

Reaching FORWARD – #1 Following God Daily Through Spiritual Practices

[Slide 1] Discipleship 1- Following God daily through spiritual practices = Knowing Jesus Better Every Day

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How would I recognize a disciple if I met one? How can I be an active, vibrant disciple?

[Slide 2] Let's share a journey together. We start here, and travel on an adventure to a new place; somewhere we have not been before. This place will be so inviting, we will want to stay and never return to our old ways. This is what Jesus is asking when He invites us to follow Him.

[Slide 3] As a part of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, and recognizing our prophetic role in history, a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who is growing in an authentic relationship with God and others. I will commit to: *REACHING FORWARD*

[Slide 4] **Following** God through daily spiritual practices

Opening myself to God by participating in regular corporate worship

Returning time, talents, and resources to God

Willingly serve my local church and community in the context of my spiritual gifts

Anticipating spiritual growth in others by being in genuine relationships

Reproducing the discipleship journey in others through the power of the Holy Spirit

Developing in my life of faith as evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit

[Slide 5] During this session we are going to focus on Following God through daily spiritual practices. Jesus extends an invitation in some familiar words.

[Slide 6] Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

[Slide 7] As Adventists we have described the good news of salvation in this way. From the book on fundamental beliefs: The Experience of Salvation.

"In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our

sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith

[Slide 8] in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the

[Slide 9] lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment."

[Slide 10] Come to Me Jesus invites us to find in Him all the answers to life's questions. We can tell Him all about our anxieties and challenges. He will give us strength and endurance. He can untangle life's challenges that seem so uncertain and impossible to face. As we surrender our weakness to Him, He gives us His answers to our dilemmas and His strength to travel a new direction for our lives.

[Slide 11] Consider these statistics with me. Ask yourself if any of them sounds like how you approach life. An average person's anxiety is focused on:

40% -- things that will never happen

30% -- things about the past that can't be changed

12% -- things about criticism by others, mostly untrue

10% -- about health, which gets worse with stress

8% -- about real problems that will be faced

An executive, decided to do all her worrying on one day each week. She chose Wednesdays. When anything happened that gave her anxiety, she would write it down and put it in her 'worry box' and forget about it until next Wednesday. The interesting thing was that on the following Wednesday when she opened her worry box, she found that most of the things that had disturbed her the past six days were already settled. It would have been useless to worry about them. (Have a 'worry box' to show as an illustration.)

[Slide 12] Here is a cure for anxiety that Scripture offers in Isaiah 30:15. ¹⁵*For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength."*

[Slide 13] Too often the truth about us is reflected by this statement from the book, "*Desire of Ages*." "Many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God" (p. 330).

And this one: "There are many whose hearts are aching under a load of care... The continual worry is wearing out the life forces... He bids *us* seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 330).

[Slide 14] Our passage of Scripture continues the invitation in this way, Matthew 11:29.
²⁹*"Take My yoke upon you..."*

[Slide 15] *Take My yoke upon you*

[Slide 16] Here are two promises that describe the 'yoke' of service. "When our will is swallowed up in the will of God, and we use His gifts to bless others, we shall find life's burden light" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 331).

[Slide 17] “Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 330.)

“Christ’s yoke is like feathers to a bird; not loads, but helps to motion.”

[Slide 18] Matthew 11:29 ²⁹*“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me...”*

[Slide 19] Learn from Me...

A 5th grade Sabbath School class was reading about the tremendous crowds that followed Jesus during His earthly ministry. “Why do you think so many people wanted to be around Jesus?” the teacher asked. One boy’s hand shot up, “Because Jesus had money?” “No,” the teacher replied, “in fact Jesus was quite poor.” A girl then asked, “Was it because He was handsome?” “Well,” said the teacher, “Although we don’t know exactly what He looked like, the Bible tells us He was not extraordinarily handsome.” Finally, after some silence a boy raised his hand and said, “I think I know... They wanted to be around Him because when they had questions, He always had the right answers.”

Certainly one of the main reasons people were and still are attracted to Jesus Christ is because He has the right answers to life’s questions.

[Slide 20, 21] Spiritual practices = Spending time to know God

Spiritual practices are about making time, and taking time to connect with the King of kings and Lord of lords. This time allows us to really know Jesus; to know Him well enough to recognize His voice. At first, time in the spiritual practices takes planning, being intentional, and then that time becomes a welcome and sought after part of your life. We learn to look forward to, then anticipate, our time with God. And finally, we won’t allow anything to take priority over that precious time with Him.

Spiritual Practices Here is a very short list.

(There are personal spiritual practices and there are those that focus on others.)

[Slide 23] Matthew 11:29-30 ²⁹*“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

[Slide 24] Psalm 46:10 *“Cease striving and know that I am God” – “be still*

Here are two quotes, one that offers council, and one that includes a promise.

“The way to dispel darkness is to admit light” (*Desire of Ages*, p.498).

“We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here... Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ...” (*Desire of Ages*, p.331).

[Slide 25] Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸*“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰“For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

[Slide 26] Our ultimate hope is to be able to say, “I am sure of heaven, because I am sure of Him.”

[Slide 27] Let’s take a few moments to stop and spend some time doing a spiritual practice. Please take out the first activity sheet on Spiritual Journaling. Please read through the description. Then take out the journal in your packet and make your an entry. We have allowed 20 minutes for this personal activity.

[Slides 28-32] Close by singing: “*Take My Life and Let It Be*” or the theme song you have chosen.

[Slide 33] And offering this benediction: Psalm 16:7-11 NIV

⁷ *I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.*

⁸ *I have set the Lord always before me.
Because He is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.*

⁹ *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,*

¹⁰ *because you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.*

¹¹ ***You have made known to me the path of life;***
*you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Partial Reference List:

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Steps to Christ

Satisfying the Longing Hunger of Your Soul, Dybdhal, Jon. L.