

RIVER *Flow*

Seven Days of Devotional Practice

August 2 – 8, 2026

ABIDING IN JESUS SERIES, PART 4 **Seeing Whole**

A Note Before You Sit

This coming week we are going to do something very simple and very old, and at first it will feel like almost nothing. A few minutes a day, we will sit still, in silence, and turn toward God. No words to assemble. No feeling to manufacture. No performance to grade. Just a quiet turning of the heart toward the One who is already here.

It is the plainest prayer the church has, and it is the ground the rest of the Christian life grows out of. A tree does not produce fruit by straining; it sinks its roots down by the water and stays. This week we sink roots.

You will be bad at it. Everyone is. Your thoughts will not stop, and they are not supposed to. The whole practice is simply what you do with a wandering heart: you notice, you let go, and you turn back. Again and again. That turning back is the prayer.

Two minutes to start. Build toward more if you can, but do not grade it. Read slowly, one day at a time. Come to Sabbath having tasted a little stillness, and we will see together what stillness makes room for.

— Pastor Mel Baga, D.Min.
Lead Pastor, Auburn SDA Church

Daily Devotional Guide

SUNDAY, August 2 — Be Still First

"Be still, and know that I am God." — Psalm 46:10

Read: Psalm 46

Reflect: Everyone quotes this verse, but it is stranger than it sounds. Be still, in the Hebrew, is not settle down and be quiet. It is closer to let go. Drop your hands. Stop your striving. And the knowing that follows is not information about God; it is the knowing of two people who are simply together. Let go and know me. That is the whole week in one line. We are not going to try harder to reach God. We are going to learn to be still before him, and to let stillness do what striving never could. It begins today with almost nothing: a few quiet minutes, and a heart that stops grasping long enough to turn toward home.

Notice: Notice, the first time you sit, how hard it is to do nothing. Something in you will want a task, will want to know if it is working. Just watch it.

Pray: Father, I have spent my life striving toward you. Today I will stop striving, be still, and let you be God. Amen.

Stay: Go and find a quiet place where you can be alone. This is your solitude. Sit down, close your eyes, and be still. Say nothing. This is your silence. Then gently begin to sense the presence of God with the eye of your heart, not by picturing him or thinking about him, but simply by turning toward the One who is already here. You are not emptying your mind; you are turning it toward God. When a thought comes, or a feeling, or a sensation, and it will, again and again, do not fight it and do not follow it. Let it

go. Let the thought go, let the feeling go, let the sensation go, and quietly return to him. You are not melting into God; you are learning to see him with the eye of your heart. However many times you lose the thread, that many times you return. That returning, over and over, is the whole of it. It is your prayer. Wordless prayer. The prayer of silence. Two minutes to begin, and longer as you are able.

MONDAY, August 3 – Not With Attention, But With Intention

“For God alone my soul waits in silence.” – Psalm 62:1

Read: Psalm 62:1–8

Reflect: There is a single line that unlocks this prayer, carried down by those who have prayed it longest: it is done not with attention, but with intention. Hear the difference. Attention means focus, concentrate, bear down, achieve, and if that were the task you would spend your minutes grading yourself. But this is not about attention. It is about intention: your consent, your quiet yes, your willingness to let God be near and to work in you. You are not concentrating on God. You are consenting to him. So the small word you turn with is not something to stare at. It is only the sound of your yes, offered again, gently, whenever you notice you have wandered off.

Notice: Notice the urge to do this well, to achieve a good sit. That urge turns prayer into a performance. You cannot fail at consent. You can only give it, and give it again.

Pray: Lord, I am not here to concentrate my way to you. I am here to say yes. Let that be enough, because you have said it is. Amen.

Stay: See Sunday’s devotional for instructions on how to enter the silence.

TUESDAY, August 4 — Even the Good Thoughts

"I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child." — Psalm 131:2

Read: Psalm 131

Reflect: There is an old counsel about this prayer that sounds almost reckless: put a cloud of forgetting beneath you, between yourself and every single thing, even the good and holy thoughts, and reach toward God with nothing but a bare, wordless wanting. And here is the surprise. The hardest thoughts to release are not the shameful ones. They are the good ones: a genuine insight, a plan for someone you love, a warm feeling about God himself. Those are the ones you will want to keep and admire. Let them go too. Not because they are bad, but because he is greater than any thought you can have about him. You set the good thought down for the same reason you would set down a photograph in order to look at the person's face.

Notice: Notice which thoughts are hardest to release today. If it is the good, useful, spiritual ones, you have found the cleverest trap: excellent thoughts about God that keep you from simply being with God.

Pray: Lord, I lay down even my best thoughts of you, because you are greater than all of them. I would rather have you than my ideas about you. Amen.

Stay: See Sunday's devotional for instructions on how to enter the silence.

WEDNESDAY, August 5 — The Sound of Sheer Silence

"...and after the fire a sound of sheer silence." — 1 Kings 19:12

Read: 1 Kings 19:9–13

Reflect: Elijah went up the mountain to meet God. A great wind tore the rocks, but God was not in the wind. An earthquake, but God was not in it. A fire, but God was not in the fire. And after the fire, a sound of sheer silence. And that is where God was. We keep looking for God in the wind and the fire: the dramatic answer, the overwhelming feeling, the unmistakable sign. But again and again he comes in the quiet, beneath the noise, in a silence most of us never slow down enough to reach. So the silence you sit in is not empty, and it is not the absence of God waiting to be filled with something better. The silence is the meeting place.

Notice: Notice your assumption that if nothing dramatic happens, nothing happened. That is exactly backwards. The thin silence is not the failure of the prayer. It is the country where God walks.

Pray: Lord, I have listened for you in the wind and the fire. Teach me to find you in the silence, where you have been waiting all along. Amen.

Stay: See Sunday's devotional for instructions on how to enter the silence.

THURSDAY, August 6 — Letting the Manufactured Self Go

*"...for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." —
Colossians 3:3*

Read: Colossians 3:1-4

Reflect: There is a self we manufacture, built out of other people's opinions, our own performance, the case we keep making for why we matter. It has an old name: the false self. It is exhausting to maintain, and most of our religion goes into propping it up. Underneath it, quieter, is the self

God actually made, the true self, which is not a better version you build but a self that exists only in relationship with him, hidden, Paul says, with Christ in God. So every thought you release in prayer is a small letting-go of the self you keep building. And hear this clearly: this is not you dissolving into God until there is no you left. It is the opposite. You are found. Your real self, safe in Christ, is finally home.

Notice: Notice how much of even your praying is defending a self, explaining, justifying, performing for God as if he needed convincing. Let one layer of it go today.

Pray: Father, I lay down the self I keep building and defending. Let me be, for a few minutes, simply yours, hidden, safe, and no longer performing. Amen.

Stay: See Sunday's devotional for instructions on how to enter the silence.

FRIDAY, August 7 – The Whole Thing Is Consent

"Let it be to me according to your word." – Luke 1:38

Read: Luke 1:26–38

Reflect: If you forget everything else this week, keep this. The whole prayer comes down to one word: consent. Consent to the presence and action of God within you. Not doing, allowing. Not producing something for God, letting God do something in you. There is a picture of it in a young woman. An angel tells Mary the impossible, and she does not argue it into place or grasp for control. She says, let it be to me. That is the posture of this whole prayer. And it is the bedrock of the life we are after. To abide is not a feeling you generate on a good day. It is a life built out of a thousand small yeses: you consent, you drift, you consent again.

Notice: Notice where you are still withholding your yes, the one corner of your life you would rather keep gripping than receive from him. You do not have to fix it. Just notice it is there.

Pray: Lord, let it be to me according to your word. Whatever I have been gripping, I loosen my hand. My yes is small and it wobbles, but it is yours. Amen.

Stay: See Sunday's devotional for instructions on how to enter the silence.

SABBATH, August 8 – The Bedrock

"Whoever abides in me and I in them, that one bears much fruit." – John 15:5

Read: John 15:4–5; Psalm 1:1–3

Reflect: Here is where the week comes clear. All this stillness was never the point in itself. It is the bedrock. Look at the tree in Psalm 1, planted by the water, roots down in the stream, so that it bears fruit in season and its leaf does not wither. It does not strain to produce. It stays near the water, and the fruit rises from underground, in the hidden place, long before anyone sees it. That is what a week of stillness is: roots, sunk quietly by the stream. And here is the only test of whether anything happened. Not whether your minutes felt holy, but whether something ungrasping came out of you this week: a patience you did not work up, a person you saw whole that you would have reduced to a problem a month ago. That fruit grows in the dark, before you notice it. A branch never sees its own fruit. Somebody else eats it.

Notice: Look back over the week. Where did stillness leak out of the room and into your life, a moment you did not grab, a face you actually saw? You may find little; roots

grow slowly. But look.

Pray: Father, I am not the source. Let the stillness you have grown in me this week become a way of seeing, out there, today. Amen.

Stay: See Sunday's devotional for instructions on how to enter the silence.

Next Sabbath: the single, clear heart that learns to see the whole — and the God it was made to see.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where in your life right now is everything too stirred up to be still? What keeps stirring it?
2. This prayer is done not with attention but with intention, consent rather than concentration. How is that different from the way you were taught to pray? Does it relieve you, or unsettle you?
3. Which thoughts were hardest to let go this week? Were the good ones, plans, insights, even warm thoughts about God, harder to release than the trivial ones? What might that reveal?
4. Elijah found God not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in a sound of sheer silence. Why do we keep looking for God in the dramatic? What would change if you expected him in the quiet?