

Nine Practices



for Being Well

Nine Practices *for Being Well*

Raewyn Orlich

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Welcome

Whether you picked up this guide because you're considering baptism, wanting to learn more about becoming a member of a local Seventh-day Adventist church, or simply longing to have a more vibrant experience with God, we're glad you're here.

Over the next nine weeks, we'll explore nine practices for being well, both as individuals and as a community.

You'll find each practice outlined by four questions:

1. What's the story?
2. Why does it matter?
3. How do we...?
4. When will you practice?

The first question looks at the big picture when it comes to the practice. The second turns to its centrality in the life and teachings of Jesus. The third, offers practical suggestions for applying it. The fourth, asks you to live out the practice in very specific ways at particular times of the week.

Please do not skip the fourth question. It's easy to think that faith is about affirming a set of doctrinal beliefs with our minds, while ignoring our hearts and our hands. But Jesus came to save us and show us a new way to be human - loving God, our neighbors, and ourselves.

Love takes practice.

Each week you'll be asked to do four things:

1. Plan a moment each day to...

This activity will take five minutes or less. Pick a time that is tied to another habit you already do every day, like brushing your teeth.

2. Pick one way to experiment with...

Look at the idea from “How do we...?”. This is an experiment, which means it may go well or it may not work for you. The key here is to put 30 minutes in your calendar to try it out and then share how it went.

3. Ask someone...

Name the person you’ll ask when you first read the question and think of when you could ask them. This could be someone in your household or a co-worker or perhaps a friend with whom you’d like to reconnect.

4. Journal

Please use the lines provided to write your thoughts and feelings in response to the Scripture listed. Again, try to choose a time during the week, even just 15 minutes, that is consistently quiet. Put your guide there with a favorite pen so it’s ready for you.

Love takes community.

Who are you going to practice with? You may have a pastor or mentor doing this guide with you. You could invite a friend to join you.

If you have teens or children in your life, you can gift them the Youth or Children’s Edition of this guide, also available at AdventSource, and go through the practices together.

May God your Creator, Jesus your Savior, and the Holy Spirit who is your Guide, grow you in love as you practice.

Be well,

Raewyn Orlich
Associate Pastor for Discipleship and Nurture
La Sierra University Church

Practice 1

Affirming Love

Tell me about one person that you know loves you.
What do they do to show you their love?

*“Whoever does not love
does not know God, for
God is love.”*

1 John 4:8

What's the story?

Have you ever tried to describe someone in one word? When the Apostle John is writing to early followers of Jesus about who God is, he chooses this one word: love.

From our first breath, to our last one, we long to know that we are loved. And the story we're going to be sharing throughout these practices is the story of God's love for all. Each practice is a response to this love.

Why does it matter?

Jesus came to show us that God truly is love (1 John 4:8, 16). If we know love at all, it is because God first loved us. God's love has no limits. As the late Dr. Fritz Guy, La Sierra University, was fond of saying, "There is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do to make God love us less."

Jesus showed God's love to all—to those others thought were unlovable (John 8:10-11), to those who ignored or rejected him (Mark 10:21-22), and even to those who enacted harm (Luke 23:33-34).

At our best and in our lowest moments, whether we're with or against God, when we struggle to believe or when we're confident and secure, God's love is steady, passionate, and perfect. It's when we experience God's limitless love, that we are able to truly love others (John 15:12-13).

It's easy for us to forget what's most important. People throughout time have been trying to figure out what it is that God wants. They've often concluded that we please God by making expensive sacrifices or praying long prayers or following a strict set of rules and excluding those who don't subscribe to the same ones. But the prophets reminded people what really matters (Micah 6:8).

How do we affirm God's love?

Let's read Matthew 22:36-40 and break it down.

1. Love God (Matthew 22:36-37)

In response to God's love for us, we're called to love God with our whole selves. Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, part of the Shema, a prayer many Jewish people recite morning and night. We're invited to think of God as we get up, go to bed, leave the house, and come home. As we spend more time with God, learning about who God is, we will grow to love God more.

2. Love Your Neighbor (Matthew 22:39a)

Here Jesus is quoting Leviticus 19:18. Just in case we're tempted to limit who could be considered our neighbor, verse 34 of that same chapter explicitly includes foreigners. Our words and actions toward our neighbors must affirm God's love.

3. Love Yourself (Matthew 22:39b)

One way to love ourselves is to take time for self-care. How do you care for yourself? If you cared for your neighbor the way you care for yourself, would that be positive or negative? Self-love and self-care come from affirming God's love for us.

When will you practice?

Plan a moment each day when you will look in the mirror and say, "(Insert your name), nothing can separate you from my love today."

Pick one way to experiment with loving your neighbor.

Ask one person, "When have you felt God's love?"

Journal

Romans 8:31-39 - Read the verses through three times. The first time, write the phrases that stand out to you or any questions you have (head). The second time, write what emotions you feel (heart). The third time, write what God is inviting you to do (hands).

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Practice 2

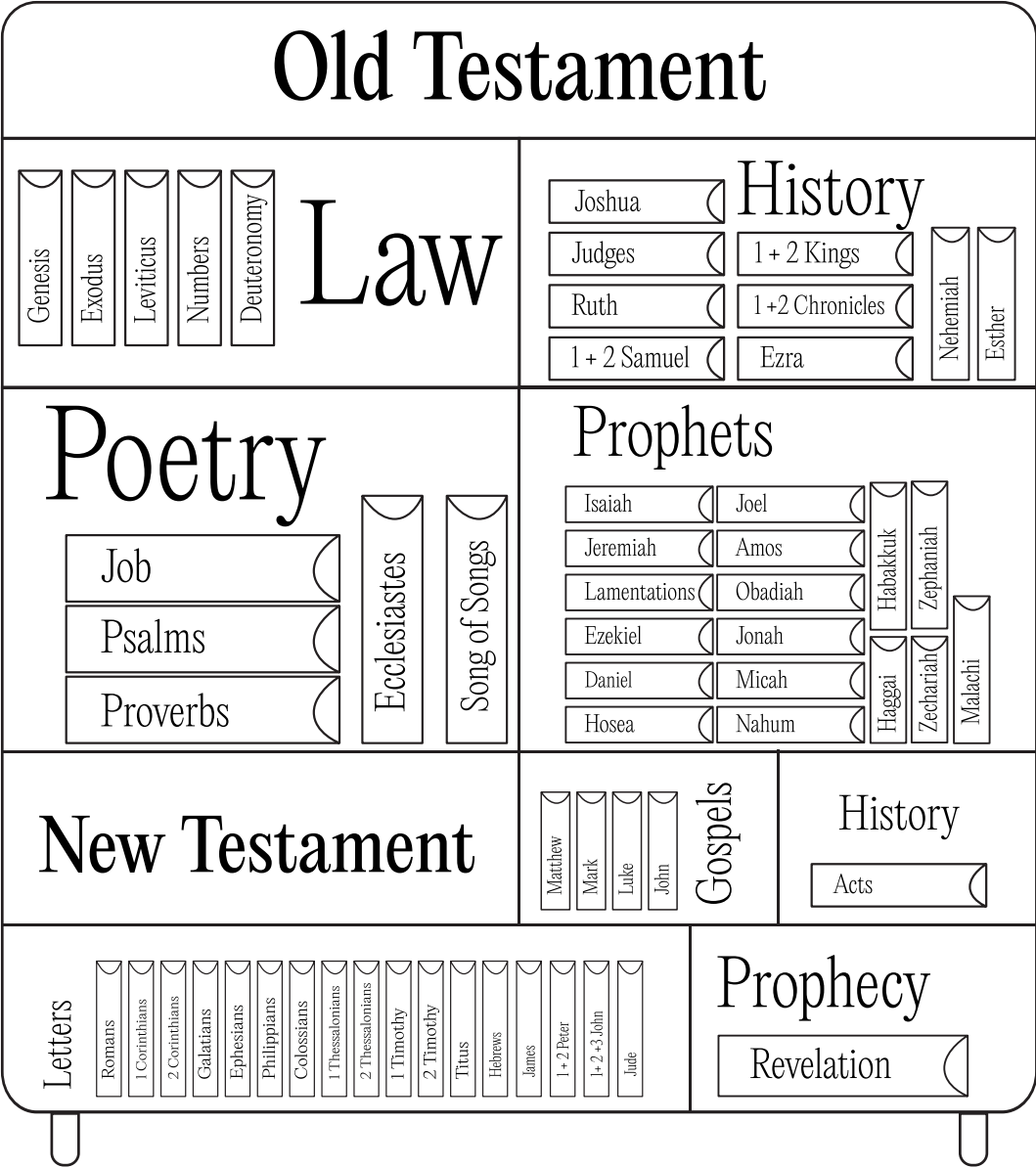
Engaging Scripture

How would you describe your relationship with the Bible?
When has a verse or idea from the Bible been helpful to you?

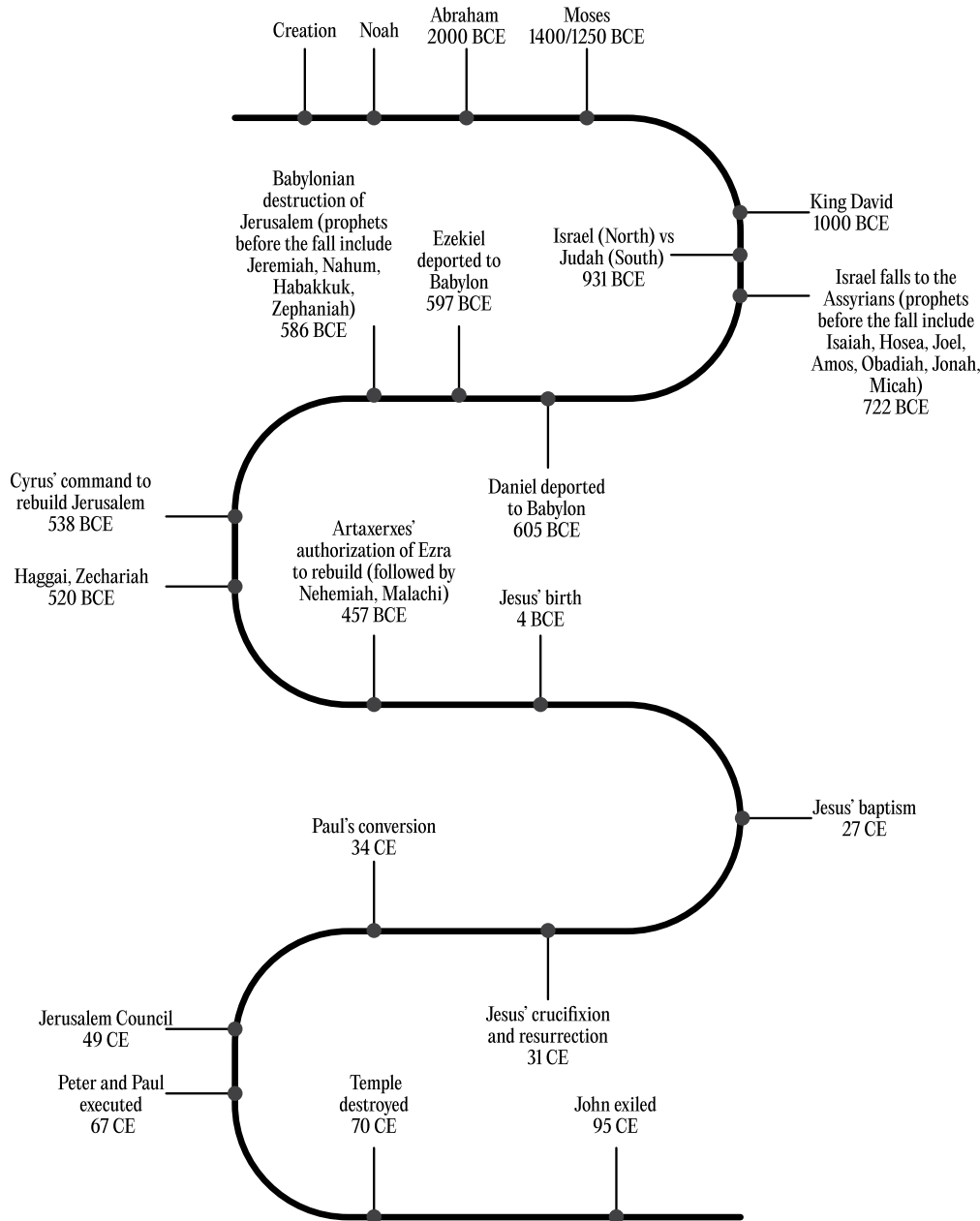
*“These are the very
Scriptures that testify
about me.”*

John 5:39b

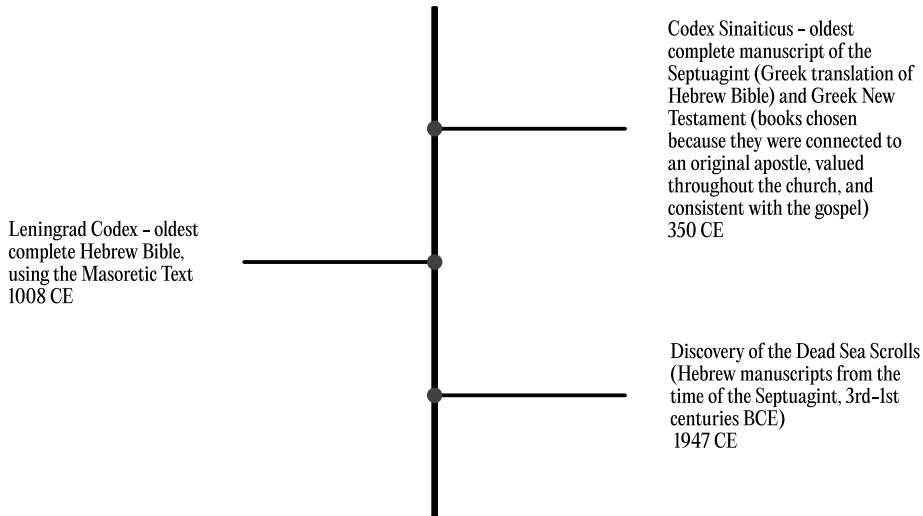
What’s the story?



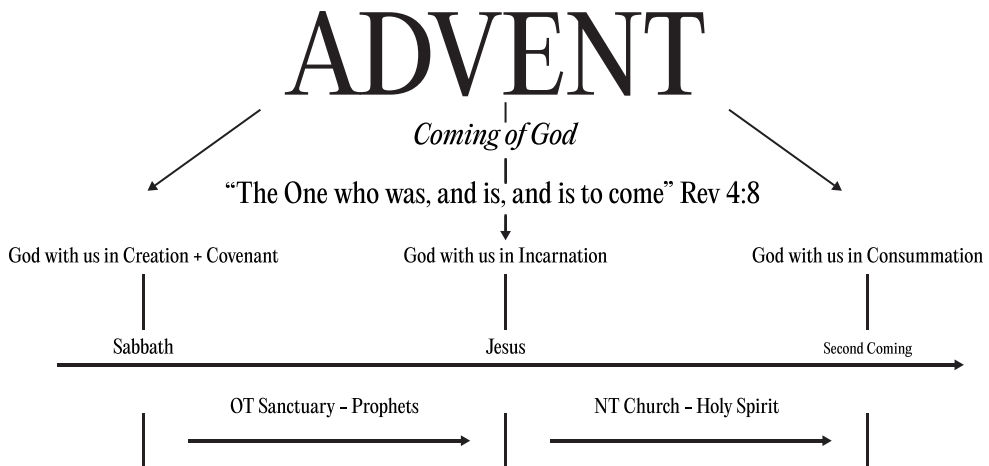
Old Testament to New Testament Timeline



Key Biblical Manuscripts



Theological Throughlines



This chart shows how God comes to be with us in a theodrama we call the "gospel." The name, "Adventist," comes from the word, "Advent," or "coming." In the words of Dr. John Webster, La Sierra University, "The Advent is God's free act of self-sharing love" (Webster, "I'm Curious. What is an Adventist?" December 2021).

Why does it matter?

The Bible was written by people, named and unnamed, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). They were human witnesses who sometimes remember different details (Mark 10:46-52, Matthew 20:29-34, Luke 18:35-43), disagree (2 Samuel 24:1 vs. 1 Chronicles 21:1), share their opinions (1 Corinthians 7:6-7, 12; 2 Corinthians 11:17; 1 Timothy 2:8; 5:14), and make personal requests (2 Timothy 4:13). Yet, they were inspired witnesses to God's coming!

In the words of one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White, "The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself, in words, logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen" (Manuscript 24, 1886).

The writers of the Bible chose what to include for a purpose. John says he wrote so that we would believe in Jesus and have life through him (John 5:39-40; 20:30-31).

How do we engage Scripture?

Here are some resources to read, study, listen, watch, and sing Scripture:

blueletterbible.org; biblegateway.com; YouVersion App (The Bible); ScriptureSinger App; "The Bible Project"; "The Chosen"

When will you practice?

Plan a moment each day when you will read one Bible verse.

Pick one way to experiment with engaging the Bible that's new to you.

Ask someone, "When has a verse or idea from the Bible been helpful to you?"

Journal

2 Timothy 3:10-17 - Read the verses through three times. The first time, write the phrases that stand out to you or any questions you have (head). The second time, write what emotions you feel (heart). The third time, write what God is inviting you to do (hands).

[illegible]

Practice 3




Celebrating Grace

When have you experienced grace?
What is the opposite of grace?

*“For it is by grace you
have been saved.”*

Ephesians 2:8a

What's the story?

 <p>“You were dead, a slave to sin” (Romans 6:1-2)</p>	 <p>“You are crucified and buried with Christ” (Romans 6:3)</p>	 <p>“You have been raised up with Christ to live a new life” (Romans 6:4, 11)</p>
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Why does it matter?

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, they had been enslaved for centuries. In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, they were given the Ten Commandments and many other laws to help rehabilitate them and reestablish their identity as a free people.

But keeping the law didn't free them from Egypt. They had already been set free. Keeping the law was meant to help keep them free. God's love always comes first, before our lives change. We have been saved by God's grace, not by what we do. As we trust in God's grace, God transforms us into our best selves (Ephesians 2:8-10).

At the last supper, Jesus washed his disciples' feet, symbolizing a renewal of their baptism (John 13:3-11) and calling them to serve one another (John 13:12-17). He gave them bread and grape juice as symbols of the gift of his life (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). He said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). God's grace transforms us into people who love God, our neighbors, and ourselves.

How do we celebrate grace?

Through baptism:

Baptism is a public, or communal, event.
Baptism is by “immersion,” being lowered under the water.
Baptism happens when the person expresses desire.
Baptism initiates membership in the local congregation
and the global Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Through foot-washing:

Two people, or a family, take turns rinsing each other’s
bare feet in a basin of water.
Each basin is returned to the service table, emptied,
and cleaned by volunteers.
Participants may choose to pray for each other.

Through Communion:

Communion is celebrated about four times per year and is open to all.
Pieces of bread and cups of grape juice are served in a worship service—
sometimes brought to you in your seat and sometimes served from the front.
Or, bread and grape juice are brought to your home by a pastor or elder.
The bread and “wine” are taken by all the people at the same time,
led by one of the pastors or elders.

When will you practice?

Write Ephesians 2:8-10 and put it where you can see it and read it every day.
Consider memorizing it. Try substituting “you” and “we” with your name.

Pick one way to experiment with celebrating grace, for example, showing
someone undeserved favor or apologizing to someone you may have hurt.

Ask one person, “When have you experienced grace?”

Journal

Acts 8:26-40 - Read the verses. Imagine yourself in the story. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you taste? What do you touch? Which character do you most identify with? What surprises you? What is Jesus saying to you today?

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