

SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2023 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Intentional activities to deepen our relationship with God and mold us to be more like Jesus.

OCTOBER PRACTICE Serving

Day 1 John 13:12-17 | Serving

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. John 13:14-15

Christians practice spiritual disciplines in concert with the Holy Spirit to deepen our relationship with God and mold us into Jesus's character. This month's spiritual discipline is **SERVING**. Serving helps us grow in our faith and become more like Jesus as we use our gifts and resources to build up Christ's body (the church). Serving is core to being a Jesus-follower.

Jesus washes his disciples' feet hours before his death and during a final meal with them. He models humble service and then **CALLED** his followers to do the same. Jesus's disciples catch this mission, and the early church is known for serving each other. Peter, whose feet Jesus washed, later teaches believers God has also **GIFTED** them to serve. "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" ([1 Peter 4:10](#)). God gifts believers differently but calls them to use their gifts together as the church community. Paul also teaches Jesus's followers they are "**CREATED** in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" ([Ephesians 2:10b](#)). Jesus re-creates people and gives them a new identity, which includes serving.

We are called, gifted and created to serve through the power of God's Spirit. We cannot do this on our own. As we step into regular, disciplined serving—God will supply the strength, love and power we need. Serving helps us grow as a Jesus-follower and helps others grow as Jesus-followers, too.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Have you found your place to serve? Ask God to show you where you can grow in the discipline of serving. We have many different places for you to serve at church. The best way to find the right fit is often just to get started. Whether it's greeting at the door, checking in at children's ministry, making coffee or something else—[find your place to serve here](#).

Day 2 1 Samuel 1:1-8 | Misery

Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. 1 Samuel 1:6

Hannah suffers deep misery. She is childless after years of waiting. Her husband then marries a second woman to produce a family. This woman becomes her rival and torments her relentlessly. The family attends a yearly festival meant to be a time of laughter and celebration. But Hannah's distress causes her to weep bitterly and be unable to eat. She suffers this way year after year. Her husband loves and cares for her, but Hannah cannot escape the anguish of infertility compounded by harassment. It's an unspeakably bad situation that seems no good could ever come from.

This week, we will see God move in Hannah's misery. God actively works to use bad things for good. We see God move in pain, conflict and suffering to accomplish more good than we could imagine. God eventually brings new life and hope to a nation through Hannah's dark situation. God's work in Hannah's life foreshadows what he did for us through Jesus. All feels lost when Jesus hangs on the cross, but God uses that darkness to bring new life to us. Jesus's death and resurrection bring the ultimate victory over sin and death. The power of God works in the most painful places to bring good beyond measure.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Look back in your life to when God used something bad for good. Thank him for how he moved through that situation for good. "God, _____ was such a hard situation. Only you can take such bad things and use them for good. Thank you for using that season for good."

Day 3 1 Samuel 1:9-17 | Prayer

In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. 1 Samuel 1:10

Hannah leaves the festival and marches to the Tabernacle. She pours her heart out to God in prayer, weeping bitterly. Her lips move, but she can't even verbalize her prayer. The priest notices her behavior and accuses her of being drunk. Grief, pain and anguish poured out to God caused her behavior, not alcohol poured into her body. Pouring her heart out to God seems to make space for his peace to fill her. She is no longer downcast even though the situation isn't unresolved ([1 Samuel 1:18](#)).

God invites and welcomes us to bring our deepest pain to him. This gut-wrenching honesty runs throughout the Psalms. David, known as a man after God's own heart, pours his heart out to God time after time. While running from enemies, hiding in the desert and facing death threats, David declares, "I pour out before him my complaint; before him I tell my trouble" ([Psalms 142:2](#)). David later urges people to trust in God at all times and "pour out your hearts to him for God is our refuge" ([Psalm 62:8](#)).

We can pour our pain to God when we are angry, betrayed, abandoned, rejected or just want to hurt someone. He welcomes our grief when we suffer loss, discouragement or confusion. No emotion is off-limits with God. Bringing pain to God is essential to moving through a breaking point with our faith intact.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Write a prayer to God in your journal or mobile device. Describe in detail the emotions you face and the pain you feel—and pour out your heart to God.

Day 4 [1 Samuel 1:11-28](#) | Giving Back

"I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there. [1 Samuel 1:27-28](#)

Hannah promises the Lord she will give her son back to him should the Lord see her misery, remember her and grant her one. The Lord does remember her and gives her a son, Samuel. Hannah recognizes God's incredible generosity and follows through on her promise. She brings Samuel to the Tabernacle when he is a few years old, giving him back to the Lord for his service. She responds to God's generosity by giving him what is most precious to her.

King David also models tangible gratitude in response to God's mercy and goodness. God delivers David from near death, and he pours his heart out to God, asking, "What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?" David desires to publicly give back to the Lord for all he's done. David calls on the name of the Lord and fulfills his vows to the Lord in front of the people ([Psalms 116:12-14](#)). He is giving back out of gratitude for how God brought him through a breaking point.

We too can give generously back to God for his goodness in bringing us through a breaking point. We might mentor someone suffering from a similar breaking point. We could serve or support a ministry helping people in situations like ours. We might help at a funeral to support other families after we've suffered a loss. It could mean sponsoring someone in Alcoholics Anonymous after experiencing recovery. We give back generously out of deep gratitude for what God has done for us.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Reflect on God's goodness to you and ask him to show you something tangible you can do to give back to him. Share what God reveals with a trusted friend and ask them to hold you accountable to follow through.

Day 5 [John 3:16](#) | The Cross

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [John 3:16](#)

Hannah expresses her love and gratitude to God by giving her beloved son back to the Lord. Her actions mirror God's deep love for people. God also willingly gives his beloved son to restore people to himself. God takes the unspeakably bad situation of the cross to bring unspeakable good.

We could never restore ourselves to God. Our sin, all the ways we miss the mark, breaks our relationship with God. Yet, when things felt hopeless and lost—God sends his son Jesus to earth. Jesus, God-in-flesh, lives the perfect life without sin. He perfectly obeys God, even going to the cross. He dies a horrific death and suffers deep agony and pain. God places all of our sins on Jesus. He takes the punishment that should have been ours. God then raises Jesus back to life on the third day in victory over sin and death.

We become part of God's family when we respond to God's gift through Jesus. We place our faith in Jesus by believing he is God's son who paid the price for our sins. God then restores our relationship with him, both now and for eternity.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY If you've never placed your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, now is a great time to do so. Pray and tell God you believe in Jesus and ask for his forgiveness. If you want to learn more about following Jesus, we would love to talk with you. Please email us at btw@adabible.org. If you have accepted Jesus, join our Ada Bible Worship team as they sing "[This is Our God](#)." Praise him that he "bore the cross and beat the grave."