

International Women's of Prayer

March 2, 2024

SERMON

Ignite Your Prayer Life

Written by Linda Mei Lin Koh, Ed.D.

SEMINAR

Five Spiritual Benefits of Prayer

Written by Linda Mei Lin Koh, Ed.D.



This sermon resource packet was prepared
By Department of Women's Ministries
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring MD 20904-6600 USA
adventist.women.org
womensministries@gc.adventist.org

Seventh-day Adventist® Church

GENERAL CONFERENCE
WORLD HEADQUARTERS



WOMEN'S MINISTRIES



August 22, 2023

Dear Sisters, joyful day. I'm excited to share with you our International Women's Day of Prayer packet for 2024. Our writer for this year is Dr. Linda Mei Koh, retired General Conference Children's Ministries director but who also served as Women's Ministries director in Southern Asia-Pacific Division.

Our theme this year is "Ignite." Let me ask you a personal question, "How is your prayer life?" What would you respond? Would you say, "It's on fire!" Or "It's okay." Or may you would be truly honest and say, "It's dying or non-existent and needs help." Well, whatever your answer may be, this packet is for you. The theme "Ignite" is directly focused on helping you set your prayer life on fire but also includes other areas of our spiritual growth that need igniting.

My prayer is that as you participate in this year's International Women's Day of Prayer that you will open your hearts and minds for the Holy Spirit to ignite a fire deep within that will empower your prayer and devotional life and your relationships at home and abroad, your neighborhood, your workplace, and also your church. Let the Holy Spirit fire be seen shining in your faces, actions, and words.

With love and joy,

Heather-Dawn Small
Women's Ministries Director

"I thank God for you..." Philippians 1:3-6

Table of Contents

Scripture references.....	3
Program Notes	3
About the Author	4
Prayer Focus.....	5
Divine Service Outline.....	6
Children’s Story	7
Sermon.....	9
Seminar.....	15

Scripture references

All quoted Bible texts in this packet are quoted from New International Version.

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Program Notes

Please feel free to translate, adjust, and edit the resource packet according to your division’s needs, including the best Bible version for your use. Also, you are free to adapt the packet according to your cultural audience. When your division has translated the assigned packet for French, Portuguese, Spanish or other languages, please send us a digital file to share with our sisters who need it.

About the Author

Linda Mei Lin Koh was born and raised in Singapore. Her love for children influenced her choice of degrees and career over the next fifty years. She pursued a major in elementary education with the first two years at Southeast Asia Union College in Singapore and completed her B.S. degree at Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University). She earned her M.A. and Ed.D. degrees from Andrews University, Michigan, U. S. A.

Dr. Koh is an experienced teacher, working with children from elementary to college levels for twenty-three years. In 1994, she was called to serve as the director for Children's, Family, and Women's Ministries in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. In 2003, she was called to serve as the Children's Ministries director at the General Conference, a position she held until she retired at GC Session in St. Louis, June 2022.

Dr. Koh enjoys writing and developing resources for children and has contributed numerous articles for the *Adventist Review*, *Ministry*TM Magazine, *Elder's Digest*, and other church publications. She has also co-authored two books for children.

Linda is married to Oliver Koh, and they have two adult sons and six grandchildren.

Prayer Focus

As followers and disciples of Jesus, women are called to work and pray; to pray with faith, perseverance, and confidence, without ceasing and giving thanks; and to work diligently in faith, trusting Jesus for all their needs, in the preparation of a people for His coming.

Ellen G. White, a woman of prayer, who found her power in Christ, wrote:

“Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.” *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 113

Our focus this year is “Ignite Your Prayer Life.” Ask God to give you power to:

- Become “brighter lights” in your communities and *ignite change* in yourself and in others.
- Reach out to people in crisis and *ignite hope* in them.
- Share His grace, compassion and love to others and *ignite unity* to reach out and share the gospel.
- Have a change of heart that will *ignite forgiveness*.

The Women’s Ministries theme responds to God’s call saying, “I Will Go Reach My World.” Who are part of “Your World” today? What else can you do to reach “Your World” today?

- Pray for God to ignite love in you for the salvation of those in “Your World.”
- Pray for God to ignite creativity in you to reach “Your World.”
- Pray for God to ignite holiness of life in Christ Jesus through a daily communion with Him to represent Him to “Your World.”

Always remember the six issues that impact women globally and keep them in constant prayer.

1. Abuse
2. Poverty
3. Health
4. Illiteracy
5. Workload
6. Leadership opportunities

Divine Service Outline

A Suggested Order of Service

Call to Worship

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3, 4 (NIV)

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

Hymn of Praise: #181, “Does Jesus Care?”

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal

Pastoral Prayer

Call for the Offering

Responsive Reading: #740, “Christ the Deliverer”

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal

Children’s Story: “A Miraculous Recovery!”

Special music

Sermon: “Ignite Your Prayer Life!”

Hymn of Response: #485 “I Must Tell Jesus”

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal

Closing Prayer

—end of suggested order of service—

Children's Story

A Miraculous Recovery!

Written by Linda Mei Lin Koh

Seven-year-old Alosie was enjoying her play in her backyard when she heard loud sirens and screeching of tires in front of her house. She rushed back to the house just in time to see her father being wheeled out by some people on a rolling bed, with mama following behind.

“Papa, Papa! Where are they taking you?” cried Alosie loudly. She tried to follow, but a strong hand grabbed her and hugged her tightly.

“My dear, it is okay. Papa will be taken care of,” said Granny gently as she cuddled Alosie close to her.

“You can pray for papa to get well soon,” Granny suggested.

Several days passed and Alosie continued to pray every day, asking Jesus, to heal her papa. Soon she began to wonder why mama was also missing. What had happened to them? Did they leave her behind with Granny?

Then one morning as Alosie was just getting out of bed, she heard mama’s voice. Excitedly she dashed downstairs. “Oh, mama! I missed you!” Mama gave Alosie a big hug and a big kiss on her cheek.

“Alosie dear, today you are going with us to visit papa in the hospital! He would be happy to see you,” Mama exclaimed happily with a twinkle in her eye.

Alosie couldn’t wait to see papa. She walked briskly through those big hospital doors and soon walked into Room 232.

“Papa, Papa, I missed you!” exclaimed Alosie as she hugged him tightly, “I have been praying for you,”

Papa was happy to see her, but she noticed that he couldn’t move his right hand as before. He also seemed to speak very strangely—not very clear. Would papa be able to walk again?

That night mama explained to Alosie that papa had a sickness called “stroke.” It would take some time before papa would recover completely.

“Mama, I know Jesus will heal papa. Let’s keep praying for him,” said Alosie with confidence.

Soon papa came home from the hospital, but he had to go very often for treatment with someone called a physiotherapist. They made him exercise his legs, arms, and his hands. And after papa came home, he continued to do all the swinging of arms, legs, and hands. Seemed kind of strange, but Alosie continued to pray and ask Jesus to heal his papa.

After many months, one morning Alosie heard some excitement from papa's room and he seemed to be calling her.

"Papa, Papa, are you all right?" replied Alosie immediately. When she stepped into papa's room, she was in for a surprise.

"Mama, Alosie, see me walk," exclaimed papa joyfully as he took several steps forward, "Thank you God, thank you Jesus!"

"Yes, yes, Jesus answered my prayers. I knew He would do that from the beginning, and I can trust Him," said Alosie affirmatively.

"It's a miracle! It's a miracle that papa can walk and talk again! exclaimed Alosie ecstatically.

After a few more months, papa was able to talk normally again. He preached just like he did before his sickness. He could also walk again except with a slight limp. It was a miraculous recovery!

Jesus never fails us. He knows our needs and will heal according to His will.

Luke reminds us,

"For with God nothing will be impossible." (Luke 1:37 NKJV)."

—end of children's story—

Sermon

Ignite Your Prayer Life

By Linda Mei Lin Koh

Scripture reading: 2 Peter 1:3, 4, NIV

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

INTRODUCTION

One afternoon I was visiting with an old friend who was sharing her problems with me. I listened carefully and offered words of encouragement when appropriate. At the end of our time together, she exclaimed, “Hey, why don’t we pray? It doesn’t hurt anyway.”

Do we regard prayer this way? Is prayer just a ritual we practice whenever we have the time for it, or when we desperately need God’s help? Prayer is an essential part of a Christian’s life. Air is as essential to breathing as prayer is to life. Ellen White writes, “Prayer is a necessity; for it is the life of the soul. Family prayer, public prayer, have their place; but it is secret communion with God that sustains the soul life.”¹

The great reformer, Martin Luther concurred, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”² Thus, Christ Himself invites us to seek Him, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Just think, the Lord gives us the privilege of coming to Him individually in prayer, unburdening our problems to Him. Ellen White describes it this way, “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.”³

Jesus treasured this power while He was on this earth. The gospels recorded numerous occasions when Christ spent many hours communing with God, seeking strength from His heavenly Father to meet the challenges of His work and mission.

Matthew tells us, “After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone” (Matthew 14:23). Luke records this, “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God” (Luke 6:12). Mark writes, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35).

Indeed, prayer is power! Prayer ignites our spiritual life. When our prayers ignite a flame, they can impact our lives, our families, and all those around us. Let’s examine four ways that prayer can ignite our lives.

1. PRAYER IGNITES CHANGE

After accepting Jesus into our lives, the apostle Paul reminds us, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are to walk in newness of life, but our sinful nature often pops up. We need our heavenly Father to help us in our spiritual walk and our battle against the devil. Thus, communion with God is highly essential for spiritual health so that He can change us to become more loving, more compassionate, and more mission focused to reach out to others.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used the examples of salt and light to explain to His disciples and all listeners how His followers ignite change around them (Matthew 5):

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot” (verse 13).

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (verses 14-16).

Today, Jesus is asking us to be **salt** as well as **light**. His vision is that we ignite change by bringing light into darkness and salt to bring a taste of God into the world. He is asking that we would be known by the light we bring and shine into our communities and by how we live, as salt in our circles of influence.

As we seek to be a light to the communities around us, we can pray to God to open doors for us to see the needs of our communities and to help us find ways we can serve them.

Yes, pray, pray, pray! Prayer can ignite change in us. If we have negative attitudes or prejudice toward other races or nationalities, God can change us into salt and light wherever we are. David prayed earnestly to God, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). David continued his prayer by asking God to grant him “a willing spirit” (verse 12).

2. PRAYER IGNITES HOPE

This familiar verse is often quoted to ignite hope.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

Prophet Jeremiah’s message was one of comfort and reassurance to his people in extreme adversity and despair. His nation had just suffered a brutal invasion and the people were displaced. This picture is no different from our world today. We think of the Ukraine war that caused many to flee their homes. The wars in Afghanistan and Syria, and civil wars in a few African countries, resulting in thousands of refugees flooding across Europe and North America. Other factors contributing to adversity and despair in our

time are the problems with energy supply, inflation, and socio-political divisions. Natural disasters, violent crimes, extreme poverty, and unemployment are on the rise.

People are looking for hope, even a sliver of hope to grasp. It seems to many that there is no hope. This is the time to pray for these people. Jeremiah's message affirms that God cares for people and families as they grapple with these problems. Such promises from the Bible provide people in adversity with hope. God offers hope to all. He reminds us that we are loved and cherished by Him. He does not forsake us. He will provide a better future.

When Peter was imprisoned for preaching the gospel, the church was in despair. There seemed no hope to get him out of jail. The members came together to pray fervently. God heard their prayers and sent an angel to lead Peter out of prison. The church's fervent prayers ignited hope in the miraculous release of Peter from prison (Acts 12:1-17).

The apostle Paul, who had suffered beating, imprisonment, and persecution, reminds us that "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

So, praying for people in crisis who desperately need hope, provides them with comfort and assurance. In times of earthquakes and flooding, when people's homes have been destroyed and their basic needs are not met, reach out to pray for and with them. Many never turn down such prayers of comfort. Introduce them to a God who cares. Encourage them to pray to Him who is always there to listen.

Bible prayers can be a source of comfort and strength for those who suffer adversity. Pray the words of Isaiah 41:10 with them: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Paul's prayer in Romans 15:13 ignites great hope, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

3. PRAYER IGNITES UNITY

The passage of 2 Chronicles 30:1-13 describes the celebration of Passover when King Hezekiah called all Israel "to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem" (verse 1). The kingdom of Judah was in crisis; all their neighboring kingdoms had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians. King Hezekiah needed to bring his factional kingdoms together in unity. Verse 12 mentions, "Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the Lord."

This gathering brought a very large crowd of people to Jerusalem for seven days. The impact on them brought about a united front as "they removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley" (verse 14). Hezekiah invited all his people not just to attend the Passover festival, but to reunite as a people who would focus on a joint mission to prepare for the future in uncertain times when the Assyrians would attack Jerusalem.

Jesus Himself prayed for unity for His followers—His disciples and you and me.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:20-23).

Therefore, the followers of Christ need to pray for unity so that the grace, compassion, and love of God will bind us together to reach out to share the gospel. I believe that unity is the key to reaching the world for Christ. We may have differences, but when others see that we are one in Christ, and that we love one another, it has a bigger impact in our evangelism. Praying for unity is therefore vital.

A praying church is a loving church! Earnest prayer ignites unity, and the apostle Paul urges us to, “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3f). Without prayer, sinful beings like us are easily tempted to create fragmentation and arguments over many issues within the church, such as styles of worship, types of music, women in leadership, etc. So, we need to pray without ceasing to ignite unity as a body in Christ, moving us forward together to reach the world.

4. PRAYER IGNITES FORGIVENESS

Have you been hurt by someone so deeply that you have become resentful, bitter, and broken? Is it possible to forgive a friend who spread lies about you? Forgive an abusive father? Or even forgive a burglar who murdered your parents? As sinful beings, it is impossible to forgive. Forgiveness is easier said than done.

However, the Bible identifies people who forgave one another which has been an inspiration for us. Joseph forgave his brother for selling him into slavery (Genesis 50:20). Stephen forgave those who stoned him for preaching the word. As he was dying, he prayed, “‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:59-60). Jesus forgave His persecutors while hanging on the cross. He said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus said it very plainly, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).

Yes, forgiving others is a necessary part of what it means to be a Christian. However, forgiveness is very hard. It is natural to want someone else to pay for the pain they have caused you. Yet, Ellen White writes this strong statement, “We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults.”⁴

One day a young man (let’s call him Jim) came to tell his pastor how he was abused by his neighbor as a child, and how his parents never expressed their understanding and love to him. But only recently had Jim come to grips with his own pain. He had been praying to God and talking to a chaplain friend. His two close friends were also praying for him daily. All three of them prayed that God would help Jim “let

go” of his bitterness and the past. The Holy Spirit filled his heart as it worked on him slowly and consistently. Finally, he was able to go to his parents to reunite with them.

Yes, prayer ignites forgiveness for we will receive power from our heavenly Father to have a change of heart to “let go” our hurts and forgive. Reminding ourselves how God has forgiven us in Christ Jesus, when we don’t deserve it, can help us forgive others. These two Bible promises can help us always depend on God to give us the grace and love to live out forgiveness. “I can do all things through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

Pray for power to forgive, but also pray for the person who hurt you. In Matthew 5:44, Jesus commands us to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Ask God to reveal His love to your offender in your heart and for Him to dissolve the bitter, negative feelings.

Indeed, prayer has power! Constant prayers can ignite change, hope, unity, and forgiveness in our lives and in our church. Let’s not neglect this daily communication with our heavenly Father, for prayer is the master key to a continued pursuit of holiness of life in Christ Jesus.

Do you desire to let God ignite change in you? Will you pray today for hope, unity, and forgiveness in your life? Are you willing to commit or recommit to a daily connection with God?

—end of sermon—

REFERENCES

¹Ellen G. White, (2002) *Prayer* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 18.

²Martin Luther, AZ Quotes. <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/544784>

³Ellen G. White, (1892) *Steps to Christ* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 8

⁴Ellen G. White, (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 113.

—end of sermon references—

Seminar

Five Spiritual Benefits of Prayer

By Linda Mei Lin Koh

Prayer is an important part of a Christian's life. Some of us spend hours on our knees, while others just say a quick prayer before going to work or at bedtime. Is prayer just a daily religious ritual that we practice? Have you ever thought of the spiritual benefits of prayer? They are far greater than you may imagine.

Prayer is life changing if we make time for it. According to Ellen White, "Prayer is one of the most essential duties. Without it you cannot maintain a Christian walk. It elevates, strengthens, and ennobles; it is the soul talking with God."¹

Let's look at five spiritual benefits of prayer.

1. DRAWS US CLOSER TO GOD

When we pray, we are talking to our heavenly Father. He is always there to listen to what we want to share with Him as a friend. Ellen White confirms that, "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us but brings us up to Him."²

Good friends communicate with each other frequently and at any time. We don't just talk to each other only occasionally. It is the same with God. When we spend time to pray, we build a closer relationship with our heavenly Father. We form a connection with Him. We can talk to Him anytime, anywhere. We are not afraid to tell Him our problems and concerns as well as our joys and praises. When we are sorrowful or when we lost our loved ones, tell your special Friend, for He has promised: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

The apostle Paul also encourages us, "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).

Ellen White adds this admonition, "The Lord has bidden us to draw nigh to Him and He will draw nigh to us; and drawing nigh to Him, we receive the grace by which to do those works which will be rewarded at His hands."³

Think and Share

- What challenges do you face in trying to draw nearer to God in prayer?
- How do busy families these days find time for prayer? Share your own experience with the group.

2. ENABLES US TO RESIST TEMPTATION

Jesus counseled His disciples, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). Peter also warns us, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Prayer keeps us alert. Through prayer, we can receive strength to say no to sin. We can ask God to help us make the right choices when tempted to do wrong. Paul gave us one good strategy to “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2), for earthly things often tempt us away from spiritual things.

Judy had the habit of using foul language, cursing and swearing all the time. But when she met Jesus, she was touched by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus and was soon baptized. But her greatest challenge was to stop using bad language. The pastor told Judy, “Pray, Pray, Pray.” Whenever Judy was tempted to curse or swear, she would pray immediately. She spent hours praying, pleading with God to transform her and help her speak kind and loving words. Prayer worked marvelously for her through time. Today, we see a completely different Judy who serves as a greeter at her church every Sabbath.

Young people today may be tempted to try drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes. Some may be tempted to cheat on exams or get involved in other wrong activities. Jesus taught His disciples to ask God, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:9). Remember, if we want God to help us avoid temptations, then we should also avoid tempting situations.

Ellen White indicates strongly that Christ is our only hope to fight temptation. She writes, “Pray much. Prayer is the life of the soul. The prayer of faith is the weapon by which we may successfully resist every assault of the enemy.”⁴

Think and Share

- How has prayer helped you in your fight against temptation?
- Share a few Bible verses that promise God will be with you during such situations.

3. IMPROVES OUR MENTAL HEALTH

Life today poses a great deal of challenges for us and many of us must deal with anxiety, insecurity, worry, and stress. Many are asking how they can find strength to cope with them. The apostle Paul advises us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Research studies support what the Bible advises. Researchers from Baylor University examined the data of 1,714 volunteers who participated in their recent Baylor Religion study, entitled, “Prayer, Attachment to God, and Symptoms of Anxiety-Related Disorders among U. S. Adults,” and was published in the journal *Sociology of Religion*. They found that people who pray to a loving and protective God are less likely to experience anxiety-related disorders, such as worry, fear, self-consciousness, social anxiety and obsessive-compulsive behavior.⁵

An article by Jenna Summers in the AdventHealth website concurs with this that, “Doctors who have studied the physiological effects of prayer have reported that when praying, heart rate and blood pressure decrease, and breathing regulates. Prayer reduces stress as well as promotes feelings of

control and peace of mind. Illnesses that are caused (at least in part) by an increase in stress are responsible for over half of all doctor visits in the United States.”⁶

Praying for others can be helpful in giving us a calm and peaceful spirit in dealing with mental issues like anxiety, depression, or stress. When we intercede for others, we remove *self* from the scene and concentrate on helping others through prayer.

What counsel did Ellen White give to those suffering depression? According to an article in the *Adventist Review*, Tim Poirier points out she learned that support from family and friends can be invaluable. Often it was the prayers of close associates that broke the spell of darkness.⁷

Yes, prayer is closely linked to better mental health as we learn to trust our loving Father who will heal us and lead us through life’s challenges.

Think and Share

- From your experience, how does prayer help you deal with anxiety, worry, and stress in your life and family?
- For a person with a terminal illness, is prayer still helpful for the person’s mental health?

4. INCREASES OUR THANKFULNESS

The apostle Paul urges us, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). When we maintain a heart of thankfulness and gratitude, we live a happier life because we shift our focus from complaining to praising God for all His goodness.

Throughout the Bible, praise and gratitude towards God is the main theme. When you learn to have a thankful heart and to see the best in all situations, you learn to be more positive even in the toughest of times.

Ellen White writes, “Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father’s house?”⁸

When we are joyful and thankful, we sing praises to the Lord, thus, inspiring others to have faith and confidence in a loving God who is there with us and for us all the time. The Book of Psalms is full of songs of praises and thankfulness which we can use to formulate our prayers. Psalm 146, verses 1 and 2 extol, “Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.”

Rosie lived in a nursing home and had been on a wheelchair a great part of her life. For years she had to deal with five types of health problems, but that did not deter her from being cheerful and encouraging. Each morning, she went into some of her friends’ rooms, drew aside the curtains, and opened the windows to let the sunshine in. Then in her cheerful voice she said, “Good morning, Denise! Good morning, Dalia! It’s a beautiful day. Let’s get up and praise God, thanking Him for

giving us a good night's sleep. At least we don't have to eat pills to go off to sleep." Rosie's regular visits to the rooms of other residents were welcomed, and she always prayed for them.

When someone asked Rosie, "Why are you so cheery when you are not able to walk?" She gave her biggest smile, "Yes, I can't walk, but I can pray and sing praises to God for giving me life." Rosie shows us that prayer increases our thankfulness.

Think and Share

- The apostle Paul asked us to give thanks in all circumstances. Is it easy to give thanks when you are facing tough situations in your life?
- Share some suggestions on how to be thankful to God even in tough times.

5. DEVELOPS A MORE CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER

We are all sinful beings with a tendency towards evil. We are selfish and self-centered, focusing on ourselves and on the things of this world. That's why Paul admonishes us, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

As followers of Jesus Christ, we want to become more and more like Him. Apostle Paul reminds us, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Undoubtedly, being transformed into the Lord's image doesn't mean we will be perfect. At times we may slip back into our old ways. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us daily. We need Christ to shape us and mold our rough character traits. Through prayer and studying of His Word, we will learn more and more of Christ.

Paul summarizes the characteristics of Christlikeness in Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness." These "fruits of the Spirit" are visible evidence of God's Spirit at work in a person's life, qualities which Christians are called to cultivate.

Bridges in his book, *The Discipline of Grace*, says, "To be like Jesus is not just to stop committing a few obvious sins such as lying, cheating, gossiping, and thinking impure thoughts. To be like Jesus is to always seek to do the will of the Father. [It is] to come to the place where we delight to do the will of God, however sacrificial or unpleasant that may seem to us at the time, simply because it is *His will*."⁹

Think and Share

- What are some specific Christlike characteristics you would like God to help you develop?
- From your experience, has prayer helped you make some drastic changes in yourself?

—end of seminar—

REFERENCES

¹Ellen G. White, (1882) *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 313.

²Ellen G. White, (1892) *Steps to Christ* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 93.

³Ellen G. White, (1956) *EGW SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association), 1122.3.

⁴Ellen G. White, (2022) *Prayer* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 91.

⁵*New Study Examines the Effects of Prayer on Mental Health*,
<https://psychcentral.com/blog/new-study-examines-the-effects-of-prayer-on-mental-health#1>

⁶Jenna Summers, *5 Reasons You Should Pray Daily*, AdventHealth, July 19, 2019.
<https://www.adventhealth.com/blog/5-reasons-you-should-pray-daily>.

⁷Tim Poirier, *Ellen White and Depression*, Adventist Review, January 3, 2017.
<https://adventistreview.org/magazine-article/ellen-white-and-depression/>.

⁸Ellen G. White, (1905) *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 25.

⁹Jeffrey Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), chapter 6.

—end of seminar references—