

Back to the Altar

100 DAYS OF PRAYER

FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

June 20-26, 2025

The Iron Gate

by Don MacLafferty



A few years ago, God sent my wife April and me to live in a small mountain town. The church I was pastoring at the time was far away in the valley, and I had a long commute. We often wondered why God would lead us to live so far away from where I worked.

Then one day, we were fascinated to hear that just a mile or so away from our little cottage lived a wealthy couple who had not been in church for over forty years. We were told that they lived on a big piece of property, with a big iron gate guarding the entrance. No one ever saw them much, and the man didn't like church or people who worked with the church. I began praying that I would have a divine appointment with the man who seemed impossible to reach.

One beautiful Sabbath day, God awakened me early in the morning, and I went walking on the road that led up to the mountain. I was praying as I walked, for the man behind the iron gate.

As I walked and prayed, I saw my neighbor talking to someone beside a well-manicured entry to a beautiful estate. My neighbor called out to me, "Hey Don, come over and meet your neighbor, Tom."

Walking up the driveway, I realized that my neighbor was talking to a man beside a large iron gate. I couldn't believe it! I was walking past the very property of the man for whom I'd just been praying. Now, the Spirit of God impressed me to ask the man a bold question. Walking up to the man, I introduced myself and then said, "Tom, may I ask you a question?" The man was a little surprised.

"What's your question?" he responded cautiously.

"Are you ready for Jesus to come?" I asked. It was abrupt, and I could tell he was shocked by my boldness.

"That's a good question," Tom responded with furrowed brow. "I hope to be ready for Jesus to come. I would like my wife to be ready for Jesus to come also." I then asked Tom if I could pray that God would help them both be ready for Jesus to come. It was an awkward moment, but Tom shrugged and said, "Sure."

I prayed with Tom and my neighbor, then waved goodbye as I needed to get down the mountain and join my family of faith. I wasn't sure that it was the best beginning for a friendship with Tom, but I knew it was what God had told me to say.

Later, I found out that after I had left, Tom had asked my neighbor what I was doing out on the road so early in the morning. When my neighbor shared that I was looking for a place to pray, Tom told my neighbor, "Tell Don that if he wants a quiet place to pray, my property is open to him. Here is the combination for my iron gate so that he can come in any time and have a quiet place to pray and read the Word. He won't be bothered by cars or traffic here."

When I heard this news, I was delighted! God had just given me the combination to the iron gate of the man whom I'd been praying I would be able to reach with the love of Jesus Christ.

From then on, each morning, whenever I was in town, I would go to Tom's property to pray. I did not see Tom again for many days. However, one morning, as I was praying at my favorite spot, his car went by in the early morning mist. The Spirit of God impressed me, "Run after that car, and make Tom a very special offer."

I got up from my perch on the rocks and ran after him as fast as I could go. He pulled his car up to the big iron gate and stepped out to inspect something just as I came running up.

"You know, I saw your car going by and I was in prayer, and God impressed me to make you an offer," I told the man.

"What would that be?" he asked as he looked me up and down.

I drew a deep breath and began to share. "I am someone who wants to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. And I want to know if you would meet me at 6:00 a.m. every morning for the next twelve mornings, and we will discover together more about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus."

He looked at me and half grunted, as he said, "Six a.m. for the next twelve mornings? I can't imagine why I would want to get up at 6:00 a.m. I can do whatever I want to at any time of day!"

"Would you be willing to pray with me about this?" I asked.

Tom laughed. "I'll tell you what, if God tells me while you are praying to meet with you at 6:00 a.m. for the next twelve mornings, then I will do it. But otherwise, no! That's the last thing I would do."

I immediately knelt right there on his asphalt drive. To my surprise, he knelt beside me. I then began to pray and poured my heart out, asking that God would be with Tom and that He would open the way for us to study His Word together.

When I finished praying, I was getting ready to stand up, but then Tom began to pray. At the end of his prayer, before I could say anything more, he said, "I'll see you in the morning at 6:00 a.m." With that he jumped into his car and sped off down the road.

For the next twelve mornings, we met morning after morning. We would pray and then read the written Word of God together and discover what it meant to be a

disciple of Jesus. Each morning, it was simple: pray, study, and apply. I was excited to see if, at the end of our time together, this man would have a new experience with Jesus. However, as we concluded our twelve days, Tom told me simply, “Okay, well, it was good to meet with you.” And that was it. I kept praying, but months went by, and nothing more happened.

Then out of the blue one morning, I got a phone call from Tom. He sounded very troubled. “Don, can you drive me to the hospital right now?” he asked. “My wife is just being transferred from one hospital to the next hospital. I think she is dying. Would you please come?”

“Absolutely!” I responded. Immediately, I jumped in my car and went to drive him to the hospital. As we arrived at the hospital, he asked, “Would you come in and pray with my wife?”

We went into the hospital together, and I prayed over that precious wife of his in her hospital bed. I knew from the diagnosis that it was a very serious situation, and the likelihood of her living was not high. As we prayed together, I cried out to God that He would do for her what I could never do for her and that if it would bring Him glory, that she would be restored.

God is good. God chose in this circumstance to heal this woman as a testimony to Tom of His great love and power. Tom’s wife was restored to good health. Some days later, Tom contacted me. “You know,” he said. “My wife is asking questions about the Bible. Would you come and study the Word of God with us both?”

And so, we began to study together. Sometime later, they were both baptized like Jesus was, fully immersed in water, as a testimony to all that they were giving their lives fully to Jesus Christ as Lord. They came up out of the water and began a fresh experience with Jesus that has lasted to this day.

Although April and I don’t live in that small mountain town anymore, I often think of this precious couple. People had told me it was nearly impossible to ever see this couple outside their property. When I met Tom, he appeared at first to be someone who needed nothing. He seemed beyond reach. However, while man builds iron gates, the Holy Spirit knows how to open those gates, for He knows the combination to reach every heart.

Don MacLafferty is president of In Discipleship, an intergenerational revival and disciple ministry impacting the lives of both young and old. He has authored more than 10 books, including the original “The Way Back to the Altar” discipleship curriculum which is being used during this 100 Days of Prayer. This testimony comes from one of his most widely published books, God Still Lives. You can read the entire book of miracle stories [at this link](#). Pastor Don currently assists the General Conference Ministerial Association as a volunteer and leads out with Back to the Altar training programs all around the world. He will be leading Back to the Altar prayer and revival sessions in the prayer room at the General Conference session in St. Louis this coming July.

Discipling Others to Jesus

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

What do you think is the most important qualification for disciple-makers today?

“Do you love me?” That’s the question Jesus asked Peter when giving him his commission as a disciple-maker for the heavenly Kingdom.

“The question that Christ had put to Peter was significant. He mentioned only one condition of discipleship and service. ‘Lovest thou Me?’ He said. This is the essential qualification. Though Peter might possess every other, yet without the love of Christ he could not be a faithful shepherd over the Lord’s flock. Knowledge, benevolence, eloquence, gratitude, and zeal are all aids in the good work; but without the love of Jesus in the heart, the work of the Christian minister is a failure” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 815).

The Bible tells us, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Upon these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:37–40).

Let’s return to the life of Elijah and learn how God used a challenging experience in Elijah’s life to give him a fresh commission, a fresh calling, and a fresh purpose as a disciple-maker for God’s Kingdom.

- **Play Video 1:** Elijah Mentors Elisha - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW12VID1>

Have you found your Elisha? Has God given you someone to mentor to be a disciple-maker for the Kingdom? If not, pray that He will bring you an Elisha.



1. Connect Activity

It’s time for a fun heart connect activity. Please pick one of the following activities that you have never done before.

- Changing a flat tire
- Sewing a dress
- Changing a baby’s diaper
- Driving a tractor
- Performing a root canal
- Baking a cake
- Building a dresser
- Shoeing a horse

Supplemental
Material to Take
This Series Deeper

**Elijah Mentors
Elisha**

[https://tinyurl.com/
BTTAW12VID1](https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW12VID1)

**The First Steps in
Disciple-Making**

[https://tinyurl.com/
BTTAW12VID2](https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW12VID2)

**Reflections on
Being a Disciple-
Maker**

[https://tinyurl.com/
BTTAW12VID3](https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW12VID3)

**Discipleship
Activity with a
Partner**

[https://tinyurl.com/
BTTAW12VID4](https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW12VID4)

After you've picked one activity that *you have no experience in doing*, please take a few minutes to practice giving a friend verbal instructions on how to do this activity. You heard right! This might seem a little difficult but do your best to give a thorough description of how to accomplish the specific activity you have chosen. (If you don't have someone to do this activity with, then record a voice message of yourself giving the instructions to someone. Again, choose an activity that you have never done!)

Now that you've had some fun, think about how this illustration relates to discipleship. What can you learn from this activity that applies to making disciples for Jesus?

As you probably discovered in this activity, it's a bit difficult to teach others what you haven't personally experienced. We must first be living as disciples of Jesus, behind the scenes and in everyday life, before we can be effective disciple-makers. As one pastor once said, "The life you live in private determines the ministry you can have in public."

So, where do we begin? How do we become a disciple-maker for Jesus? The answer is simple. We begin by following the ways of Jesus, the Master Disciple-Maker. Jesus spent unrushed time with His Heavenly Father every day (see Isa. 50:4, and Mark 1:35) and from that time with His Father, He poured His life into those around Him.

Let's learn about some practical steps Jesus took as He made disciples.

2. Jesus' Disciple-Making Method

Read/Reflect on Luke 6:12-16 – What were the first steps Jesus took before choosing the twelve?

Read/Reflect on Matthew 4:18-20 –Based on this passage, what are ways that you could be more intentional about making disciples for Jesus?

Read/Reflect on Mark 3:14 – Before sending the disciples out to preach, what was their first need and calling?

Let's watch the following video where Pastor Don goes deeper into the practical application of these inspiring Bible passages.

- **Play Video 2:** The First Steps in Disciple-Making - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW12VID2>

Again and again, we see that disciple-making is an investment of time, energy, and focus. In other words, it is very intentional and sacrificial. In *Desire of Ages* we read:

"It was by personal contact and association that Jesus trained His disciples. Sometimes He taught them, sitting among them on the mountainside; sometimes beside the sea, or walking with them by the way, He revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He did not sermonize as men do today. Wherever hearts were open to receive the divine message, He unfolded the truths of the way of salvation. He did not command His disciples to do this or that, but said, "Follow Me." On His journeys through country and cities He took them with Him, that they might see how He taught the people. He linked their interest with His, and they united with Him in the work" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 152).

When someone you mentor observes you, do they see glimpses of Jesus?

3. Power to be a Disciple-Maker

Read/Reflect on Luke 9:1, 2 – Where did the disciple's power come from? Where does your strength and power as a disciple of Jesus come from today? What is the entering wedge for the gospel ministry based on this passage, and what could it be today?

In 1896 Ellen White wrote:

"I want to say that the third angel's message is the gospel, and that the health reform is the entering wedge for the truth. There are to be no abrupt declarations of any phase of our faith. Preach the truth as it is in Jesus and bring all the brightness and special radiance from the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness into the gospel. Those who speak of practical godliness should dwell upon the lessons of Christ. All should have the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and let none be satisfied without it. Let your words express your confidence and love for God. The most simple testimonies borne in a humble spirit, expressing the love of God will touch hearts" (*Health, Philanthropic, and Medical Missionary Work*, p. 48).

Disciple of Jesus, if you feel powerless and inadequate for the calling at hand, you are in the perfect place to become the disciple-maker God intends you to be. Remember, "From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 300).

God has everything you need for life, for godliness, and to be disciple-makers for His Kingdom. But we each must learn to depend completely on Him!

As we close this session, we hope you enjoy the following personal recap by Pastor Don and Melody.

- **Play Video 3:** Reflections on Being a Disciple-Maker - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW12VID3>

Will you step out of your comfort zone and invest in someone's life? Will you become a disciple-maker for Jesus?

Dear Father in heaven, we have little time left to follow our Savior's command to go and make disciples around the world. We have given others information about Jesus yet made few disciples of Jesus. Forgive us for not being willing to pay the price that disciple-making costs. To make a disciple costs our time when we have too much to do. It costs our comfort when we are weary. It costs our reputation when the Holy Spirit sends us to someone we do not want to see. It cost Jesus His life to make the way back to the altar to disciple us. Send us the Holy Spirit to empower us to make disciples of Jesus who walk with Him, talk with Him, and share Him with heart-pounding power. In Jesus' name, amen.

4. Practical Application and Heart Challenge

- **1st Challenge:** Study Matthew 4:19, 20. How is Jesus asking you to follow Him as His disciple? What active steps of obedience will you take for Jesus this very week?
- **2nd Challenge:** Take a night of prayer and ask God who He wants you to disciple and mentor in an intentional way. Ask Him for someone you can disciple that can go even beyond you in life and ministry.
- **3rd Challenge:** Once God has given you a name(s), reach out to that person(s) and tell them God has placed their name on your heart. Ask them if they'd be interested in your

mentoring them and discipling them. (Important that men disciple men and women disciple women.)

- **4th Challenge:** Find a friend this coming week to do the follow-up discipleship activity with that is included in the bonus section. That person can also be the person God has laid on your heart to disciple, if they are willing. Ask this person to meet for 1 hour of time to do the activity. Have fun!

Don't forget, 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

Let's pray!

Bonus Discipleship Activity

You've just completed a study on how to be a disciple-maker. Now we have a special activity for you to do with a discipleship partner. This can be with a friend or someone that you want to disciple more intentionally for Jesus. Give about 1 hour for this activity. (We recommend that men partner with men and women with women. Youth can also take part and do this with a friend or someone they want to disciple for Jesus.)

After you have prayerfully asked someone to partner with you, agree on a time and a place to meet. We recommend meeting in a place where you can talk and pray without too many distractions. In your home, in a park, or out in nature are some good examples. While this is a practice exercise for you, we want this activity to be meaningful and a blessing for both you and your discipleship partner, so don't rush through the activity. Before you and your discipleship partner meet, pray that the Holy Spirit will really bless this discipleship activity as well as the life of the person doing the activity with you.

When you meet, play the following video and pause the video every time you are instructed to discuss a question or do a specific activity. Again, have fun and use this as a special bonding experience for both you and your discipleship partner.

- **Play Video 4** – Discipleship Activity with a Partner - <https://tinyurl.com/BTTAW12VID4>

Questions are in video, but we have also included them here for your reference:

- **Question 1:** Get Acquainted - Share a little about who you are as a person.
(Give each person 3-5 minutes for this conversation.)
- **Question 2:** Going Deeper - How would you spend a day if you could do anything?
(Give each person 1-2 minutes to answer this question.)
- **Question 3:** Who is Jesus Christ to you at this time in your life?
(Give each person 3-5 minutes to answer this question.)
- **Question 4:** Going Deeper – How do you need God to work in your life right now?
(Give each person 5 minutes to answer this question.)
- Find a special promise or verse of encouragement that you can share with your discipleship partner. This verse of encouragement should correspond with the need they expressed in Question 4.
- Close with a special prayer for one another! Then listen to the remainder of the video as Pastor Don finishes this session by sharing a special testimony about discipleship.

If you and your discipleship partner want to continue meeting, plan your next appointment to pray together and encourage one another. Prayerfully consider exploring the **Back to the Altar** series with your disciple partner. A leadership packet for each lesson with teaching tips can be found online at: www.backtothealtar.org.

Prayer Focus

For June 20 - 26, 2025



Promises to Claim as You Pray

"You need not go to the ends of the earth for wisdom, for God is near. It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you expect great things from Him." Christ's Object Lessons, p. 146

"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession." Psalm 2:8

"We have too little faith. We limit the Holy One of Israel. We should be grateful that God condescends to use any of us as his instruments." Gospel Workers, p. 52

Prayer Focus for Week 12

1. **Heavenly Father**, fill the convention center, the dome, all the meeting halls, and every place that will be utilized during the GC session with Your Holy Spirit in such a significant way that even the convention center staff and session management will sense Your presence. (Claim Ezekiel 10:4)
2. **Dear Jesus**, as we experience this Sabbath day of rest, help us to rest in You, in Your love, in Your Peace, in Your perfect righteousness. Help us to rest in Your amazing grace. Thank you for redeeming us from all our sins. (Claim Ephesians 2:8-9)
3. **Heavenly Father**, give us the desire and willingness to wrestle in prayer, even all night in prayer, as Jesus did, that we may more clearly hear Your voice and know who You are calling us to disciple for the Kingdom. (Claim Luke 6:12)
4. **Dear Jesus**, make us disciples and disciple-makers. Teach us what it means to truly be fishers of men, and to GO in obedience wherever You call. (Claim Matt. 4:19)
5. **Lord**, be with our church leaders and administrators as they prepare for GC session. Give them heavenly wisdom and Holy Spirit blessing. Lead them in Your way and help them to lean constantly on You for their strength. (Claim Isa. 30:21)
6. **Dear Jesus**, You are coming soon. Prepare our hearts as a people for the great trials that are soon to come. Even when it seems that everything is against us, help us to stand strong for You! Keep us in the secret place of Your presence. (Claim Psalm 91:1)
7. **Heavenly Father**, grow our faith. Help us to walk by faith, live by faith, and move in faith, knowing that You have called us and You will be faithful to complete the work You have started in us. (Claim Phil 1:6)