

Materials for May 2-29, 2025

Back to the Altar

100 DAYS OF PRAYER

FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION



Back to
the Altar



Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer

(Packet for Churches, Small Groups, and Translators: Weeks 5 - 8)



General Conference
Ministerial Association

Organized by Melody Mason, with collaboration of the Back to the Altar leadership team, under the direction of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association

Many of these materials are taken from the booklet, *The Way Back to the Altar*. For more information or to register for 100 Days of Prayer visit: www.backtothealtar.org

Note to Translators and Leaders:

This material is written and shared as a resource to help those leading **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer** in their churches and/or small groups. A separate resource, without leader notes, has been created for individual distribution and/or publication. Please go to www.backtothealtar.org to download or share the materials for individual use.

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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the continuing **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer** journey.

We all long for peace, for rest, for the ability to hear God's voice and the ability to know His voice when we hear it. We long to experience true genuine worship. But how is this possible in today's active bustling world?

Life never slows down. Having time for daily meaningful and unrushed worship amidst the chaos and distractions of daily living is a constant challenge. Truth is, it will always be a challenge for us as believers, no matter our life, age, or culture. But God doesn't give up on us, even though sometimes we forget about Him. In the midst of the chaos and noise, His voice is calling our name. "In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him. 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10)... Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ, to sit down in companionship with Him—this is our need." *Education*, 260-261

As we continue this **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer** journey, we will be focusing these next few weeks on what it means to really honor Jesus as Lord, not just in theory, but in real daily life. We will be learning afresh the joy of searching for and discovering *Jesus*, the Fountain of Living Water, in the written Word. We will be learning what it means to hold communion with Him and what it means to hide His Word in our heart. We will also study what it means to make the Kingdom of heaven our highest spiritual priority and learn how we can stay focused and connected with Him in the midst of so many digital online distractions.

If you long to build strong your altar of worship, if you are hungry for a deeper more abundant life in Jesus, if you pray for peace of mind and freedom from anxiety and fear, these lessons will be a breath of fresh air for your soul.

In Psalms we read again and again the joy that David the shepherd boy, David the running fugitive, and David the king, found at his altar of worship. To him, worship was not just something he checked off his to-do list each day. It was his passion, his lifeline, his existence.

"One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek," David wrote, "That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27:4).

David lived at the altar. Worship was his joy because Jesus was his Joy. "Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy," David wrote. "And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God" (Ps. 43:4).

As we continue this journey back to the heart of worship, let's ask God to be our True Joy. Let's pray that His Word would come alive like never before, and that our hearts would burn within us with a Holy Spirit fire that cannot be quenched, because Jesus is coming soon, and He's looking for a people who, no matter their circumstances, find their truest joy in Him!

What to expect:

Over the course of these fourteen weeks (April 4th thru July 12th, 2025), we are praying for an outpouring of the Latter Rain on our world church, growing together as disciples for the Kingdom, and preparing our hearts for Jesus' soon return.

Each Friday morning, during the **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer**, all those registered are receiving an e-mail which includes:

- A short revival or miracle testimony to build faith
- A packed inspirational Back to the Altar themed Bible study
 - This study will include fun interactive activities and questions that one can do alone, with friends/family, the church, or a small group.
 - It will include personal heart challenges and inspiring video illustrations.
 - It will include practical spiritual disciplines to incorporate into your daily life, as well as much, *much* more.
- Participants can sign up to receive a daily "prayer focus" on WhatsApp.
- Those who desire can also participate in a 1 hour weekly revival session on zoom hosted by members of the Back to the Altar leadership team. This revival session started on Sunday April 6th and will take place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time, until July 13th. While the main session is in English, multiple translations are being offered, including Swahili, Spanish, Romanian, and Russian. More languages may be added.

We pray that this **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer** revival, with its simple activities and soul challenges, will not only draw you closer to Jesus personally but give you practical tools to lead your family, your congregation, and your friends and neighbors to becoming daily disciples of Jesus who *live at the altar*. To learn more or to sign up today visit: www.backtothealtar.org

Note to Churches/and or Small Group Leaders

Going through this 100 Days of Prayer together as a church or small group will double the blessing.

Quick tips:

- Prayerfully read and study the material first as a leader, then invite others to be a part.
- Join the weekly 1 hour zoom revival every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time with the Back to the Altar leadership: <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> **Password:** 18442025
- Pick one night each week to go thru this Back to the Altar series as a church or small group.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to open hearts and guide as you lead/teach each lesson.
- *Note Leader Tips are italicized and highlighted in blue throughout these lessons to make them easier to spot!*
- Rather than sharing the material as a sermon, put people into small groups of 6 individuals per group and allow them to engage with the Word and with each other. This series will be more meaningful if shared in an interactive way.
- Keep the youth and children involved. This is an intergenerational revival. It's for everyone! It's also perfect for individuals who don't regularly attend our church.

- Keep each session on point but make the meetings fun and engaging. Use suggested “connect activities and questions” to build bridges for Biblical points being shared. Instead of giving all the answers, let people discover the answers in the Word for themselves.

In the book *Gospel Workers* we read, “There should be less preaching, and more teaching... As we approach the end, I have seen that in these meetings there will be less preaching, and more Bible study. There will be little groups all over the grounds, with their Bibles in their hands, and different ones leading out in a free, conversational study of the Scriptures. This was the method that Christ taught His disciples” (page 407-408).

- Pray, pray, pray and make a commitment, as a leader, to teach only what you are already seeking to live. The life we live in private determines the ministry we can have in public.
- For more material to enrich your church/small group Back to the Altar study, and for more practical tips on how to lead this series, download the *The Way Back to the Altar* handbook from www.backtothealtar.org. While the booklet does not contain everything that will be included in this 100 Days of Prayer, the booklet is a great teacher’s resource.

We are praying for you, and we look forward to meeting you on this journey.

The Back to the Altar leadership team

Ramon Canals, Dwain Esmond, Don MacLafferty, Melody Mason, Pavel Goia, John Feezer & Gabriel Begle

Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer

Fourteen Week Topic & Zoom Outline

Note: The first four weeks of materials can be found online at www.backtothelatar.org.
Weeks five to eight are included in this pack!

Zoom Link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> Password: 18442025

Week 1 | **April 4 – 10** | Preparing for Revival

- Zoom Revival – Sunday April 6th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 2 | **April 11 - 17** | Worshiping Together

- Zoom Revival – Sunday April 13th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 3 | **April 18 - 24** | What it Means to be a Disciple

- Zoom Revival – Sunday April 20th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 4 | **April 25 – May 1** | Come to Jesus as You Are

- Zoom Revival – Sunday April 27th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 5 | **May 2 - 8** | Honor Jesus as Lord

- Zoom Revival – Sunday May 4th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 6 | **May 9 - 15** | Jesus in the Word and in Prayer

- Zoom Revival – Sunday May 11th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 7 | **May 16 - 22** | Hiding God's Word in Our Heart

- Zoom Revival – Sunday May 18th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 8 | **May 23 - 29** | Word before World - Limiting Digital Distractions

- Zoom Revival – Sunday May 25th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 9 | **May 30 – June 5** | Ask for and Receive a Fresh Baptism of the Holy Spirit

- Zoom Revival – Sunday June 1st (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 10 | **June 6 – 12** | Love Your Family Sacrificially

- Zoom Revival – Sunday June 8th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 11 | **June 13 - 19** | Jesus is coming, I Will GO!

- Zoom Revival – Sunday June 15th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 12 | **June 20 - 26** | Disciple Others to Jesus

- Zoom Revival – Sunday June 22nd (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 13 | **June 27 – July 3** | Living Your God given Mission

- Zoom Revival – Sunday June 29th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team

Week 14 | **July 4 – July 12** | Back to the Heart of Worship

- Zoom Revival – Sunday July 6th (6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time)
- Led by the GC Back to the Altar team



Back to
the Altar

100 Days of Prayer

(Week 5 | May 2 - 8, 2025)

Honor Jesus as Lord - Program Materials

Week 5 | May 2 – 8 | Honor Jesus as Lord | Leader's Guide

Leader Encouragement & Tips

- Have you allowed Jesus to truly be the LORD of your life, or are you just going through the motions, pretending you have fully surrendered to His authority when you are actually still living for self? People can tell when you are being genuine and when your talk is just for show. Allow the Lord to change you from the inside out. Allow the Holy Spirit to have His way in your life. It will make all the difference in the world.

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” Romans 2:28-29

“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting aside self, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God...If His people will remove the obstructions, He will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through human channels.” *Review and Herald*, May 19, 1904, par. 13

- Gather others to pray with you for this week's Back to the Altar revival.
- Pray for the attendees by name, if possible. (If you keep a roster, this will help!)
- Take part in the weekly Back to the Altar revival on zoom every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> **Password:** 18442025

Suggested outline for a 1 hour 30 minute revival meeting

- Give everyone a warm welcome. **(3 mins)**
- Sing 2-3 songs of worship and praise about Jesus being our King and Lord. **(5-8 mins)**
- Make sure people are arranged in small groups of 6. Even numbers are best if possible!
- Make sure each small group has a group leader. Keep the youth involved. **(2 mins)**
- Make sure everyone has a Bible. Notebook and pens for taking notes is also helpful.
- To break the ice, ask everyone to quickly going around their small group circle and in 1-2 sentences answer the following question: **(5 mins)**
 - “What is the best thing that happened to me today/this week?”
- Opening prayer **(2 min)**
- Share Testimony: “A Legacy of Virtue and Honor to God and His Word” **(5 mins)**
- Have small groups pray together for courage to honor the Lord. **(5 mins)**
- Follow “Honor Jesus as Lord” Bible study outline. **(45 mins)**
(Leader tips and prompts will be in italicized and in blue throughout the study!)
- Pray in small groups for the “Prayer Focus” for the week. **(10-15 mins)**

At the end of the meeting

- Invite attendees to the online revival meeting.
- Pull the small group leaders together and pray with them. Ask if there's anything you can do to support them. Ask how things are going in the small groups.

Week 5 | May 2 – 8 | Honor Jesus as Lord | Testimony

“A Legacy of Virtue and Honor to God and His Word”

By Frank Hasel

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.” Mark 8:35

My grandfather, Franz Hasel, was an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister in Germany. Against his will, he was drafted into the army during World War II. Because my grandfather wanted to honor God’s commandments, including “thou shalt not kill,” he requested to serve in the medical corps and refused to use a weapon. But his request was not granted. Instead, he was placed into another unit as a unit clerk on the front lines. However, he took his conviction not to kill so seriously that he carried a wooden gun in his holster for the duration of the war. Although he thought he might die many times, God miraculously protected my grandfather time and time again. His inspiring story can be read in the book *A Thousand Shall Fall*.

My grandfather often told us a story that is not included in *A Thousand Shall Fall*. It’s a story that while serving in Russia, far from home, his unit was assigned to search through the houses of every village that the Germans had captured on their advance into Russia. They were ordered to search for resistance fighters, who would hide inside homes and attack the advancing German troops. They were told to immediately and indiscriminately shoot every person they found hiding.

One day, as my grandfather was carefully searching a house, he had a feeling that something was unusual. When he entered a particular room, he found it empty but still had an impression that something was suspicious. When he looked under the bed, he saw a young man staring right at him. My grandfather knew that if he exposed this young man, the young man would definitely be shot. They locked eyes for a split second that seemed like an eternity. Then my grandfather got up, left the room, and did not report what he had seen. He had pity on this young man and spared his life.

Several weeks later, my grandfather was assigned to patrol an important railway track. His duty was to make sure that no resistance fighters bombed the tracks. He was watching alone when a group of Russian Cossacks rapidly charged at him on their horses. There was no way to escape. He braced himself for death, believing they would surely kill him.

The group quickly encircled him, but my grandfather was shocked when he saw the face of their leading commander. It was the same young man he had seen hiding under the bed in that empty house. They immediately recognized each other. The young Cossack commander pointed his gun at my grandfather and signaled to him, “I could kill you now,” he indicated, “but you were kind enough to save my life. So, I will spare your life!” Then he ordered his men to ride on.

In God’s providence, the life of my grandfather was once again spared. His loving-kindness to that man and his faithfulness to God was returned to him. I’m so thankful for the virtuous life

and the example of faithfulness and loving-kindness my grandfather left behind. This legacy can be ours as well.

There is something peculiar about faithfulness. Although you can be a little bit famous or a little bit rich, you cannot be a little bit faithful. Faithfulness has something exclusive about it that demands undivided attention. Either you are faithful 100 percent, or you are unfaithful. If you are faithful 95 percent, you are not faithful but unfaithful. Faithfulness requires total commitment to Jesus as Lord of our life. God wants our undivided loyalty and full, complete dedication.

In the Old Testament, we read the story of Daniel, who was thrown into the lions' den because he was not willing to compromise his faith in God. When Daniel distinguished himself as a wise, dependable leader for the king, his enemies became envious and looked for ways to accuse him of wrongdoing. "But they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful" (Daniel 6:4, NASB). My hope is that our enemies (if we have any) and our friends, and all those who have been watching our lives will discover the same about us! May we be people who are known for the genuine loving-kindness we gently extend to others, and may we be respected for our faithfulness in the daily things we do. Like Daniel, may we trust God to take care of us as we are faithful to His will. No matter what the future holds, let us be Christians who honor Jesus as Lord, and who are faithful to God and His living Word, no matter the cost.

Frank M. Hasel, PhD, is a theologian, speaker, and author. He works as Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. Frank has shared his story of Grief, Grace, and Gratitude on It Is Written, 3ABN and HopeTV. The story shared in this week's devotional can be found in his book "[Living for God: Reclaiming the Joy of Christian Virtue](#)" (Pacific Press, 2020).

[Leader Tip: Have small groups take 5 minutes to pray together for courage to stand for God and to honor His Word, no matter the cost. Ask them to pray also for the Holy Spirit to bless their time in the Word.]

Week 5 | May 2 – 8 | Honor Jesus as Lord | Study

Welcome to another lesson in the **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer** revival series!

What a powerful testimony we've just heard about honor to God and His Word. It's important to recognize that Franz Hasel did not instantly become a spiritual superhero when faced with the conflicts of World War II. The spiritual fortitude, strength, kindness, and courage that he displayed in the face of conflict came from his personal decisions to honor Jesus as LORD, long before the war started. The reality is that he had already made a thousand decisions over the years to honor Jesus as Lord in the little details of daily life. So, when the big test came, when he was pushed to the front lines of battle, and when he faced life and death decisions, his loyalty to God was already decided.

“It is not a conclusive evidence that a man is a Christian because he manifests spiritual ecstasy under extraordinary circumstances. Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 51).

In this week's revival study, we are going to study what it means to honor Jesus as Lord. However, before we get started with this study, let's watch this short video testimony, that gives us a little review from last week and also shows how we can start honoring Jesus as Lord, TODAY.

- Play Video 1: **Introduction to Jesus as Lord** - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW5VID1>

What spoke to your heart most through the testimony that Pastor Don just shared? Write down your thoughts.

[Leader Tip: Encourage the small groups to take several minutes to discuss what spoke to them most through the video testimony that Pastor Don just shared.]

Honor Jesus as Lord – Bible Study

1. Heart Connect

Now let's do a fun activity for a moment. Stand up, right now, right where you are!

As you stand to your feet, think about one specific place in the world where you have physically stood—a place where you found yourself in total and complete AWE. Perhaps it was standing before a huge powerful waterfall, like Victoria Falls located on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Perhaps it was watching the sun set in a blaze of glory. Maybe it was when you stood at the altar on your wedding day. Think of that specific place! Think of how you felt in that moment.

[Leader Tip: After giving a moment for everyone to think, ask them to share briefly in groups of two. Then allow several to share feedback with the larger group of favorite places that made them feel in great AWE.]

Now, let's look to Scripture. Think about how Elijah must have felt when he came before king Ahab, the mighty king and ruler of Israel, in Ahab's royal palace.

Read/Reflect on 1 Kings 17:1 – As you read this passage, ask yourself, “Where is Elijah standing in this story?”

[Leader Tip: Give 2 minutes for small groups to read this passage and decide their answer to the question. Allow several to share feedback with the larger group. Some will say, “Elijah is standing before King Ahab!” Others will say, “Elijah is standing before God.” Just listen to the responses, without saying a right or wrong to the answers. Then play the following video.]

Let's watch this short “Elijah Revival Moment” and see if there's more to the story than first caught our eye.

- Play Video 2: **Elijah Revival Moment: Facing King Ahab** - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW5VID2>

What “Ahab” is in your life right now that might be distracting you from being in AWE of the True King of Heaven? What “Ahab” might be keeping you from having unrushed time in God's presence every day?

2. Honoring Jesus with Your Time

Read/Reflect on Mark 1:35 and Isaiah 50:4 – What difference would it make if you gave Jesus your alarm clock and allowed Him to awaken you each morning, on His timetable, so you could have unrushed undistracted time standing/kneeling in His presence?

[Leader Tip: Encourage the small groups to read the passages together and discuss the above question. Allow several people to share brief feedback with the whole group.]

While Jesus lived on earth, did He also yield to an authority higher than Himself? Isaiah 50:4 tells us that He did. If we look at the context of the passage (see Isaiah 50:6), we discover that this is actually a Messianic prophecy about the life of Jesus. The Father in Heaven is the One who promised to awaken His Son, Jesus, morning by morning during Jesus' time on earth.

What does God's Word tell us specifically about Jesus as Lord?

Read/Reflect on Matthew 28:18 and Philippians 2:5-11 – What do these passages tell us about the authority and Lordship that Jesus received from His Father?

Jesus Himself proclaimed that all authority had been given to Him in heaven and in earth.

While Jesus humbled Himself and was obedient to death on the cross, God exalted Jesus to His right hand and gave Him a name above all names. At Jesus' name, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess Him as Lord.

It's easy to honor Jesus as our SAVIOR. He's forgiven us, washed us clean, and given us the gift of eternal life. Because of this we love to sing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!" But singing, "I surrender all," is often a bit harder, because we struggle to honor Jesus as LORD.

3. Honoring Jesus with Your Choices

The Bible tells us that everyone in the universe will soon bow to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. So, why do we not bow to His Lordship today? Why is it so difficult to honor Jesus as Lord of our daily choices?

Watch the following fun video illustration to help make this concept more practical.

- Play Video 3: **The New Car Illustration** - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW5VID3>

Let's practice the prayer of surrender that Pastor Don just shared in the video.

Get on your knees wherever you are and pray the following prayer, using your hands to show what you are surrendering, as we just saw illustrated.

[Leader Tip: Get down on your knees and lead the group in the following actions. Maybe even do this prayer of surrender twice as repetition deepens impression.]

- Dear Jesus, I give You all that I am (*hands running from your head towards your heart*)
- I give You all I have (*hold both your hands out palms facing up*)
- I give You my attitude (*touch your forehead with both hands*)
- And I give You my electronics (*with one hand, hold up your phone symbolizing the surrender of your electronics to Jesus.*)

Think of how powerfully our lives would change if we prayed this prayer of surrender (and lived this prayer of surrender) each and every day!

Before we close, let's look at two more powerful Scripture passages.

Read/Reflect on Ezekiel 36:26-27 and Colossians 1:27-28 – Can Jesus change the things in our hearts that we cannot change? What is the secret to victory as believers?

The answer is a whole-hearted "YES!" to the first question. Jesus is The Master Heart Surgeon. He is able to change thoughts and attitudes and heal scars in our heart and mind that we can never change ourselves. That's why the secret to victory for the Christian is contained in two three-word phrases found in Colossians 1:27-28. They are "**Christ IN you**" and "**perfect IN Christ.**" This is our key!

Remember: It is not about working harder to overcome our sins and evil tendencies. The key to our success is learning to abide IN Christ and allowing Christ Himself, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to abide IN us.

“God desires to manifest through you the holiness, the benevolence, the compassion, of His own character. Yet the Saviour does not bid the disciples labor to bear fruit. **He tells them to abide in Him.** ‘If ye abide in Me,’ He says, ‘and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’ **It is through the Word that Christ abides in His followers...** You live ‘by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ Matthew 4:4. The life of Christ in you produces the same fruits as in Him. Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ, you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 677, emphasis added).

[Leader Tip: This would be a great place to plug in a short 5 minute testimony (based on Ezekiel 36:26-27) of how Jesus changed your own heart in a way that only He could. Be vulnerable!]

If you feel discouraged or overwhelmed by the attacks of the enemy in your life, you will love this last powerful video illustration.

- Play Video 4: **Jesus is our Champion** - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW5VID4>

No matter what you are facing right now, remember, Jesus is your Champion. And He is ready to win for you!

4. Personal Practical Application

As you go through this coming week, here are three practical heart challenges:

- **1st Challenge:** Honor Jesus as Lord, before you go to sleep each night, by asking Jesus to wake you up each morning to have unrushed time with Him. Get up when He calls.
- **2nd Challenge:** Honor Jesus as Lord by starting each day with the following prayer of surrender: Dear Jesus, I give You all that I am. I give You all that have. I give You my attitude and my electronics.
- **3rd Challenge:** Abide in Jesus! Daily be in AWE of God and His Word. Don't be distracted by the many "Ahab's" in your life. If you start to feel overwhelmed or anxious claim the following Bible promises: Phil. 2:13, Phil. 4:13, John 14:15-20, Eph. 3:14-21.

You are invited to join the General Conference weekly Back to the Altar revival on zoom that takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. All are welcome!

Zoom Link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> **Password:** 18442025

[Leader Tip: Transition to this week's Back to the Altar prayer focus. Give participants a copy of the prayer focus sheet, if possible.]

Now it's time to pray!

Week 5 | May 2 – 8 | Honor Jesus as Lord | Prayer Focus

Promises to Claim as You Pray



“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” 1 John 5:14

“The rainbow round about the throne is an assurance that God is true, that in Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning... When we come to him confessing our unworthiness and sin, He has pledged Himself to give heed to our cry. The honor of His throne is staked for the fulfillment of His word unto us.” *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 148

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.” 2 Chron. 16:9

Prayer Focus for Week 5

1. **AWAKE:** Pray that honoring Jesus as Lord would become a living reality for your life. Pray that Jesus would wake you up each morning to have unrushed time with Him in His Word and in prayer. (Claim Isaiah 50:4)
2. **SURRENDER:** Pray the following prayer of surrender as you start the Sabbath: “Dear Jesus, I give You all that I am. I give You all that have. I give You my attitude and my electronics.” Live this prayer of surrender daily! (Claim Philippians 2:9-11)
3. **ABIDE:** Pray to abide in Jesus each and every day by immersing yourself in the living Word. Rather than trying to produce the fruit of the Spirit, pray that the Prince of Peace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, would abide in you. (Claim John 15:5)
4. **BE IN AWE:** Pray that God would help you be in complete AWE of Him, His Word, and His mighty power as you go through this week. Pray that you would have no spirit of awe for the “Ahab” the enemy might bring across your path. (Claim Romans 8:31)
5. **EXPERIENCE:** Pray that we would, in the prayer room at GC session, have an “Upper Room experience” as the disciples had at Pentecost. Pray that all pride and things of self would be put away as we seek unity in Christ. (Claim Acts 2:1-2)
6. **HONOR:** Pray that every conversation, every message, every concert, every song, every worship service, every business meeting, every decision made during the General Conference session, would be for the glory and honor of God. (Claim Psalm 115:1)
7. **STAND:** Pray that we, individually and collectively as a church, would stand for Bible truth and honor God, no matter the cost. (Claim 1 Corinthians 16:13)



Back to
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100 Days of Prayer

(Week 6 | May 9-15, 2025)

Discovering Jesus in the Word and in Prayer - Program Materials

Week 6 | May 9 – 15 | Discovering Jesus | Leader's Guide

Leader Encouragement & Tips

- Sometimes we can become so busy trying to feed others that we don't eat properly ourselves. Retune your heart heavenward! Ask God to help you slow down so you can linger with Jesus. Feed your own soul. Take time to eat the Living Bread and drink deeply from the Fountain of Living Water. Take time to spend with family or to walk and pray in nature. These daily "refresh moments" will bring your weary bones back to life, and from that overflow, there will be plenty to share with those in need.

"But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:31

"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14

- Take part in the weekly Back to the Altar zoom revival that takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> Password: 18442025
- Gather others to pray with you for this weekly Back to the Altar revival.
- Pray for those who have been coming. Pray for those who have special needs.
- Go through this week's lesson and pray how you can help it be even more impactful.
- Print up handouts to share with attendees/or put on a screen for many to see.

Suggested outline for a 1 hour 30 minute revival meeting

- Welcome everyone, especially newcomers. **(3 mins)**
- Sing 2-3 songs of worship and praise on topic of who Jesus is. **(5-8 mins)**
- Make sure people stay in the same small group that they've been with from the beginning. By now, the small groups should feel like "second family."
- Make sure everyone (or at least 1 person in each group) has a Bible.
- To begin, ask everyone to share around their group circle the following: **(6 mins)**
 - One word describing your greatest need. (Can be physical, emotional, spiritual)
 - Then encourage prayer in groups of two for those needs.
- Opening prayer **(3 min)**
- Share Testimony: "Learning to Linger in the Word." **(7 mins)**
- Have one person pray for the Holy Spirit's blessing on this revival session. **(3 mins)**
- Follow "Discovering Jesus in the Word and Prayer" study outline, which includes an optional review of Weeks 1-3. **(45 mins)**
- Pray in small groups for the "Prayer Focus" for the week. **(15 mins)**

At the end of the meeting

- Invite everyone back for next week's revival meeting.
- Remind them to invite their friends. It's never too late to join the revival!

Week 6 | **May 9 – 15** | Discovering Jesus | **Testimony**

“Learning to Linger in the Word”

By Nina Atcheson

“Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.” Jeremiah 15:16

Some time ago I visited a church organization for some meetings I was attending. Before my workday began, I decided to join the morning staff worship. Someone was reading from a short devotional. There were about forty workers who sat in rows. I sat on the end of a row, looking with curiosity at the faces of those around me. I saw various responses. Some looked out the window, seeming eager to get on with the day. Others looked a little blank, perhaps disconnected. Others were listening. I waited, hungry for some takeaway words that would fill me as the day began. However, before I knew it, a short prayer was being offered, and everyone was rushing off to start their busy day.

I found myself longing for more; longing perhaps for what God was waiting to give and wondering if I was the only one left feeling a little empty. While I’ve read many good devotionals, as I’m sure you have too, there’s nothing as deep or inspiring as the Bible itself. However, it’s so often that we rush—even in our personal Bible reading.

Perhaps you have tried to read the Bible through in a year. Maybe you’ve given up after a few weeks of hurriedly reading one or two chapters a day because it felt like just another thing to check off your daily to-do list. Instead of finding joy in our reading, it can sometimes feel like a chore we need to accomplish. If we don’t “keep up” with what we think we should be reading, guilt can drive us away from spending time with God.

Many of us are busy, living in a rushed society. Sometimes I’ve looked at the clock and thought, “Right. I have a few minutes before I need to shower, eat breakfast, and get to work. I better quickly read and pray and get on with my day!” And so, I’ve gone through the motions very quickly and at the end of my brief time with God I continued to rush into my day, only a little satisfied that I had appeased my conscience and spent a little time reading my Bible.

Perhaps you can relate to this too. Yet have you ever wondered what might happen in our spiritual lives if we sought God by giving Him some unrushed time in His Word? How might this impact our days? There are so many profound, deep, convicting, and encouraging messages in the Bible that God has given to help us, yet too often we leave our Bibles closed.

Over the years I’ve struggled to wake up to study my Bible. Because of work commitments, I became more of a night person. I would hear about people waking up early to study their Bible and thought to myself, “That just isn’t possible for me!” But I still tried. If I wanted to read my Bible, I would set my alarm and drag myself out of bed fifteen minutes earlier than usual to do so, but to be fair, I would spend most of the time trying to wake myself up before I quickly scanned a chapter of the Bible and then hurriedly went on my way.

But something happened to me several years ago when I truly surrendered my time to God. I asked Him to wake me up in the mornings. It wasn't a passing request but a heartfelt desperate cry that went like this:

God, please help me to desire You. I know I need to spend time with You, and I want to love Your Word. I know You can speak to me through Your Word. But I need You to help me. Please wake me up with enough time to spend with You. You know my life is too full already, but I can't do this without You any longer.

After I prayed this prayer, I started to wake up early, without an alarm, usually before five o'clock in the morning. I would be in the deepest sleep and all of a sudden wake up. I knew God had answered my prayer. Of course, He was eager and waiting to spend time with me!

When this happened day after day, I found myself enjoying a precious routine as I met with God downstairs in a cozy corner of my office. As the days and months went by, I expected to feel tired, but surprisingly, I wasn't. Instead of reaching for my phone to see whether any e-mails had arrived overnight, I made a commitment to spend time with God first, before anything else took my attention. That personal challenge hasn't always been easy, and I am often tempted to launch into other things. But if I have chosen God to be number one in my life, surely, I can honor Him as my priority every morning.

Jesus gave us this example: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). Imagine Jesus, seemingly alone to the onlooker but abiding with God, sitting by the Sea of Galilee or on the side of a hill, praying and communing with His Father before the world around Him woke up. I'm sure this time was what gave Him strength to face all He faced while being separated from His Father. If Jesus needed this time to linger with His Father each day, how much more do we?

God's Word tells us, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" Psalm 34:8

Have you ever tasted a slab of honeycomb from a beehive? The first time I tried it, I was surprised at how the sweet honey melted on my tongue. It would have to be one of the most delicious treats, which bring to life the words of Psalm 119:103,104.

"How sweet are Your Words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding."

God's words are indeed sweet to my soul and unlike anything else the world has to offer.

How might our lives change if we truly took time to read and linger in the Word of God? Before rushing into our busy days, we can give Jesus our first thoughts and invite Him to lead us today. He will teach us from His living, powerful Word, and draw us to Himself. We will meet Him again—today, and tomorrow, because He promises that we will find Him when we seek Him with all our hearts (Jeremiah 29:13).

Nina Atcheson serves as the Curriculum Manager and Senior Editor for the new *Alive in Jesus Sabbath School Curriculum* at the General Conference. She is a curriculum specialist, teacher, speaker, editor, and author. She lives to be faithful to God's call and mission and has a burden to inspire and equip others to know God deeply and personally through His living Word. Nina is married to Matt, a pastor, and together they have three wonderful teenage children. More inspiration, can be found in her much-loved book "[As Light Lingers: Basking in the Word of God.](#)"

[Leader Tip: Have someone pray that God would help us treasure His Word above all treasures. Pray also that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on this Back to the Altar revival session.]

Week 6 | May 9 – 15 | Discovering Jesus | Study

Welcome to another session of **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer!**

Before we dive into this session, let's take a few minutes to review what we've learned about the first two principles of Back to the Altar.

(Note: If you would like to review the introductory lessons from weeks 1-3, click here: <https://tinyurl.com/Review1-3>)

[Leader Tip: Review for weeks 1-3 is optional! Only review as a group if you have time or if you have many new participants that have not been part of the first three weeks. You can also print up the review sheet and share it with the participants to take home.]

While we are learning many practical things about what it means to come back to the altar, there are seven specific **Back to the Altar** principles that we are focusing on.

- **Back to the Altar principle #1: Come to Jesus as You Are.** In this first principle we learned how Jesus invites us to come to Him just as we are. We also learned how we can have peace about our salvation (See 1 John 5:13).

Remember, this is not a cheap "stay-as-you-are" or "once-saved-always-saved" gospel. This peaceful assurance is based on specific truths from God's Word which remind us that our sins, when confessed, as well as our best efforts (Isa. 64:6) are both being covered by Jesus' perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10:14). He is our perfect substitute and surety!

The following quote really keeps everything in perspective:

"Perfection through our own good works we can never attain. The soul who sees Jesus by faith, repudiates his own righteousness. He sees himself as incomplete, his repentance insufficient, his strongest faith but feebleness, his most costly sacrifice as meager, and he sinks in humility at the foot of the cross. But a voice speaks to him from the oracles of God's Word. In amazement he hears the message, 'Ye are complete in Him.' Now all is at rest in his soul. No longer must he strive to find some worthiness in

himself, some meritorious deed by which to gain the favor of God. Beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, he finds the peace of Christ; for pardon is written against his name, and he accepts the Word of God, "Ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10)" *Faith and Works*, p. 107-108.

Are you tempted to keep focusing on the inadequacies of self rather than looking to Jesus? The enemy of our souls would like nothing better. But we must look up! Look and live, as Scripture tells us (See Numbers 2:8).

If you continue to struggle in this area, go back and prayerfully study the materials from week 4 in more depth at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA-Week4>

Back to the Altar principle #2: Honor Jesus as Lord. In the study from last session, we had three very specific heart challenges. Let's review them now.

[Leader Tip: Ask the group if they can remember the three challenges from last session, before you share them. When you get to the 2nd challenge, have everyone join you in getting on your knees and doing the hand actions as demonstrated in "The New Car" illustration video, in week 5.]

- **1st Challenge:** Honor Jesus as Lord, before you go to sleep each night, by asking Jesus to wake you up each morning to have unrushed time with Him. Get up when He calls.
- **2nd Challenge:** Each day pray the following prayer of surrender: "Dear Jesus, I give You all that I am. I give You all that have. I give You my attitude and my electronics."
- **3rd Challenge:** Abide in Jesus! Daily be in AWE of God and His Word. Don't be distracted by the many "Ahab's" in your life.

Time for Testimonies: Do you have a special testimony of how God has been working in your life this past week? Or maybe you want to share how God has grown your walk with Him through this **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer?** *(Write down your thoughts or find a friend and share a short testimony about something God has done for YOU in the past five weeks!)*

[Leader Tip: Give everyone 5 minutes to spread out across the room/meeting area and find someone to share a short testimony with! That person will then share in return. After 5 minutes, have everyone return to their own small group and sit down.]

Discovering Jesus in His Word and in Prayer – Bible Study

1. Connect Activity

Take a moment to look at this beautiful picture. What do you see? Do you see a beautiful waterfall on a lovely fall day, or do you see something more?

- **Waterfall Picture Illustration** - <https://tinyurl.com/Waterfall-Handout>

[Leader Tip: Put the picture on a big screen or give a handout with the painting! The bigger the picture, the more the message stays hidden.]

Look closely! Squint your eyes almost closed and look again. Once you see it, you cannot unsee it! Do you see it?

(Picture Explanation: For those who aren't sure what you are seeing, you are seeing a beautiful waterfall surrounded by autumn trees in bright reds, golds, purples, and greens. There is bright blue sky with puffy white clouds over the sparkling blue water. The water is pooling over and between the brown and grey rocks. The shadows of the water and rocks is placed in just the right way to spell "Jesus Loves You." Do you see it?)

Just as God's love is written throughout all creation, God's written Word is His personal love letter to our hearts. In the written Word we discover who He is, and many beautiful pictures of who Jesus is. But we miss these pictures of Jesus if we don't take time to look closely. If we rush through our devotional time, if we don't take time to linger in the Word and in prayer, we will miss what God is wanting to show us.

In this week's session we going to focus on **Back to the Altar principle #3**. It's called, **Discovering Jesus in His Word and in prayer.**

While God's written Word is the anchor for our faith and our relationship with Him, prayer is what helps bring His Word to life in our hearts. We need unrushed time in both the Word and prayer to thrive spiritually. Prayer, without the Word as its foundation, is like a sailboat without a rudder. Studying the Word without taking time to pray is like trying to bake bread without using yeast to make it rise. When we live a prayerless life we can easily start living a powerless life, a religion of dry form—a "form of godliness" without the Holy Spirit's transforming power (2 Timothy 3:5).

Before we open our Bibles, there's an *important key* that we need to help unlock the Scriptures. Can you guess what that key might be?

- **Play video 1:** Introduction to Finding Jesus in Scripture - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID1>

Now that we've prayed for the Holy Spirit, let's open the Word.

2. Looking for Jesus from Genesis to Revelation

Read/Reflect on Luke 24:27 and John 5:39 – Based on these passages, what is the focus of all of Scripture?

[Leader Tip: Allow 2-3 minutes for the small groups to discuss briefly and share.]

If you answered "Jesus," you are right! Sometimes when we read the Bible, we see pictures of Jesus very quickly. But other times, we struggle to see Him at all.

Now we are going to do a little activity, and for this activity, you will need your Bible and a pen to write with.

[Leader Tip: Hand everyone (or just the group leader) the "Pictures of Jesus" sheet of paper. Have them keep it face down until you tell them they can start. They can do this activity individually, or as a small group. But they must look up every Bible verse listed.]

(Here is the download link for this handout: <https://tinyurl.com/PicturesOfJesus>)

With the "Pictures of Jesus" handout, see how quickly you can draw a line to match the names of Jesus with the correct Bible verse on this sheet.

Ready, set, go!

[Leader Tip: For extra fun, you can give the fastest teams or individuals a prize of some treats or candies. Then ask a few people to share which name of Jesus speaks most personally to their heart and why? And which name do they wish to experience more?]

That was a fast-paced activity, wasn't it? But let's pause for a moment. Which name of Jesus, from this exercise, speaks most personally to your heart? Why is this? Which name of Jesus do you not know very well but long to experience even more? *(Write down or share your thoughts!)*

In these Bible passages, it's very easy to quickly identify the different names of Jesus. These names give us pictures of Jesus that are bold and clear. But often times, we are so accustomed to seeing these different names of Jesus in Scripture that we take them for granted.

Now we want to look a little deeper, below the surface.

Read/Reflect on Genesis 1-2 – Take a few minutes and see how many different pictures of Jesus you can find in the story of Creation. (Keep praying for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to what God wants to show you!)

[Leader Tip: Give the small groups 5-7 minutes for this activity.]

Some pictures of Jesus were probably obvious. For example, when God said, "Let there be light," in Genesis 1:3, we see a reminder that Jesus is the Light of the world. But did you see Jesus in the very first verse?

Genesis 1:1 reads, "In the beginning..." Here in the first three words of Scripture is a precious beautiful picture of Jesus that we often rush right past. The Bible says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8).

Jesus is our beginning! He is the author and finisher of our faith. And since He started our story, He will finish it for His glory! *Alleluia!*

How many other pictures of Jesus did you find in the story of Creation?

[Leader Tip: Give time for people to raise their hands and share one picture of Jesus that they saw.]

Not only do we find pictures of Jesus in the story of creation, but just as Luke 24:27 told us, we see pictures and parallels to Jesus in many other Bible stories as well.

In the life of Joseph, we actually find some of the most amazing and beautiful biblical parallels to Jesus. Ellen White writes extensively about these. For example, just as Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold for twenty pieces of silver, Jesus was also betrayed by His spiritual brethren and sold for thirty pieces of silver. And yet through the betrayal, Joseph saved his people, and through the betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus saved the world.

We encourage you to take unrushed time studying Genesis 37-47, and you will be amazed at all the parallels you will find between Jesus and Joseph.

The book of Revelation is another beautiful place to look for Jesus. Jesus is everywhere in Revelation. Let's take a moment and listen as Pastor Don shares some beautiful pictures of Jesus from Revelation 1.

- **Play video 2:** Seeing Jesus in Revelation - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID2>

Truly there are many beautiful surprises and treasures waiting to be discovered in God's Word. Of course, *Jesus* is the most beautiful treasure of them all!

3. Living by the Word

We can spend hours studying the Word, however if we don't allow the Living Word to change our life, what have we gained? Listen in once more as Pastor Don talks about how to make every Scripture practical.

- **Play video 3:** Allowing the Word to Change Your Life - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID3>

One way to make God's Word practical in your daily life is to pray the Word. If your prayer life seems a little dry, write down your prayer requests, and beside them write specific promises from God's Word. Every promise in God's Word is ours! We are told, "The honor of [God's] throne is staked for the fulfillment of His Word unto us" (*Christ Object Lessons*, p. 148).

Before we close this session, let's take a few precious minutes to return to the story of Elijah and see how Elijah responded when he heard the Word of the Lord.

- **Play video 4:** Elijah Revival Moment – Closing the Gap - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID4>

How's the gap in your life today? Are you, afraid of what others might think if you follow what God has spoken through His Word? Or do you hurry eagerly to obey God's voice?

Let's ask that God help us close the gap and live as believers who are actively preparing for Jesus' soon return. Let's ask that He teach us how to seek Him with all our hearts, and that discovering Jesus in His Word would become our greatest joy and delight.

4. **Practical Heart Challenge**

To take this message deeper, here are three practical challenges.

- **1st Challenge:** Every day, look for Jesus in the Word. See how many different names of Jesus you can find. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see, what perhaps, you've never seen before!
- **2nd Challenge:** Take time to meditate on Matthew 14:13-21 and look for a fresh picture of Jesus. Who is Jesus in this passage? Who does Jesus long to be for YOU? (For many more pictures of Jesus, study the life of Joseph or go through the entire book of Revelation keeping Jesus as your main focus. This study will change your whole perspective about the book of Revelation.)
- **3rd Challenge:** Practice praying the Word of God. If you need help getting started, you can find some special resources at this link. <https://tinyurl.com/PrayerPromises>

You are invited to join the General Conference weekly Back to the Altar revival on zoom that takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. All are welcome!

You are also invited to pray daily with believers from around the world at www.247unitedprayer.org. There are multiple prayer calls in multiple languages all praying over the Back to the Altar themes from 100 Days of Prayer.

Zoom Link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> Password: 18442025

[Leader Tip: Transition to this week's Back to the Altar prayer focus. Encourage participants to open their Bibles and claim the Bible promises listed as they pray together and for one another.]

Week 6 | May 9 – 15 | Discovering Jesus | Prayer Focus

Bible Promises to Claim as you Pray



"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." John 17:3

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." John 15:7

"How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light." Psalm 36:7-9

Prayer Focus for Week 6

1. **REST:** Pray that God would help us slow down and find our peace and rest in Him as we prepare for the best day of the week, the Holy Sabbath day of rest. (Claim Isa. 26:3)
2. **REMEMBER:** Pray that this would be a high Sabbath as we come back to the altar, remembering that Jesus is our perfect Substitute and Surety. Pray that we can understand and share the message of righteousness by faith. (Claim Heb. 10:14)
3. **PLEAD:** Pray for God's will to be accomplished in who should lead our church in the next five years. Pray that we would not lean on human wisdom as we make leadership choices, but that we would plead for God's wisdom, for "man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." (Claim James 1:5)
4. **DISCOVER:** Pray for the Holy Spirit to be our heavenly guide as we daily seek to discover fresh pictures of Jesus in the Word and in prayer. (Claim 1 Cor. 2:12-13)
5. **FOCUS:** Pray for a renewed heart for service and mission, no matter your sphere of influence or responsibilities. God has a place of service for each one of His children! (Claim Matt. 6:33) May the theme, "Jesus is coming soon, I will Go!" be our focus.
6. **SEARCH:** Pray for a renewed interest in the books of Daniel and Revelation as God's people search for hidden treasure. Jesus is our Treasure, and He's coming soon! (Claim Psalm 119:162 and Luke 24:27)
7. **REFRESH:** Pray that God's people would have boldness as they pray the promises of God's Word. God's Word does not return to Him void. (Claim 2 Peter 2:4 and Isa. 55:11)



Back to
the Altar

100 Days of Prayer

(Week 7 | May 16 - 22, 2025)

Hiding God's Word in Our Heart - Resource Materials

Week 7 | May 16 – 22 | God’s Word in Our Heart | Leader’s Guide

Leader Encouragement & Tips

- Memorizing Scripture may seem impossible as a busy leader, but God makes all things possible. Make it a priority and ask God for strength to get started. It’s a habit that will forever change your life and strengthen your ministry. And if you think you can, you can with God’s help. Talk faith, live faith, and memorize the Word, which builds faith.

As one author once said, “Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny.”

“God desires to manifest through you the holiness, the benevolence, the compassion, of His own character. Yet the Saviour does not bid the disciples labor to bear fruit. He tells them to abide in Him. ‘If ye abide in Me,’ He says, ‘and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’ It is through the word that Christ abides in His followers. This is the same vital union that is represented by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The words of Christ are spirit and life. Receiving them, you receive the life of the Vine. You live ‘by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ Matthew 4:4. The life of Christ in you produces the same fruits as in Him. Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ, you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ.” *Desire of Ages*, p. 677

- Join the Sunday morning Back to the Altar revival on zoom at 6 A.M. Eastern Time.
Zoom Link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> **Password:** 18442025
- Keep praying by name for those who came last week and for more to come this week.

Suggested outline for a 1 hour 30 minute revival meeting

- Welcome everyone, including newcomers. **(3 mins)**
- Sing 2-3 songs of worship and praise. **(5-8 mins)**
- Make sure people return to the same small group they were in last week. (Group numbers of 6 are best if possible!) If they are new, invite them to join a group or start a new group with someone who was present last week.
- Ensure everyone (or at least 1 person in each group) has a Bible.
- To begin, ask everyone to share around their group circle the following: **(4 mins)**
 - One sentence that describes an unexpected gift they received.
 - One sentence describing a gift they would like to give someone.
- Share Testimony: “The Unopened Gift.” **(5 mins)**
- Have small groups pray for Holy Spirit power to memorize the Word. **(5 mins)**
- Follow the “Back to the Bible” study outline. **(45-50 mins)**
- Pray in small groups for the “Prayer Focus” for the week. **(15 mins)**
- Invite participants to join the weekly Back to the Altar revival on zoom

Week 7 | **May 16 – 22** | God's Word in Our Heart | **Testimony**

"The Unopened Gift That Transformed My Life"

By Ramon Canals

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." John 15:7

Have you ever received a gift but forgot to open it? Over the years I have received many beautiful gifts from my family and friends that I eagerly opened. However, one gift stands out above all the others: my first Bible. Although it was the best gift I have ever received, it was several years before I opened it. The dedication inside the cover of the Bible read, "So that you will never forget your friend or God." This copy of the Bible was given to me by a friend. Unfortunately, with time I had forgotten about my friend and, worse, the God depicted in its pages.

For many years that Bible remained out of view, hidden from the sight of all who lived in my house. This precious book gathered dust; it had no power in my life because it lay buried amid worthless objects. But a miracle occurred early one morning as I was driving back home from a dance hall in New York City. God spoke to me. I heard his voice three times. He told me, *Read the Bible. Read the Bible. Read the Bible.*

Read the Bible? I have never done that in my life, I thought. But that touch of the Almighty could not have come at a more appropriate time. I felt sad, tired, and miserable. I felt like escaping life, especially my youth. Past events made me reflect on the kind of life I was living. Two of my friends had died: one had jumped from the thirty-fifth floor of a building in New York City; the other was stabbed while negotiating a drug deal.

I had just left the dance hall at 4:00 in the morning. And the voice persisted, *Read the Bible. Read the Bible. Read the Bible.* It was not an audible voice, but the impression was so clear that I did not doubt that it was the voice of God.

After getting home, I began reading my Bible. At first, I did not understand it, but just reading it brought peace to my heart. Since the day I discovered the Bible, it has been a guiding light in my life.

Finding unhurried time to connect with God can be difficult in our fast-paced existence. We are often conditioned to be busy constantly. The pressures of modern life can consume every moment, leaving us with little time to cultivate our relationship with God. Finding unrushed time with God has always been my struggle (and I suspect I am not alone). There are times in my Christian experience that I spend hours in communion with God—basking in His presence and immersed in the Word and in prayer. But then I get so busy again that sometimes I scarcely have time to utter a prayer during the whole day.

I am unsatisfied with that type of spiritual life; you should be too. God's Word calls us to focus our eyes on Him always, even when we're busy. Though God inspires a personal and intimate relationship with us, we often respond with excuses: too busy, too tired, blah, blah, blah. But

the Word of God reminds us gently to be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10), and to do that takes time.

Throughout the history of Christianity, humans have recognized the Bible's transforming power. The power is found, not in the book itself (for it is only ink and paper), but in its content: the living Word of the living God. Perhaps that's why the Lord Jesus said, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The Bible has a transforming power that few recognize. My love for the Bible has been profound and deeply personal. When presented with a unique academic challenge during my university years—the memorization of 100 Bible verses—I relished the task.

This endeavor became a pilgrimage of sorts, with each verse carved into the corners of my mind like a sculptor etching intricate patterns onto stone. The journey was undeniably arduous at the onset. Yet as I braved the steep learning curve, it gradually became more manageable. This was the first step in my remarkable journey of Bible memorization. I began to etch entire psalms, key passages, and extensive sections of Scripture into my memory.

Despite my growing cache of memorized verses, I had never tried to commit an entire book of the Bible to memory. Perhaps this was because of a lack of ambition or determination. However, an unexpected hurdle transformed my approach to Scripture memorization.

In 2009 I underwent eye surgery to correct my nearsightedness. However, the surgery significantly impaired my ability to read for a time. A few months after my eye surgery, I was invited to spearhead a large-scale satellite evangelistic meeting. I wrestled with a predicament: how would I read my Bible or even the words on the screen during the meetings?

The idea ignited a passion within me. I made a commitment to memorize word-for-word each biblical verse that I planned to use every night. I prayed to God for help, and He kindly answered my prayers. Every night, as I encouraged the congregation to follow along with verses such as Romans 6:23, I recited the text from memory. Although many people thought I was reading the Bible directly, I had memorized the verses. After successfully reciting the Bible verses without making a single mistake for nine consecutive days, I realized the powerful impact of speaking God's Word from memory.

This experience taught me a valuable lesson. With God's help, anyone can memorize many sections of Scripture, perhaps even a whole book of the Bible, and be immensely blessed, just as I have been. This has become my goal. Just imagine the profound power of having the entire Bible committed to memory.

Ramón J. Canals serves as the Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the Assistant to the President of the General Conference for Total Member Involvement. Previously, he was Director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries at the General Conference and has also served as an Evangelist, Evangelism Coordinator, Ministerial Secretary, and Hispanic Ministries Coordinator at various levels within the church. Among many responsibilities in the leadership of the Ministerial Association, he also oversees the Back to the Altar initiative.

Week 7 | **May 16 – 22** | God's Word in Our Heart | **Study**

Welcome to another session of **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer!**

Let's do a quick review!

In the past several sessions we've learned the first three Back to the Altar principles. Do you remember what these first three principles are?

[Leader Tip: Ask participants to review in their small groups or have them review out loud with you, before you give them the answers.]

- **Principle #1** – Come to Jesus as You Are!
- **Principle #2** – Honor Jesus as Lord!
- **Principle #3** – Discover a Fresh Picture of Jesus in the Word and in Prayer.

Have you discovered Jesus in a new way in the Word this past week? If so, how did that discovery affect your walk with Jesus? *(Write down your answer or share your testimony with a friend.)*

Hiding God's Word in Our Heart - Introduction

As we prepare for this session, take a few moments and think about some of the most precious words that have ever been spoken to you. Chances are you remember exactly what was said, who said it, and where you were when these words were spoken. What are those words? Why do you remember them so well, and why were they so meaningful in your life when they were spoken? *(Write down or share your thoughts with a friend!)*

[Leader Tip: Give 1 minute for participants to reflect silently, then give an additional four minutes for participants to share in groups of two. Each person should have about 2 minutes to share. At the end, you can ask for 2-3 people to share with the whole group.]

Some words are so precious that you can't ever forget them! However, God's Words are the most precious words ever spoken or written. Would you miss these words if you did not have access to a Bible? Now is the time to hide God's Word in your heart so it will always stay with you.

In *Ministry of Healing* we are told, "Let them [the people of God] keep the treasure house of mind and heart filled with, 'It is written.' Hang in memory's hall the precious words of Christ. They are to be valued far above gold or silver" (p. 215).

In this session, we will learn how to master the art of hiding God's Word in our hearts. We will explore why Scripture memorization is vital, how to get started, and practical steps to make it a part of your daily life. By the end of this session, we pray that you will be equipped to start hiding God's Word in your heart.

Before we start our study, let's watch this short introductory video.

- **Play Video 1:** Introduction to Memorizing the Word - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID1>

Now, you might ask yourself, “Why should we memorize Scripture?”

There are many reasons, but Psalm 119:11 gives us a very clear answer: “Your Word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”

Memorizing Scripture isn’t just about knowledge—it’s about transformation. Memorizing the Word of God is about knowing God and deepening our relationship with Him and attuning our hearts with His.

Think you are too busy to memorize the Word? Consider Pastor Canals' testimony. He memorizes in both English and Spanish daily. Some books of the Bible he has already put to memory. Watch the following video where Pastor Canals recites two Scripture passages by memory. If he can do this, so can we!

- **Play Video 2:** Pastor Canals Sharing Scripture by Memory <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID2>

Are you now really inspired to memorize the Word of God? We are!

Part 1: The Journey Begins

Here are three foundational steps to take as you begin your Scripture memorization journey:

1. **Ask God for a Burning Desire:** Ask God to give you a longing to internalize His Word. Even if the desire feels small, pray for it to grow.

[Leader Tip: At this point, give two minutes for participants to go around their small group circle and share two reasons why they have a desire to memorize Scripture.]

2. **Pray for the Holy Spirit’s Help:** Memorizing Scripture is not just a mental exercise; it’s a spiritual practice. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you and strengthen your memory.

[Leader Tip: Give two minutes for small groups to pray together for the desire to memorize Scripture and for the Holy Spirit to help them to retain what they memorize.]

3. **Act in Faith:** Select a Bible version you love, choose a verse, book, or chapter, and take the first step. Trust that God will help you.

Part 2: Simple Memorization Steps

The following are simple and effective steps to memorizing Scripture. We will give examples how to apply these steps, and then we will take time to practice memorizing a verse.

1. **Choose a Verse or Passage:** Start with a single verse. For example, let's use Philippians 4:13 which says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
2. **Pray:** After you choose your verse, pray for the Holy Spirit to help you memorize. Pray that the verse you've chosen will become a living and active part of your daily life.
3. **Read:** Read the verse out loud several times, including the reference at the beginning and at the end of the verse. This is not about becoming like a parrot that simply repeats something it has heard, but learning the verse word perfect with the reference included is significant.
4. **Break It Down:** Divide the verse into smaller, logical phrases or sections.
 - "I can do all things"
 - "through Christ"
 - "who strengthens me."
5. **Recite Out Loud:** Recite each phrase seven times by memory, then connect the sections together. Repeat the entire verse 21 times by memory, along with the reference. These 21 total repetitions help move the verse from short-term to long-term memory.
6. **Record and Listen:** Record a voice memo of yourself reciting the verse and listen to it throughout your day as many times as possible.
7. **Use Your Imagination:** As you recite the verse, visualize the meaning of the verse. Picture yourself drawing strength from Christ as you face challenges.
8. **Write and pray:** Write the verse down from memory. Handwriting is best, and writing helps reinforce memory. Then turn the verse into a prayer. For example: "Lord, I believe that I can do all things through You, for You are my strength."

Now, using the worksheet found at this link (<https://tinyurl.com/BibleMemorization>) take about 15-20 minutes to practice the above steps with a single verse. Choose one of the following verses to memorize: Joshua 1:8, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 4:12, Isaiah 26:3, or Psalm 16:8. Be sure to pick a verse that you have not already memorized!

[Leader Tip: Pass out copies of the "Scripture Memorization Worksheet" and give 15-20 minutes for individuals to spread out around the room or go outside and practice memorizing a verse. When they come back, have several share their experience, or maybe even share their verse.]

Part 3: Forming a Life-long Habit

To master Scripture memorization, consistency is key. Seek to integrate Scripture memorization into your daily routine.

Here's some suggestions:

- **Morning Devotions:** Start your day by reciting a verse during your prayer time.

- **Commuting:** Listen to recorded verses while driving or taking public transport.
- **Walking/Waiting/Witnessing:** Use moments of walking or waiting—like in a line or on hold—or when you are with others as opportunities to recite Scripture. When we share a passage that we’ve learned with someone, it becomes even more meaningful.
- **Evening Reflection:** Reflect on the verses you’ve learned as you wind down at night. Recite it in your mind as you go to sleep. You will likely wake up with it on your mind the next morning.

Again, repetition is the secret code of memorization. Just as habits form through repeated actions, memorizing Scripture happens when we engage with it daily.

Part 4: Meditation - The Key to Scripture Memorization

Read/Reflect on the following passages: Psalm 1:2, Psalm 77:11-12, Psalm 119:11. What do these passages tell you about the importance of meditation?

Read/Reflect on Psalm 119:87-99: What does this passage teach us about the beauty of Biblical meditation? Which part of this passage speaks the most to the hunger of your heart today?

[Leader Tip: Give 7-10 minutes for the small groups to read, reflect, and discuss the above passages.]

Memorization is just the beginning—meditation brings the Word to life. As Ellen White once stated, “The Bible was given for practical purposes.” As you memorize, take time to reflect on the meaning of the verses and the practical application. Ask yourself questions like:

- What is God saying to me through this passage?
- How does this apply to my life today?
- Then pray over the text and let it shape your thoughts and actions.

Let’s take a few moments to watch this additional inspiring video with Pastor Canals.

Play Video 3 – The Key to Successful Scripture Memorization –
<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID3>

Start today. Choose one verse, commit it to memory, and let it change your life. Remember, the Word of God isn’t just meant to be read—it’s meant to be lived.

Part 5: Personal Practical Application

- **1st Challenge:** Pray for God to give you a desire to memorize the Word of God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you.
- **2nd Challenge:** Choose two to four verses to memorize this next week. Pick verses that have spoken to your heart from your own unrushed devotional time in the Word. Follow the steps outlined in this lesson to help you memorize them.

- **3rd Challenge:** Take practical active steps to incorporate Scripture memory into your daily habits! Be prepared to share next session the steps you've taken!

Remember, you are invited to join the General Conference's weekly Back to the Altar revival on Zoom, which takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. All are welcome!

Zoom Link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> **Password:** 18442025

Also, join believers around the world in prayer focusing on these Back to the Altar themes every day of the week at: www.247unitedprayer.org

[Leader Tip: Transition to this week's Back to the Altar prayer focus. Encourage participants to open their Bibles and claim the Bible promises listed as they pray together and for one another.]

Time to pray!

Additional Bonus Material

To help your memorization of the Word have an even more powerful effect in your daily life, consider doing a deeper study of Deuteronomy 6. God's instructions to Moses in Deuteronomy 6 weren't just for ancient Israel—they're a guide for us today. They reveal how to internalize His Word in a way that shapes our thoughts, actions, and character. The principles found in Deuteronomy 6 combined with the steps in this lesson work together to create an environment of Scripture immersion that will forever change your life.

- **Play Video 4 - A Deeper Look at Deuteronomy Chapter 6** - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW7VID4>
- **Supplemental Handout on Deuteronomy 6** - <https://tinyurl.com/Deut-6-Study>
- **Scripture Memory Bookmark to print** - <https://tinyurl.com/SM-Bookmark>
- **Quotes on Scripture Memory** - <https://tinyurl.com/EGW-SM>
- **Fast Missions Scripture Memory Course** - www.fastmissions.com

Pastor Canals has written a book titled *Back to the Bible: A Call to Refocus Our Minds on the Word of God*. In this book, he shares many practical tips on Scripture memorization. The book is available on Amazon and in Adventist Book Centers. There will also be free copies in the prayer room at GC session.

Another excellent resource to help with Scripture memorization is www.fastmissions.com. Members of the Back to the Altar leadership team highly recommend this course.

Week 7 | **May 16 – 22** | Back to the Bible | **Prayer Focus**

Bible Promises to Claim as you Pray



“Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” Psalm 119:89

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” John 15:7

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” 1 John 5:14-15

Prayer Focus for Week 7

1. **PREPARE:** Dear Heavenly Father, as we start this new week focusing on turning our hearts back to the Bible, prepare our mind to be stretched. Make us willing to move outside our comfort zone of the normal life routine as we allow You to prepare and grow our character for Your soon coming. (Claim Rev. 22:7)
2. **REST:** Dear Father God, as we enter Your sacred Sabbath rest, help us to rest in You. Help us to rest our sins at Your feet, to rest our worries on Your shoulders, to rest our future in Your hands, and to rest our identity in the fact that You love us, and we are Your children. (Claim Romans 8:15)
3. **PRAY:** Dear Jesus, as our church leaders from around the world prepare for General Conference session, we ask that You prepare their hearts for the decisions they will make, for the new leadership roles they will take, and for the mission You are calling them to embrace. Helps us to encourage the leaders appointed by God and lift up their arms in prayer, just like Aaron and Hur lifted up the arms of Moses. (Claim John 15:7)
4. **DESIRE:** Dear Heavenly Father, please give us a hunger and burning desire to lay up Your words in our heart. Send Holy Spirit power that we will remember what we’ve memorized and know how to apply it practically in everyday life. (Claim Col. 3:16)
5. **GROW:** Dear Jesus, grow us as individuals, families, and churches. Refine our characters and purge away the chaff of sin and spiritual compromise from our hearts. Teach us how to build strong our altars of worship. (Claim John 4:24)
6. **EMBRACE:** Dear Heavenly Father, help us to embrace the call, I WILL GO. Give us courage to share with all we meet the Hope found in Your Word. (Claim John 17:3)
7. **DARE:** Dear Jesus, we ask for big things at the upcoming General Conference session. We are asking for an outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. We will not let go. We dare to ask for more. (Claim Jer. 33:3)



Back to
the Altar

100 Days of Prayer

(Week 8 | May 23 - 29, 2025)

Word before World - Limiting Digital Distractions
Resource Materials

Week 8 | May 23 - 29 | Limiting Digital Distractions | Leader's Guide

Leader Encouragement & Tips

- Where is your treasure? Stop, pause, put your phone down, close your computer, turn off the noise, and silence the distractions. Look around you. Look at the faces of your loved ones. Do they know you love them? Look up at the starry heavens. Do you know that God loves you? Are you hearing His voice? Are you responding to His call. When He returns will He say, "I know you!" or have you gotten distracted...so distracted with the cares of life or the responsibilities of ministry, that you've neglected the love of your life. Proverbs 15:6 tells us, "In the house of the righteous there is much treasure." Don't lose sight of your greatest Treasure.

"Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the LORD." Jer. 9:23-24

- Take part in the weekly Back to the Altar zoom revival that takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> Password: 18442025
- Gather others to pray with you for this weekly Back to the Altar revival.
- Pray for the young people coming to this revival series. Pray for those who are addicted to media. Pray that Jesus would become their greatest treasure and joy.

Suggested outline for a 1 hour 30 minute revival meeting

- Welcome everyone, especially newcomers. **(3 mins)**
- Sing 2-3 songs of worship and praise on topic of keeping Jesus first. **(5-8 mins)**
- Make sure people stay in the same small group that they've been with from the beginning. The small groups should feel like "second family."
- Make sure everyone (or at least 1 person in each group) has a Bible.
- To begin, ask everyone to share around their group circle the following: **(6 mins)**
 - One sentence describing the best gift you ever received.
- Opening prayer **(3 min)**
- Share Testimony: "Distracted." **(7 mins)**
- Have one person pray for the Holy Spirit's blessing on this revival session. **(3 mins)**
- Follow "Limiting Digital Distractions" study outline. **(45 mins)**
- Pray in small groups for the "Prayer Focus" for the week. **(15 mins)**

At the end of the meeting

- Invite everyone back for next week's revival meeting.
- Remind them to invite their friends. It's still not too late to join the revival!

Week 8 | May 23 - 29 | Limiting Digital Distractions | **Testimony**

“Distracted”

By Dwain Esmond

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” Proverbs 4:23

It was during the summer before my third year of high school—a school with all the attendant ills of violence, drugs, sexual immorality, etc.—that my parents decided I needed a change of scenery, and for good reason. I have always had a “thing” for words and language. I excelled in any subject that involved English or writing, and this started at an early age for me. So, when Hip Hop music burst onto the American music scene in the late 80s and 90s, I was hooked. I overdosed on the Hip Hop groups of the day. Add to the music a hot new dance craze called Breakdancing, and I was doubly hooked. It was fresh. It was urban. It was me.

If by beholding we become changed, as Ellen White wrote in many places of her writings (*MS 4, 1897; MS 148, 1897; MS 117, 1899; MS 102, 1901, and more*), this was definitely true of me. I had been changed by what I was pumping into my ears and setting before my face (Ps 101:3). By the time I reached high school I was “rappin” in a small group, breakdancing with my friends, and dreaming of pop stardom. I went to church with my parents, participated actively in Pathfinders and Adventist Youth Society (AYS), but I was losing my way. I was distracted and completely off course from where God wanted me to be.

My parents shipped me off to Adventist boarding school far away from the city. I comforted myself with the thought that though I would be far away, I would not be far away from my music. Little did I know at the time that something else would replace that music and change my life.

As my father readied our car for the trip to Pine Forge, he gave me *Mind, Character, and Personality*, a two-volume set of books by Ellen G. White. I had arrived at the intersection of desiring a personal change in my life, and the resources to begin that change were in my hands. As I read those books, my life started to change. Nothing did more to transform my spiritual experience at the time than the Bible—which *Mind, Character, and Personality* encouraged me to put first in my life. As a young man coming of age and baptized in city culture, God began to remove the distractions that then held me fast, and He’s doing it again in my life now.

Today a different distraction is on the horizon! Many of us hold it in the palms of our hands. Numerous studies today report that digital addiction to electronic devices is causing an alarming rise in depression and anxiety, negative body image and self-esteem, and rising feelings of loneliness and even suicide. Most people spend an average of three to four hours on social media each day. Hours spent in front of screens has been shown to decrease memory function, empathy, communication skills, ability to focus/attention, and ability to think and reason. These drawbacks affect one’s ability to worship God fully and serve Him unreservedly.

I am not immune to the effects of digital media. Sure, I love all the conveniences it gives, the apps that make life easier, but that’s not the whole story. My unhealthy digital diet would

often find me “doomscrolling” for the next dopamine hit like a drug addict looking for his next fix. There was a time when I reached for my phone when I woke up and it was the last thing I looked at before bed. It had become a god to me with power to positively or negatively affect my mood with every post, like, or tweet. Sound familiar?

I learned back in high school that if I did not make a concerted effort to reclaim my mind and heart for God, I would be lost. As an adult living in a tech-obsessed, digitally addicted world, I sense the need once again to raise a standard against Satan (Isaiah 59:19) in this area of life, that I might fulfill God’s purpose for me. It is hard to rebuild our worship altar while addicted to our devices. It’s time to “tame” our devices and make them obedient to the will of God!

Pastor Dwain Esmond is an author, editor, and ordained pastor. He currently serves as Associate Director/Editor of the Ellen G. White Estate. For more than 28 years Elder Esmond has dedicated his life and ministry to the service of God in many different capacities. He is founder of this Back to the Altar global worship initiative, and author of the current InVerse Young Adult Bible Sabbath Guide on the topic. He is joined in ministry by Kemba, his wife of 29 years, and their teenage son, DJ.

[Leader Tip: When finishing this powerful testimony, have the small groups pause to pray that God would speak to hearts through the following timely and needed study. Pray especially for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on this Back to the Altar revival session.]

Week 8 | May 23 - 29 | Limiting Digital Distractions | Study

Welcome to another session of **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer!**

The last couple sessions we have been focusing specifically on the Word: How to discover Jesus in the Word and in prayer and how to hide God's Word in our heart. We've shared many biblical and practical tools for growth in these areas.

Today we are going to learn about putting the Word before the World, and what it means to allow Jesus to be Lord, even over our digital distractions. However, before we start this lesson, let's return to the story of Elijah.

The Elijah Revival Moment

In previous Back to the Altar sessions we learned that Elijah stood in God's presence, which enabled him to stand boldly and unflinchingly before king Ahab, even though he was delivering a message that king Ahab did not want to hear. This could have cost Elijah his life, but God was standing with him.

Next, we learned that every time the Word of the Lord came to Elijah, Elijah did not pause to argue with God about the sensibility of His commands. Instead, Elijah immediately obeyed whatever God was asking him to do.

To prepare our hearts for today's Elijah Revival Moment, we have another stand-up activity. Go ahead, stand up, right now, right where you are. As you are standing, begin to march in place. If this seems a little silly, pretend you are in Pathfinders or in a marching band. In your imagination can you hear your leader barking out orders? *Left right, left right, left right!*

[Leader Tip: Stand up and have the small groups do these marching actions with you, as you share the following instructions.]

As you march, get in the rhythm and say out loud. *Left right, left right, left right, left right.*

Now pause a moment and hold up your left foot, while balancing on your right foot. (Hold on to something if needed to keep your balance.) As you hold that left foot up in the air, pretend your left foot represents your worship of Baal, or spiritual compromises that you may be struggling with in your life today.

Now switch feet and balance on your left foot while you hold your right foot up in the air. In this illustration your right foot represents your allegiance and worship of God.

Now march in place again, starting with the left foot. Only this time, this is the marching chant that you are to say out loud as you march: *Baal God, Baal God, Baal God, Baal God.*

That doesn't sound good, does it? However, this is not just what the children of Israel were doing in Elijah's day. This is what many of God's people are doing still, even today.

Pause right now for a moment of silent prayer and ask God if there's anything in this illustration that He wants to speak to your heart about.

As we watch today's "Elijah Revival Moment," let's ask ourselves, "How is God calling me to rebuild (or make stronger) my personal altar of worship? How is He calling me to put away worldly distractions?"

- **Play video 1:** Elijah Revival Moment: Rebuilding the Altar of Worship
<https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW8VID1>

Would you like God to be Lord in your life today? Would you like His help dealing with the spiritual distractions that are weighing you down, so your altar of worship can be strong for His glory once again?

The Danger with Digital Distractions!

It does not take a rocket scientist to recognize that digital technologies are occupying a larger slice of our lives than ever before. When we want to remember something, we do not reach for paper and a pen. We reach for our phones. When we want to awake at a certain time, we set the alarm on our smartphone. When we want to pay for something, in many places of the world, we do it digitally. Digital technology and digital media have become a part of our lives, as integral as our hands and feet.

One survey asked several respondents whether they would rather break a bone or break their phone. Only a slim majority said they would rather break their phone than one of their bones. Technology is changing us, whether we accept it or not.

The biggest toll that digital tech and media is having on us is our inability to focus on things that really matter. Attention is the greatest casualty of our tech-addicted age. Yet, it is the most prized commodity by big digital firms such as Apple, Google, Facebook, Amazon, and more. Attention, ironically, is also the means by which God speaks to us and vice versa. This is the critical reason why we must limit digital distractions and develop healthy digital practices.

Let's get started now!

"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

The verse above is attributed to King Solomon, author of most of the book of Proverbs.

Read/Reflect on 1 Kings 11:1-9 - What distractions did Solomon face during his life? How was he affected by some of his distractions?

[Leader Tip: Allow the small groups to read these passages and discuss. What are the practical spiritual applications for our lives today?]

Among the most dangerous distractions Solomon faced was his unholy desire for many different women. When he failed to surrender this sin to God, his heart was led astray from

God. Not even Solomon’s great wisdom was a match for the distractions he loved. When Solomon speaks of keeping our hearts with all diligence, he is not referring to the physical heart beating in our chest. Solomon is referring to the affective center of our being—our minds. He is saying in effect, “Guard carefully what you allow to enter your mind, because everything you do in life springs from this source.”

The danger of digital media is its ability to place messages deep within our minds, messages that often have nothing to do with God, His Word, nor His purposes for our lives.

How important is it to guard our minds? Ellen White writes, “The mind controls the whole man. All our actions, good or bad, have their source in the mind. It is the mind that worships God and allies us to heavenly beings. Yet many spend all their lives without becoming intelligent in regard to the casket [jewel case] that contains this treasure” (*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol 1, p. 72).

Limiting Digital Distractions – Bible Study

1. Recognize the Distractions

Read/Reflect on Luke 10:38–42

- What was Martha doing that prevented her from enjoying the presence of Jesus?
- Was Martha’s desire to care for the physical needs of Jesus wrong?
- What did Jesus mean when He said that Mary had chosen what was better?
- What was Mary doing while Martha was working? What specifically did Jesus commend Mary for doing?

[Leader Tip: Allow small groups to discuss.]

Martha was busy *doing* for Jesus, while Mary was busy *being* with Jesus. Jesus affirmed Mary’s choice to sit at His feet because this is the most important thing that any person can do in life. Nothing should ever distract us from spending time in the presence of God. This does not mean that we do not do all the daily things we must do, but we must do them all with a sense that Jesus is with us, and the avenues of our hearts are open to His whisper at every moment.

Take a moment to pause! Recognize the moments when you are going to social media because you are bored, tired, lonely, or stressed. Recognize the distraction for what it is, a feeble attempt to remedy a deeper emptiness in your heart.

2. Discern Digital Distractions

Technology and media are tools—they can help or hinder our walk with God depending on how we use them.

Read/Reflect on 1 Corinthians 6:12 & 10:23

- How can media become a spiritual distraction?
- What are some subtle signs we’re spiritually distracted?
- Can good things at times be the enemy of the best thing?

[Leader Tip: Allow small groups to discuss.]

Media becomes a distraction when it consumes our attention, alters our thinking, fuels comparison, or diminishes our time with God. Have you ever noticed how difficult it is sometimes to quiet your mind when trying to focus or meditate on God or Scripture? Restlessness during prayer, constant checking your phone, anxiety, lack of Bible reading, and decreased spiritual hunger are all signals that we are being changed and that our capacity to receive and enjoy God is being diminished. These are blinking red lights in one's spiritual life.

3. Biblical Principles to Refocus and Practical Application

- **Prioritize Quiet Time**

Read/Reflect on Psalm 46:10. Stillness allows us to hear God. There is no substitute for quiet, unrushed time with God. Set a non-negotiable, quiet time at the start of your day to commune with God. Ask Him to wake you up and get up when He calls.

[Leader Tip: Ask participants to do take the next 5 minutes to do the next two activities: Have them do the "Distraction Audit" and then pray about each distraction they wrote down. Then given them several minutes to give you feedback on how God is speaking to their hearts.]

- **Do a "Distraction Audit"**

Read/Reflect on 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. Make a list of the things that are pulling your focus away from God. Maybe it is apps, shows, notifications, people, etc. You cannot limit digital distractions until you are honest about what they are, and how specifically they are stealing precious time from you and God.

- **Pray about each distraction by asking the following:** Is this helping or hindering my relationship with Jesus?

4. Set Digital Boundaries

Read/Reflect on Psalm 16:8. How did King David "filter" the things that he would allow to get his attention?

Here are some practical ways limit the things that prevent you from keeping God always before you.

- Turn off notifications during devotions
- Use "Do Not Disturb" or Focus Modes throughout your day
- Designate screen-free hours or zones. These are times when you turn off your device. This will not be easy, but it will be rewarding if you do it consistently.

5. Replace, Don't Just Remove

Read/Reflect on Romans 12:21. Replace media time with worship music, Scripture meditation, journaling, or prayer walks. Get creative and be intentional about replacing negative practices with positive spiritual habits or activities.

6. Practice Sabbath Rest

Read/Reflect on Exodus 20:4-8. Use the Sabbath as a day to unplug from media and plug into God, family, rest, and nature. The Sabbath is a perfect time to renew your media-free focus on God and power-up for the week ahead.

7. Personal Practical Application

Not sure where to go from here? Here is a 5-day challenge to get your started on the road to healthier digital habits and more time for God!

5-Day Distraction Detox Challenge

- **Day 1:** Turn off all non-essential notifications.
- **Day 2:** Fast from one of your favorite or commonly used apps for the whole day.
- **Day 3:** Spend 30 minutes in silent reflection in the Word and in prayer instead of wrapped up in screen time.
- **Day 4:** Journal about what God is teaching you.
- **Day 5:** Share your experience with someone else.

What would happen if we put the Word before the world? What if we were to set aside our distractions and put our relationship with Jesus first? To set aside the things that are artificial, and receive something wonderful from Christ Himself?

Join several different families and individuals in the following inspiring 3-minute video as their story unfolds. This video is sure to challenge and convict you in new ways as you seek to live undistracted for God's glory.

- **Play video 2:** When We Put Jesus First - <https://tinyurl.com/JesusBeforeDistractions>

Don't forget, you are invited to join the General Conference weekly Back to the Altar revival on zoom that takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. All are welcome! Zoom link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> **Password:** 18442025

[Leader Tip: Transition to this week's Back to the Altar prayer focus. Encourage participants to open their Bibles and claim the Bible promises listed as they pray together and for one another.]

Let's pray!

Additional Bonus Material

To download a bookmark with reminders of ways to help keep your digital life in balance, click here: <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA-Balance>

Week 8 | May 23 - 29 | Limiting Digital Distractions | Prayer Focus

Bible Promises to Claim as you Pray



“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3

“I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways.
I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.” Psalm 119:15–16

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and
purify your hearts, you double-minded.” James 4:8

Prayer Focus for Week 8

1. **Praise** be to You, Lord, for You are the stillness in my storm and the peace in my noise. I lift up Your name above the chaos of my world. I choose to praise You instead of giving in to distraction. You are worthy of my full attention. (Claim Psalm 113:3)
2. **Honor** belongs to You alone, Lord. I lay aside the distractions that compete for my devotion. May my thoughts, time, and attention reflect the reverence I have for You. You are first in my life. (Claim Matthew 22:37 and Psalm 29:2)
3. **Change** my desires, Lord, so they align with Your will. Remove my attachment to things that pull me away from You. Create in me a new heart—one that craves Your presence more than my phone, media, or mindless distractions. (Claim Romans 12:2 and Psalm 51:10)
4. **Stop** me, Lord, when I begin to drift from You. Interrupt my scrolling, silence the noise, and pull me back into Your stillness. When I’m tempted to numb or escape, remind me that You are my refuge. (Claim Psalm 119:37; Hebrews 12:1)
5. **Revise** my daily rhythm, Lord. Teach me to structure my life around Your voice, not notifications. Help me make wise changes to how I spend my time so I can hear You clearly and walk with You fully. (Claim Ephesians 5:15-16; Proverbs 3:6)
6. **Help** me, God, to focus when my mind wanders and my heart grows restless. Strengthen my discipline to seek You first. I cannot do this without Your Spirit guiding me and steadying my steps. (Claim Psalm 12:1-2; James 4:8)
7. **Breathe** on me Your Holy Spirit, Lord. Prepare me and prepare my brothers and sisters for Your soon coming. Bring us to life through the power of Your Word and prepare us as a church to meet You in the clouds of glory. (Claim Ezekiel 37:4-5)

(We thank Dwain Esmond for this timely study and these heart touching prayers!)