



NINE PRACTICES for Being Well

AFFIRMING LOVE, ENGAGING SCRIPTURE, CELEBRATING GRACE,
EXPERIENCING SABBATH, DYING WITH HOPE, PURSUING PEACE,
LIVING FULLY, CHOOSING GENEROSITY, CONNECTING IN COMMUNITY

NINE PRACTICES for Being Well

Benjamin Amoah

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“GRACE ALWAYS OUTRUNS JUDGMENT.”

INTRODUCTION

So glad that you've come across this study guide! Whether you were given this by a pastor or spiritual mentor OR you came across this on your own, we are glad you are here.

In these NINE studies, we will spend time reflecting on NINE practices for being well, as individuals and as a community.

Each practice is divided into five sections:

1. The Warm-Up
2. The Story
3. The Heart of It All
4. The Apps
5. From Mind to Practice

We begin with a verse and a question to break the ice on the following topic. Take time to reflect or discuss with someone your answer. There are no wrong answers and your story, which influences your answer, matters!

We then spend some time in Scripture, grounding our practice in the timeless human-recorded pages of God's self-revelation (THE BIBLE).

Next, we will unpack God's loving heart for us all through this practice, how God leads us to accept love, know we are loved, and to love others through the practice.

The Apps (application) is essential. As we now reflect on this practice, we must ask ourselves: "What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ through this practice?"

From Mind to Practice is your non-evaluated homework. Something you can do to begin to materialize this practice, concluded with a text from Scripture and space to journal to process your thoughts!

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 there are any kids or adults who may be interested in a study like this, you can recommend to them the Children's Edition or Adult Edition of this guide, also available at AdventSource, and go through the practices together.

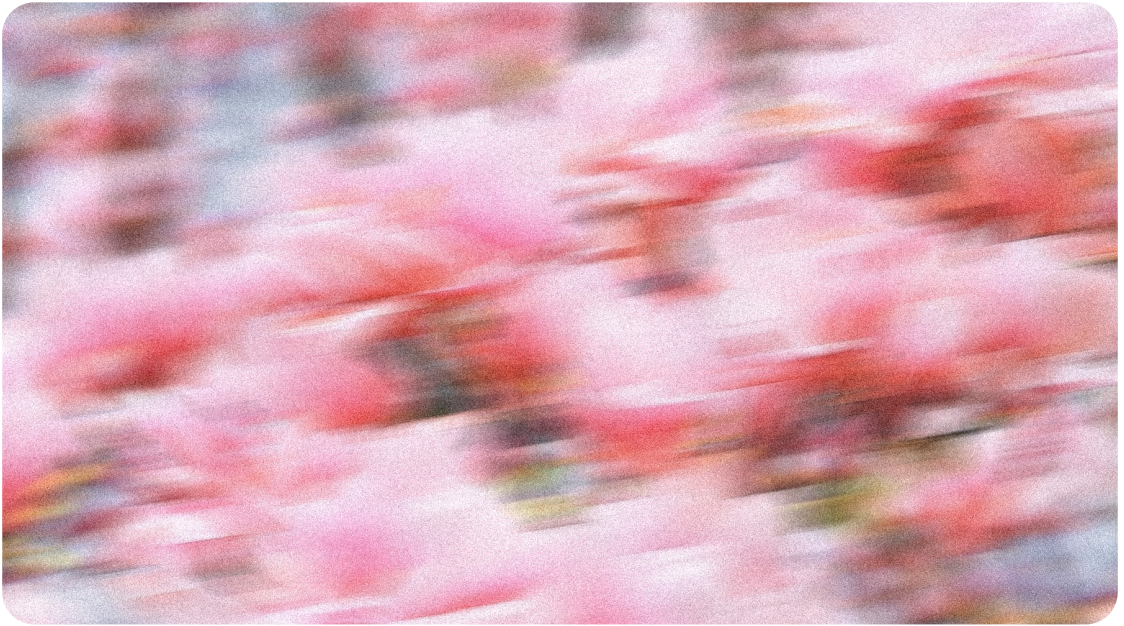
May God your Creator, Jesus your Savior, and the Holy Spirit who is your Guide, grow you in love as you practice.

Be well,

Benjamin Amoah
Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults
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PRACTICE #1:

Affirming Love



“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

1 John 4:8 ESV

THE WARM UP

Tell me about one person who you know loves you. What do they do to show you their love? How do you show love to the people that matter to you?

THE STORY

God is love, Jesus is love - and we are created to love. This is our starting point and perspective for how we are called to process everything from God, the Bible, and the world around us (1 John 4:7-9).

Jesus even talks about how the greatest commandment given to humanity is to love (John 15:12-14). If we are to be friends of Jesus, we are called to love in every circumstance, even with people we are at odds with (Matthew 5:43-48).

Throughout the narrative of the Bible, God is constantly trying to be with humanity in love, through prophets, through sanctuaries, and through Jesus directly. Even at the end of time, the Bible concludes with God and humanity together in peace.

THE HEART OF IT ALL

We wrestle with knowing that God loves us; it is hard to picture being loved entirely and constantly when we often do not experience that sort of love from people we see face to face. God's love is unlimited; no circumstance makes God love us less. Let's confirm this from some Bible stories...

Jesus loves people who are against Him (Mark 5:21-24)

Jesus loves people who do harmful things (Luke 23:39-43)

Jesus loves people who others think are worthless (John 8:1-11)

God's love truly has no limits, and it's important for you to know that even in your lowest moments, moments when you feel like you are against God, moments when you struggle to believe in God, moments when you feel worthless, moments when you choose to do something that does not represent who you truly are, you are not separated from God's love.

THE APPS

Let's read Matthew 22:36-39.

So now that we know that God is love, that everything starts with God being love and God loving us, how do we live this out?

1. Love yourself (Matt 22:39)

Take breaks, say no, have boundaries, and remember you matter.

2. Love your neighbor (Matt 22:39)

Care for those who are suffering, look out for your friends, stand up for people even if others aren't.

3. Love God (Matt 22:36-37)

Make space for your relationship with God regularly, find authentic ways for you to connect with God, love yourself and others, and spend time learning what God has said and done in the past.

FROM MIND TO PRACTICE

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

Choose to do something this week that is "loving your neighbor."

For seven days straight, write on your phone or on a piece of paper, "(Your name), nothing can separate you from My love today."

JOURNAL PROMPT

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

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PRACTICE #2:

Engaging Scripture



“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me...”

John 5:39 ESV

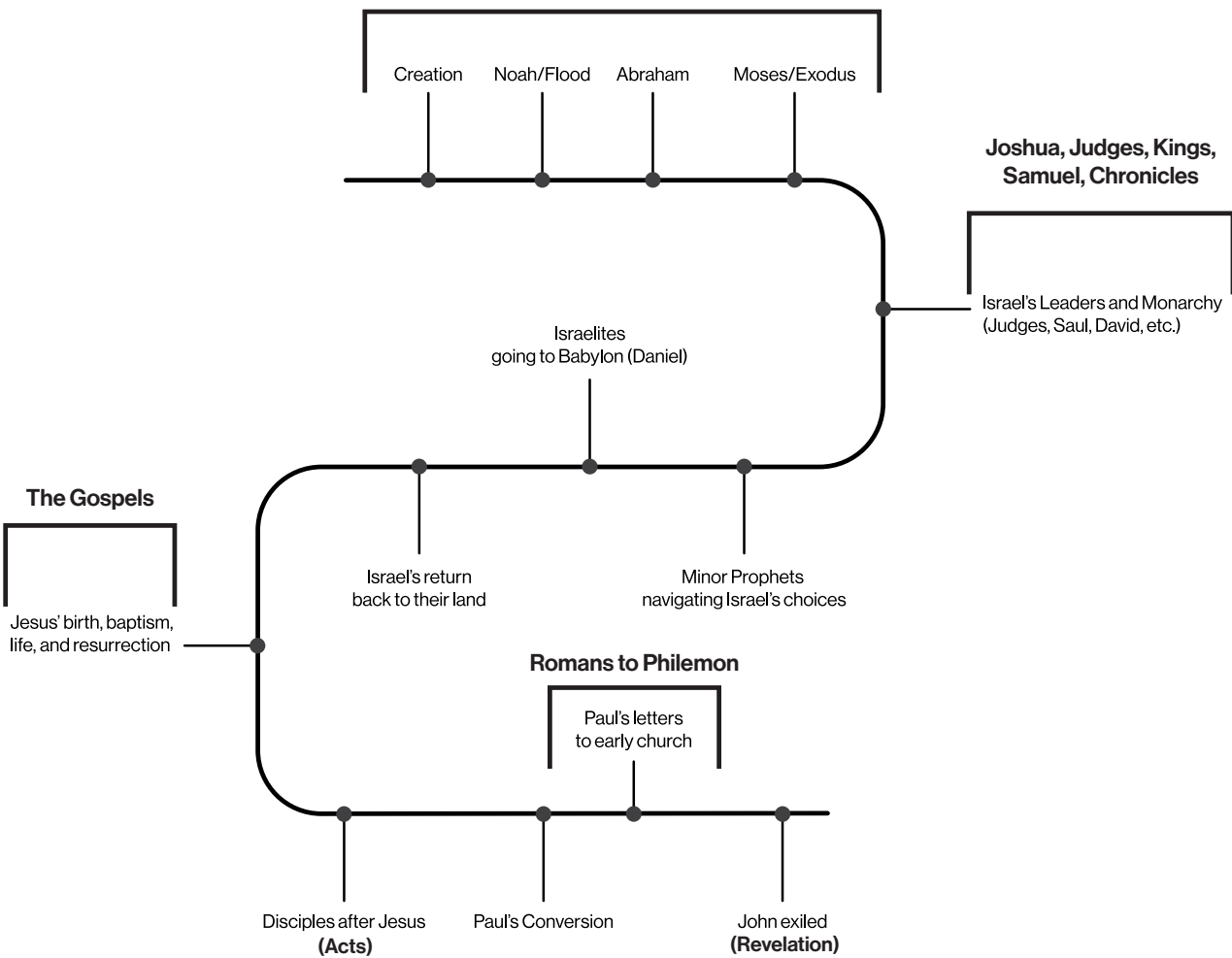
THE WARM UP

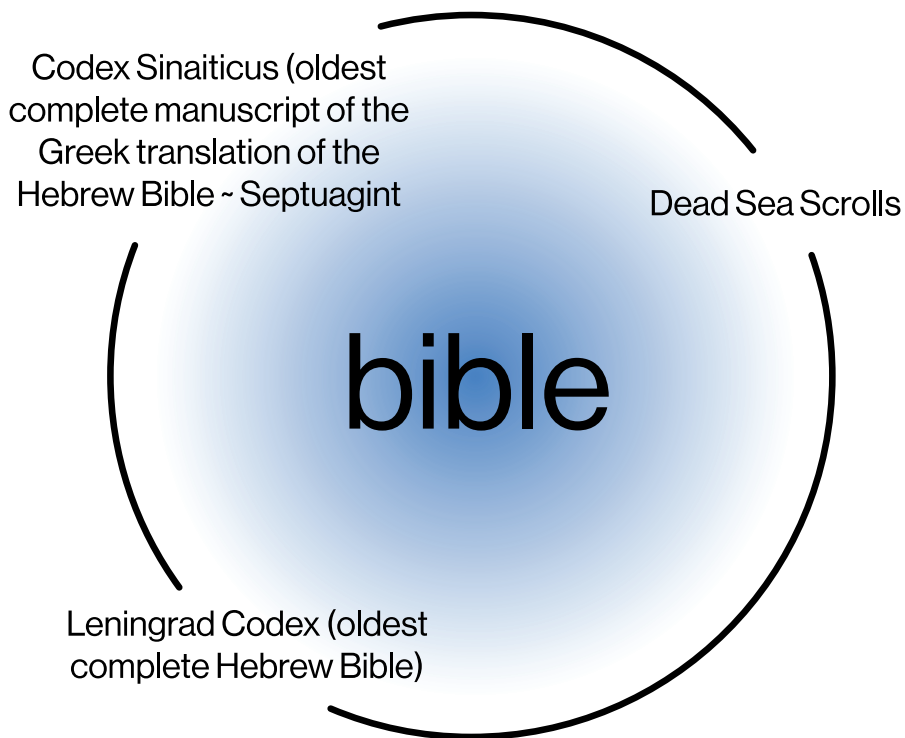
What is your relationship with the Bible? How do you interact with it, how do you see it? When has a verse or an idea from the Bible been helpful to you?

THE STORY

The Bible is a collective of narratives of God interacting with humanity throughout history!

The Torah - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy





In these pages of the Bible, we see how God, in love, continually reaches out to humanity - from Genesis to Revelation - in every one of the 66 books.

THE HEART OF IT ALL

The Bible is a first-hand account of who Jesus is (John 5:18, 19, 39-40)! It was written by people who we believe were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16/2 Peter 1:20-21). Being human, the writers did their best to write through inspiration, while focusing on what mattered to them specifically, being influenced by the context and society they were in.

Sometimes some things are different in detail:
Luke 18:35-43 vs. Matthew 9:27-30

Sometimes they contradict each other:

2 Samuel 24:1 vs. 1 Chronicles 21:1

What do you think about this?

But despite things like contradictions and detail changes, the Bible holds truth. Truth can exist even when facts are not concrete.

Ellen G. White, one of the founders of our church wrote this:

“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).
Thoughts?

Though the Bible is fundamental, it is not the end of God’s voice. Just because life continues outside of the pages of the Bible does not mean God is not moving. That is why we continually seek God’s guidance today, while we use the Bible as our starting place (John 20:30-31, 21:25).

THE APPS

There are countless ways to engage with Scripture! You can read, watch, listen, or even sing it! There are many great sources:

Streetlights Bible on Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube

biblegateway.com

YouVersion Bible App

“The Bible Project”

The list goes on! Find what works for you and make it a habit to engage intentionally with Scripture on your own AND with others.

FROM MIND TO PRACTICE

For the next seven days, set a reminder on your phone for a time to read one Bible verse and reflect on it. If you feel up to it, increase the amount each day or even go to a chapter.

Try a new way to interact with the Bible, ex. Listening to Streetlights Bible.

Ask someone you look up to, “When has a verse or story from the Bible been helpful for you?”

JOURNAL PROMPT

Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17 three times. For the first time, write down whatever questions come to mind. For the second time, write down the emotions you feel. For the third time, write down what you feel God is leading you to do.

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PRACTICE #3:

Celebrating Grace



“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and
this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—”

Ephesians 2:8 NIV

THE WARM UP

How would you describe grace? What is the opposite of grace?

Does God care about the things we do? Why or why not?

THE STORY

When Moses and the Israelites left Egypt after centuries of slavery, they were left trying to piece together who they were and how to see the world after living in a context that had become a new normal, even though it was different from their ancestors. This is when they were presented with THE TEN COMMANDMENTS and many other laws (see Leviticus and Deuteronomy) to help rehabilitate and reform their beliefs, standards, and conduct.

Let's read the TEN together. Exodus 20:1-17

What do you think is the most important commandment?

The Ten Commandments are timeless: the first three connect us vertically with God, the fourth connects us with both God and the world around us, including our neighbors, and the last six connect us with our neighbors.

We read a few weeks ago about the greatest commandment. Let's revisit Matthew 22:36-40.

The two greatest commandments are: (1) **love God** and (2) **love your neighbor as yourself**. All of God's directions are for us to be more loving in all aspects of our lives and to all who are in our lives, familiar or strangers.

THE HEART OF IT ALL

Why does this matter? What does this have to do with grace?

We often think we must do the right things to complete our "Christian Checklist," to win God's approval, AND/OR to make it into heaven. Living out the law (a life of love) does not make God love us more; in fact, we do it out of response to the love we receive from God. God doesn't say, "Follow my commandments AND THEN I will love you"; God says, "If you love me, follow my commandments" (John 14:15-17). Relationship always comes first.

We do not gain more of God's approval or salvation because of what we do (Ephesians 2:8-10).

We spread love in this world and grow our relationship with God because we accept the grace that God has given us, which is the first step in our relationship with God. God has

done the heavy lifting; all we can do is choose to be intentional with our relationship with God, which will affect the way we live our lives.

THE APPS

We celebrate grace:

Through baptism... (Matthew 3:13-17)

We can respond to God's universal and free love by being baptized.

Baptism is a public or communal event.

Baptism is by "immersion," being lowered under the water.

Baptism happens when a person expresses the desire to be baptized.

Baptism initiates membership in a local congregation and the global Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Through foot washing... (John 13:3-11)

We can respond to God by serving people and recognizing that we are not greater than any other human on this planet.

Foot-washing is when two people or a family take turns rinsing each other's feet in a basin of water and pray for each other.

Through Communion... (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Communion is often celebrated four times a year and is open to all people.

Bread and grape juice, representing Jesus' life and death, are served, or brought to your home. The bread and "wine" are consumed in unison, led by a pastor or elder.

FROM MIND TO PRACTICE

Participate in foot-washing OR communion next time the opportunity arises.

Ask someone who you know has been baptized, "What led you to choose to be baptized?"

JOURNAL PROMPT

Read Acts 8:26-40 three times. For the first time, write down whatever questions come to mind. For the second time, write down the emotions you feel. For the third time, write down what you feel God is leading you to do.

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