

Back to the Altar

100 DAYS OF PRAYER

FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

May 9-15, 2025

Learning to Linger in the Word

by Nina Atcheson



Some time ago I visited a church organization for some meetings I was attending. Before my workday began, I decided to join the morning staff worship. Someone was reading from a short devotional. There were about forty workers who sat in rows. I sat on the end of a row, looking with curiosity at the faces of those around me. I saw various responses. Some looked out the window, seeming eager to get on with the day. Others looked a little blank, perhaps disconnected. Others were listening. I waited, hungry for some takeaway words that would fill me as the day began. However, before I knew it, a short prayer was being offered, and everyone was rushing off to start their busy day.

I found myself longing for more; longing perhaps for what God was waiting to give and wondering if I was the only one left feeling a little empty. While I've read many good devotionals, as I'm sure you have too, there's nothing as deep or inspiring as the Bible itself. However, it's so often that we rush—even in our personal Bible reading.

Perhaps you have tried to read the Bible through in a year. Maybe you've given up after a few weeks of hurriedly reading one or two chapters a day because it felt like just another thing to check off your daily to-do list. Instead of finding joy in our reading, it can sometimes feel like a chore we need to accomplish. If we don't "keep up" with what we think we should be reading, guilt can drive us away from spending time with God.

Many of us are busy, living in a rushed society. Sometimes I've looked at the clock and thought, "Right. I have a few minutes before I need to shower, eat breakfast, and get to work. I better quickly read and pray and get on with my day!" And so, I've gone through the motions very quickly and at the end of my brief time with God I continued to rush into my day, only a little satisfied that I had appeased my conscience and spent a little time reading my Bible.

Perhaps you can relate to this too. Yet have you ever wondered what might happen in our spiritual lives if we sought God by giving Him some unrushed time in His Word? How might this impact our days? There are so many profound, deep, convicting, and encouraging messages in the Bible that God has given to help us, yet too often we leave our Bibles closed.

Over the years I've struggled to wake up to study my Bible. Because of work commitments, I became more of a night person. I would hear about people waking up early to study their Bible and thought to myself, "That just isn't possible for me!" But I still tried. If I wanted to read my Bible, I would set my alarm and drag myself out of bed

fifteen minutes earlier than usual to do so, but to be fair, I would spend most of the time trying to wake myself up before I quickly scanned a chapter of the Bible and then hurriedly went on my way.

But something happened to me several years ago when I truly surrendered my time to God. I asked Him to wake me up in the mornings. It wasn't a passing request but a heartfelt desperate cry that went like this:

God, please help me to desire You. I know I need to spend time with You, and I want to love Your Word. I know You can speak to me through Your Word. But I need You to help me. Please wake me up with enough time to spend with You. You know my life is too full already, but I can't do this without You any longer.

After I prayed this prayer, I started to wake up early, without an alarm, usually before five o'clock in the morning. I would be in the deepest sleep and all of a sudden wake up. I knew God had answered my prayer. Of course, He was eager and waiting to spend time with me!

When this happened day after day, I found myself enjoying a precious routine as I met with God downstairs in a cozy corner of my office. As the days and months went by, I expected to feel tired, but surprisingly, I wasn't. Instead of reaching for my phone to see whether any e-mails had arrived overnight, I made a commitment to spend time with God first, before anything else took my attention. That personal challenge hasn't always been easy, and I am often tempted to launch into other things. But if I have chosen God to be number one in my life, surely, I can honor Him as my priority every morning.

Jesus gave us this example: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). Imagine Jesus, seemingly alone to the onlooker but abiding with God, sitting by the Sea of Galilee or on the side of a hill, praying and communing with His Father before the world around Him woke up. I'm sure this time was what gave Him strength to face all He faced while being separated from His Father. If Jesus needed this time to linger with His Father each day, how much more do we?

God's Word tells us, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" Psalm 34:8

Have you ever tasted a slab of honeycomb from a beehive? The first time I tried it, I was surprised at how the sweet honey melted on my tongue. It would have to be one of the most delicious treats, which bring to life the words of Psalm 119:103,104. "How sweet are Your Words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding," David wrote.

God's words are indeed sweet to my soul and unlike anything else the world has to offer.

How might our lives change if we truly took time to read and linger in the Word of God? Before rushing into our busy days, we can give Jesus our first thoughts and

invite Him to lead us today. He will teach us from His living, powerful Word, and draw us to Himself. We will meet Him again—today, and tomorrow, because He promises that we will find Him when we seek Him with all our hearts (Jeremiah 29:13).

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Discovering Jesus in His Word and in Prayer

Welcome to another session of **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer!**

Before we dive into this session, let's take a few minutes to review what we've learned about the first two principles of Back to the Altar.

(Note: If you would like to review the introductory lessons from weeks 1-3, click here: <https://tinyurl.com/Review1-3>)

While we are learning many practical things about what it means to come back to the altar, there are seven specific Back to the Altar principles that we are focusing on.

- **Back to the Altar Principle #1: Come to Jesus as You Are.** In this first principle we learned how Jesus invites us to come to Him just as we are. We also learned how we can have peace about our salvation (See 1 John 5:13).

Remember, this is not a cheap "stay-as-you-are" or "once-saved-always-saved" gospel. This peaceful assurance is based on specific truths from God's Word which remind us that our sins, when confessed, as well as our best efforts (Isa. 64:6) are both being covered by Jesus' perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10:14). He is our perfect substitute and surety!

The following quote really keeps everything in perspective:

"Perfection through our own good works we can never attain. The soul who sees Jesus by faith, repudiates his own righteousness. He sees himself as incomplete, his repen-

Video Illustrations
to help Take this
Series Deeper

**Intro to
Discovering Jesus**
[https://tinyurl.com/
BTTAW6VID1](https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID1)

**Seeing Jesus in
Revelation**
[https://tinyurl.com/
BTTAW6VID2](https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID2)

**Allowing the
Word to Change
Your Life**
[https://tinyurl.com/
BTTAW6VID3](https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID3)

**Elijah Revival
Moment**
[https://tinyurl.com/
BTTAW6VID4](https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID4)

HANDOUTS

**Waterfall Picture
Handout**
[https://tinyurl.com/
Waterfall-Handout](https://tinyurl.com/Waterfall-Handout)

**Pictures of Jesus
Handout**
[https://tinyurl.com/
PicturesOfJesus](https://tinyurl.com/PicturesOfJesus)

tance insufficient, his strongest faith but feebleness, his most costly sacrifice as meager, and he sinks in humility at the foot of the cross. But a voice speaks to him from the oracles of God's Word. In amazement he hears the message, 'Ye are complete in Him.' Now all is at rest in his soul. No longer must he strive to find some worthiness in himself, some meritorious deed by which to gain the favor of God. Beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, he finds the peace of Christ; for pardon is written against his name, and he accepts the Word of God, 'Ye are complete in Him' (Colossians 2:10)" *Faith and Works*, p. 107-108.

Are you tempted to keep focusing on the inadequacies of self rather than looking to Jesus? The enemy of our souls would like nothing better. But we must look up! Look and live, as Scripture tells us (See Numbers 2:8).

If you continue to struggle in this area, go back and prayerfully study the materials from week 4 in more depth at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA-Week4>

- **Back to the Altar Principle #2: Honor Jesus as Lord.** In the study from last session, we had three very specific heart challenges. Let's review them now.
 - **1st Challenge:** Honor Jesus as Lord, before you go to sleep each night, by asking Jesus to wake you up each morning to have unrushed time with Him. Get up when He calls.
 - **2nd Challenge:** Each day pray the following prayer of surrender: "Dear Jesus, I give You all that I am. I give You all that have. I give You my attitude and my electronics."
 - **3rd Challenge:** Abide in Jesus! Daily be in AWE of God and His Word. Don't be distracted by the many "Ahabs" in your life.

Time for Testimonies: Do you have a special testimony of how God has been working in your life this past week? Or maybe you want to share how God has grown your walk with Him through this **Back to the Altar | 100 Days of Prayer**? (*Write down your thoughts or find a friend and share a short testimony about something God has done for YOU in the past five weeks!*)

Bible Study

1. Connect Activity

Take a moment to look at this beautiful picture. What do you see? Do you see a beautiful waterfall on a lovely fall day, or do you see something more?

- **Click for Waterfall Picture Illustration** - <https://tinyurl.com/Waterfall-Handout>

Look closely! Squint your eyes almost closed and look again. Once you see it, you cannot unsee it! Do you see it?

(Picture Explanation: For those who aren't sure what you are seeing, you are seeing a beautiful waterfall surrounded by autumn trees in bright reds, golds, purples, and greens. There is bright blue sky with puffy white clouds over the sparkling blue water. The water is pooling over and between the brown and grey rocks. The shadows of the water and rocks is placed in just the right way to spell "Jesus Loves You." Do you see it?)

Just as God's love is written throughout all creation, God's written Word is His personal love letter to our hearts. In the written Word we discover who He is, and many beautiful pictures of who Jesus is. But we miss these pictures of Jesus if we don't take time to look closely. If we rush through our devotional time, if we don't take time to linger in the Word and in prayer, we will miss what God is wanting to show us.

In this week's session we going to focus on **Back to the Altar Principle #3**. It's called, **Discovering Jesus in His Word and in Prayer**.

While God's written Word is the anchor for our faith and our relationship with Him, prayer is what helps bring His Word to life in our hearts. We need unrushed time in both the Word and prayer to thrive spiritually. Prayer, without the Word as its foundation, is like a sailboat without a rudder. Studying the Word without taking time to pray is like trying to bake bread without using yeast to make it rise. When we live a prayerless life we can easily start living a powerless life, a religion of dry form—a “form of godliness” without the Holy Spirit's transforming power (2 Timothy 3:5).

Before we open our Bibles, there's an important key that we need to help unlock the Scriptures. Can you guess what that key might be?

- **Play Video 1:** Introduction to Finding Jesus in Scripture - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID1>

Now that we've prayed for the Holy Spirit, let's open the Word.

2. Looking for Jesus from Genesis to Revelation

Read/Reflect on Luke 24:27 and John 5:39 – Based on these passages, what is the focus of all of Scripture?

If you answered “Jesus,” you are right! Sometimes when we read the Bible, we see pictures of Jesus very quickly. But other times, we struggle to see Him at all.

Now we are going to do a little activity, and for this activity, you will need your Bible and a pen to write with.

With the following “Pictures of Jesus” handout, see how quickly you can draw a line to match the names of Jesus with the correct Bible verse on this sheet.

(For those doing this activity on your own, here's the download link: <https://tinyurl.com/PicturesOfJesus>)

Ready, set, go!

That was a fast-paced activity, wasn't it? But let's pause for a moment. Which name of Jesus, from this exercise, speaks most personally to your heart? Why is this? Which name of Jesus do you not know very well but long to experience even more? (Write down or share your thoughts!)

In these Bible passages, it's very easy to quickly identify the different names of Jesus. These names give us pictures of Jesus that are bold and clear. But often times, we are so accustomed to seeing these different names of Jesus in Scripture that we take them for granted.

Now we want to look a little deeper, below the surface.

Read/Reflect on Genesis 1-2 – Take a few minutes and see how many different pictures of Jesus you can find in the story of Creation. (Keep praying for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to what God wants to show you!)

Some pictures of Jesus were probably obvious. For example, when God said, “Let there be light,” in Genesis 1:3, we see a reminder that Jesus is the Light of the world. But did you see Jesus in the very first verse?

Genesis 1:1 reads, “In the beginning...” Here in the first three words of Scripture is a precious beautiful picture of Jesus that we often rush right past. The Bible says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

Jesus is our beginning! He is the author and finisher of our faith. And since He started our story, He will finish it for His glory! *Alleluia!*

How many other pictures of Jesus did you find in the story of Creation?

Not only do we find pictures of Jesus in the story of creation, but just as Luke 24:27 told us, we see pictures and parallels to Jesus in many other Bible stories as well.

In the life of Joseph, we actually find some of the most amazing and beautiful biblical parallels to Jesus. Ellen White writes extensively about these. For example, just as Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold for twenty pieces of silver, Jesus was also betrayed by His spiritual brethren and sold for thirty pieces of silver. And yet through the betrayal, Joseph saved his people, and through the betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus saved the world.

We encourage you to take unrushed time studying Genesis 37-47, and you will be amazed at all the parallels you will find between Jesus and Joseph.

The book of Revelation is another beautiful place to look for Jesus. Jesus is everywhere in Revelation. Let’s take a moment and listen as Pastor Don shares some beautiful pictures of Jesus from Revelation 1.

- **Play Video 2:** Seeing Jesus in Revelation - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID2>

Truly there are many beautiful surprises and treasures waiting to be discovered in God’s Word. Of course, Jesus is the most beautiful Treasure of them all!

3. Living by the Word

We can spend hours studying the Word, however if we don’t allow the Living Word to change our life, what have we gained? Listen in once more as Pastor Don talks about how to make every Scripture practical.

- **Play Video 3:** Allowing the Word to Change Your Life - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID3>

One way to make God's Word practical in your daily life is to pray the Word. If your prayer life seems a little dry, write down your prayer requests, and beside them write specific promises from God's Word. Every promise in God's Word is ours! We are told, "The honor of [God's] throne is staked for the fulfillment of His Word unto us" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 148).

Before we close this session, let's take a few precious minutes to return to the story of Elijah and see how Elijah responded when he heard the Word of the Lord.

- **Play Video 4:** Elijah Revival Moment – Closing the Gap - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW6VID4>

How's the gap in your life today? Are you afraid of what others might think if you follow what God has spoken through His Word? Or do you hurry eagerly to obey God's voice?

Let's ask that God help us close the gap and live as believers who are actively preparing for Jesus' soon return. Let's ask that He teach us how to seek Him with all our hearts, and that discovering Jesus in His Word would become our greatest joy and delight.

4. Practical Heart Challenge

To take this message deeper, here are three practical challenges.

- **1st Challenge:** Every day, look for Jesus in the Word. See how many different names of Jesus you can find. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see, what perhaps, you've never seen before!
- **2nd Challenge:** Take time to meditate on Matthew 14:13-21 and look for a fresh picture of Jesus. Who is Jesus in this passage? Who does Jesus long to be for YOU? (For many more pictures of Jesus, study the life of Joseph or go through the entire book of Revelation keeping Jesus as your main focus. This study will change your whole perspective about the book of Revelation.)
- **3rd Challenge:** Practice praying the Word of God. If you need help getting started, you can find some special resources at this link. <https://tinyurl.com/PrayerPromises>

You are invited to join the General Conference weekly Back to the Altar revival on zoom that takes place every Sunday at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time. All are welcome!

Zoom Link - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTA100> **Password:** 18442025

Also, to join other believers praying over these Back to the Altar themes each day, visit: www.247unitedprayer.org where you can join many different prayer calls with believers from around the world.

Now, let's pray!

Prayer Focus

For May 9-15, 2025



Promises to Claim as You Pray

*"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." John 17:3*

*"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire,
and it shall be done for you." John 15:7*

*"How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put
their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the
fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For
with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light." Psalm 36:7-9*

Prayer Focus for Week 6

1. **REST:** Pray that God would help us slow down and find our peace and rest in Him as we prepare for the best day of the week, the Holy Sabbath day of rest. (Claim Isa. 26:3)
2. **REMEMBER:** Pray that this would be a high Sabbath as we come back to the altar, remembering that Jesus is our perfect Substitute and Surety. Pray that we can understand and share the message of righteousness by faith. (Claim Heb. 10:14)
3. **PLEAD:** Pray for God's will to be accomplished in who should lead our church in the next five years. Pray that we would not lean on human wisdom as we make leadership choices, but that we would plead for God's wisdom, for "man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." (Claim James 1:5)
4. **DISCOVER:** Pray for the Holy Spirit to be our heavenly guide as we daily seek to discover fresh pictures of Jesus in the Word and in prayer. (Claim 1 Cor. 2:12-13)
5. **FOCUS:** Pray for a renewed heart for service and mission, no matter your sphere of influence or responsibilities. God has a place of service for each one of His children! (Claim Matt. 6:33) May the theme, "Jesus is coming soon, I will Go!" be our focus.
6. **SEARCH:** Pray for a renewed interest in the books of Daniel and Revelation as God's people search for hidden treasure. Jesus is our Treasure, and He's coming soon! (Claim Psalm 119:162 and Luke 24:27)
7. **REFRESH:** Pray that God's people would have boldness as they pray the promises of God's Word. God's Word does not return to Him void. (Claim 2 Peter 2:4 and Isa. 55:11)