

December 25–29, 2023
“Christmas + Review”



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.

DECEMBER PRACTICE Celebration

Day 1 Luke 2:1-21 | Christmas

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. Luke 2:10-11

For generations, the Israelites have been waiting for the arrival of the Messiah. He is the one who will fulfill the promise given long ago to their forefather Abraham and through whom the whole world will be blessed ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). They hear nothing for hundreds of years. No prophets. No signs. No wonders. Then angels break through the sky to announce he is here. Nothing about Jesus’s birth is expected or typical. He is the King of Kings but doesn’t arrive in a palace or capital. His birth isn’t announced to powerful leaders but humble shepherds. His earthly family isn’t influential or known. God-in-flesh comes in humility. His birth mirrors how he will live, die and rise again.

This is just the beginning of the greatest story ever told. The good news, or the “Gospel” of Jesus, is still “great joy for all people” ([Luke 2:10](#)). What began so long ago in a manger continues in our modern times. Jesus, the Messiah, offers life, forgiveness and salvation to all. His promise is for all people, no matter the situation, background or upbringing. As the shepherds race breathlessly to see and then spread the news, so can we. May God renew our awe at the miracle of his birth. May the good news that began then continue in our lives today. And may we share the good news of God’s presence with us to all.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Meditate on the angels’ announcement that Jesus’s birth is “good news that will cause great joy for all the people” (Luke 2:10b). Pause on each word thinking about what they mean. Ask God to help this good news bring great joy to you and everyone you encounter today.

Day 2 1 Timothy 4:7-8 | Bible Reading, Sabbath, Fasting

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Throughout 2023, we focused on [spiritual practices](#) to deepen our relationship with God and mold and train us into Jesus’s character. This week, we will review each practice and encourage you to keep growing in them in the next year.

Many people set a [BIBLE READING](#) goal at the beginning of the year. Some read through the Bible cover to cover. Others read through the Bible chronologically. Some read through the New Testament. Others may focus on one or two books and read them repeatedly. The key is to develop the habit of reading God’s Word throughout our lives to allow God’s Spirit to speak to us. In many ways, reading God’s word and listening to the Spirit is like training for anything—to help us get better at living godly lives.

The [SABBATH](#) commandment reminds us God is a God of rest ([Exodus 20:8-11](#)). God tells us he even rested after all the work of creation, not because he needed to, but as a gift and model for people. We often can feel enslaved to our work today. Work texts, emails or calls come in at all times of the day. Amid this frenzied world, God calls us to rest. Practicing the Sabbath will take just that—practice. The key is finding a different rhythm that restores and refreshes what the week and the world take from us.

[FASTING](#), or abstaining from something, can be done for spiritual reasons. It is not about the duration of the fast, nor is it a mathematical equation to manipulate God into acting ([Matthew 6:16-18](#)). It’s also not a cleanse or a diet. Instead, fasting is a way to focus one’s heart and mind on God and learn to depend on him for provision and help rather than our own devices.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Ask God to help you continue growing in spiritual disciplines throughout the next year. Reflect on how you have become more like Christ through these practices. Thank him for the growth he has already brought into your life.

Day 3 Revelation 4:1-11 | Confession, Secrecy, Worship

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. Revelation 4:11

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CONFESSION is admitting and agreeing with God that our thoughts, actions or words were wrong and sinful. It's not merely saying, "I have sinned," but being specific and honest with God about our sins. A regular discipline of confession clears the air between us and God, allowing a deeper relationship with him. We can regularly ask God to reveal our sin and confess it immediately when we recognize it. We cling to the promise that when we confess, God is "faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" ([1 John 1:9](#)).

SECRECY is deliberately choosing to do the right thing without seeking recognition. Perhaps, even taking steps to ensure people don't find out about it. Jesus introduces this concept in the Sermon on the Mount as he instructs his followers to do something solely for the recognition of God ([Matthew 6:1-4](#)). It's doing the right thing without self-promotion. It trains the heart to leave any public recognition up to God and to trust God instead of putting our trust in the people around us. It helps us recognize that our character is what matters.

WORSHIP is the practice of focusing on and responding to God. We respond to the awesomeness of God—his power, beauty, glory and holiness ([Revelation 4:11](#)). Jesus models that worship is public and private. He spends time at local synagogues for teaching. He also regularly withdraws alone to spend time with the Father. We also need times of public worship where we are strengthened by meeting together to proclaim God's greatness. We also need private time to deepen our worship of him. The more we worship God, the more we become like him in our character.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Pick one of these three and practice it today. Spend time confessing a sin to God or serve in a way no one will ever know. Or take a walk, turn on a worship song and spend time declaring how great God is.

Day 4 Matthew 18:19-20 | Solitude, Prayer, Community

Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them. Matthew 18:19-20

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SOLITUDE is withdrawing temporarily in privacy to be alone with God. Jesus spends regular time alone with the Father throughout his ministry. He withdraws to solitary places to pray, rest and listen to the Father. As crowds press in on him and his disciples, he calls his disciples away to a quiet place to rest and be alone. Solitude helps us regain God's perspective, listen for his voice, express our faith and trust in him and seek his will about something in our lives. Regular solitude deepens our dependence on God and grows our character more like Jesus.

PRAYER is a conversation with God. Prayer is a privilege and an invitation to a deeper relationship with him. Examples of prayer fill the Bible. Jesus's disciples see him regularly praying and ask him to teach them to pray, too. Jesus responds with what we know as the Lord's Prayer. We can trust that when we come to God wanting to pray, the Holy Spirit will teach and help us ([Romans 8:26-27](#)). We will spend the rest of our lives learning and growing in our conversations with God through prayer.

COMMUNITY is the intentional connection among God's people to grow together in faith and spiritual practices. Throughout Scripture, we see God speak and work through individuals AND groups of his people. Our intentional connection to other believers helps us grow and become more like Christ. Our faith deepens, and we model the difference Jesus makes when we practice spiritual disciplines in community. Jesus urges his followers to gather and seek his will, promising to be present with them ([Matthew 18:20](#)).

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Community is one great way to keep growing our spiritual practices. Small Groups will be starting again in January, and this is a great time to join a group. Find more information and sign up at adabile.org/joinagroup.

Day 5 John 15:8-11 | Serving, Bible Meditation, Celebration

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11

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SERVING helps us deepen our relationship with God, 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. 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.

BIBLE MEDITATION involves thinking deeply about the truths God has revealed in his Word. This focused thought leads to deeper understanding and living out God's Word. It involves not rushing past the words but letting them linger in our minds. We may sit with a familiar passage to soak it in to change us. Bible meditation allows the Word to occupy our minds to shape our thinking, speaking and acting. The Holy Spirit then enables us to become doers of the word and not just hearers ([James 1:25](#)).

CELEBRATION involves pausing to recognize who God is and what he's done. It is a result of the Holy Spirit working through our spiritual practices. Joy infuses our lives as we obey and follow Jesus, becoming more and more like him. Celebration is at the heart of the way of Jesus. From angels who celebrate his arrival ([Luke 2:10](#)) to a Father who celebrates when lost people return to him ([Luke 15:32](#)). Near the end of his life, Jesus points to joy saying he taught and commanded his disciples to obey so they would have his joy and complete their joy ([John 15:10-11](#)). Obedience to Jesus brings joy. Celebration is to infuse all spiritual practices.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Reflect on the spiritual practices again and which one has impacted you the most this year. We would love to hear how God has helped you grow through these practices. You can email us at btw@adabible.org. We pray God continues to help you grow to become more like Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit as you follow him through these practices.