

Priorities of Faith

DAY 10 — BE RICH IN WHAT IS IMPORTANT — BE LESS ONLINE AND MORE IN-PERSON

“We should think about each other to see how we can encourage each other to show love and do good works. We must not quit meeting together, as some are doing. No, we need to keep on encouraging each other. This becomes more and more important as you see the Day getting closer.” (Heb. 10:24-25)

In-Person Faith

Spirituality in the Bible is in-person, not online. It is based on personal connections between real people and the living God and can be felt. Physical things are by their very nature real, not fake. While we cannot see the God of the Bible, He has asked us to do very specific physical things that show our relationship with Him. Take our works, for example. The things we do for God or for other people are always hands-on and in-person. Or think about how we keep the Sabbath. To keep the Sabbath holy we do many specific physical activities like rest or worship. Resting from our everyday activities and making choices that show that the Sabbath day is holy is never an online experience; it is always in-person. The same is true for worship experiences in fellowship with real people in church on Sabbath mornings. While it is possible to join an online worship service, the best worship experience is found in-person, joining with real people in physical places. Real acts of kindness, grace, forgiveness, compassion, awe, and worship are meaningful only when we experience them in real life. No virtual reality can replace or be better than real, physical human touch, a kiss, a helping hand, the comfort of a hug, the joy felt from laughing, or a firm welcoming handshake. You cannot celebrate the practice of foot-washing, or eat and drink the symbols of communion online. What Jesus started through His own example is to be remembered in a physical way we can touch and taste.

Real and Touchable Faith

Even when we pray and fast, as the Bible tells us to do, it is a physical action that happens in a specific time and space. Our faith in God always has an in-person part that can be seen. While people can do all kinds of things online, our relationship with God and showing our connection with Jesus can never be lowered to virtual reality or an online experience.

Think about all the blessings that real-life, in-person physical acts can bring. “Saying the right thing at the right time is like a golden apple in a silver setting” (Prov. 25:11). A helping hand in support of a physical need; a gentle touch that shows “You are not alone!”; the value of a handwritten postcard or letter that you hold in your hands; forgiving and giving grace to someone who does not deserve it results in a changed personal relationship; sharing food with people who are hungry; welcoming people who are traveling or do not have a place to stay into your home. These and many other blessings need to be experienced in-person. We can enjoy all the things we can do online—but remember we need to be more in-person in our faith.

Let’s pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)

All prayer groups have different ways of praying together. We want you to spend the next 30-45 minutes praying together, however the Holy Spirit leads you. Short informal prayers (1-3 sentences) are good. This way, more people can pray many times. Below are some examples of praying with Bible verses based on the theme. You may also pray through other Bible verses and include other topics in your prayer time. See the Leader's Guide and World Church Prayer Requests for other prayer ideas.

Praying God's Word — Heb. 10:24, 25

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"Encourage Each Other to Show Love and Do Good Works"

God, Thank You for showing us what true love is. Thank You for becoming human and showing us through Jesus the highest and best kind of love. Thank You Jesus for coming into our world to live a physical, in-person life with us and for us. In this time of online technology, remind us that we truly need to be involved in the physical world with acts of love and kindness. God, we are too often addicted to our electronic devices and the online world. Free us, so we can live for You by serving others. Amen.

"Do Not Quit Meeting Together"

Father, the COVID-19 pandemic made us even more isolated and alone, which the online world had already been leading us into for years. The fake connections we make online will never be better than the importance and blessing of real face-to-face meetings. Now that the pandemic is slowing down help us to prioritize in-person human connections, showing kindness, love, care, and support through physical acts, words, and touch. Amen.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to give wisdom for today's challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Pray for local and world church needs (see separate sheet with requests).

Local Requests: Pray for needs of church members, family, and neighbors.

Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Blest Be the Tie that Binds (#350); Let Us Break Bread Together (#403); We Have This Hope (#214)

Other Songs: Bind Us Together, Lord; We Are One in the Spirit; Side by Side