my prayerlessness for my husband. I feel negligent in this area of prayer and would like to improve. To be honest, I’m not sure my husband prays that much for me either. Do you have suggestions that would help me with prayers of intercession for my husband?

*Sincerely,
Ready to Pray*

Dear Ready to Pray

The Holy Spirit is already at work in your life! Blessings will abound as you take steps to develop a vibrant intercessory prayer life. You can be assured that you *will* experience the desires of your heart as you implement some of the following prayer ideas.

Also, share your enthusiasm with your husband. It will be a great encouragement to him. Then make the commitment together to intercede for each other—sealing your intentions with a prayer. God wants us to pray for others, especially our spouses. The apostle Paul tells us to “*pray for one another, that you may be healed*” (James 5:16, NKJV).

An intercessory prayer plan:

1. Pray, above all, that your husband grows his relationship with Jesus.
2. Pray for his relationship with others (children, friends, church members).
3. Pray for his health and physical protection from the enemy.

4. Pray for strengthened and deepened intimacy in your relationship.
5. Pray that he will have multiple opportunities to share the gospel with others.

As you pray fervently from your heart—accompanied by love, faith, consistency, and detail—you will discover God’s anointing on your marriage and ministry!

And just like Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul, and Daniel, we can join the ranks of those who have watched God’s mighty hand move through the powerful tool of prayer.

Finally, trust Jesus to fulfill His promise to you.

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3, NKJV).

Blessings,
Deborah

East-Central Africa Division

Rwanda Union Mission held Training of Trainers (TOT) for Shepherdess delegates in May 2019. Fifty Shepherdesses attended and then returned home to teach fellow Shepherdesses what they had learned. Meeting topics included personal growth, the call to ministry, family relations, and other human relations. The women also participated in group discussion and much prayer.



Shepherdesses from Rwanda meet in Nyamata.



Shepherdess leaders from Rwanda hold group discussions.



An ordination was held in Maroua, Cameroon, in April 2019.



Shepherdesses take part in evangelism in Central Ghana.



Eastern Sahel Union held a Shepherdess retreat in June 2019.

West-Central Africa Division



Shepherdesses from Cameroon Union Mission meet in Batouri.



Eastern Sahel Shepherdesses hold discussions at a retreat.



Eastern Sahel Mission Shepherdesses gather at the beach.



West Africa Union Shepherdesses meet in Liberia.



Shepherdesses in South-Central Ghana make a donation to an orphanage.



Shepherdesses from Accra City Conference meet in April 2019.



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