

## But when you pray . . .

### DAY 1—ABIDE IN ME

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV).

#### **Continually Connected—the Vital Condition for Producing Fruit**

After graduation I was called to a district that had three small churches. It was winter. One of the churches had a mostly elderly membership. On a very good Sabbath, like for the Christmas program, we had maybe 40 people. On a bad Sabbath, about 10.

One Sabbath it was very cold, around -32°F, and nine people showed up: my family of four and another five. I wondered, *Should I even preach?* The head elder, a lady who was about 90 years old, said, “We pay tithes, so you need to preach.” So I did.

I preached from John 15:4–8. In four verses Jesus repeats “Abide in Me” three times. In Hebrew culture, something repeated three times is very important, even essential. I emphasized that it is not so much what we *do* in the Christian life. While we are called to serve, we will never have results by ourselves. However, Jesus gave His word that if we remain in Him, whatever we ask, it will be done. There is no ambiguity; it’s 100 percent assurance for success.

“So,” I told the listeners, “it is not what *we* can do, but what *God* can do that makes the real difference.”

Author Ellen G. White states, “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” (*Christian Service*, p. 262).

I told my little congregation that prayer “is the secret of spiritual power” (*Prayer*, p. 12). It connects us with the “Source of strength” (*Prayer*, p. 272). Prayer gives us access to God’s “boundless resources” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 95). It is the most efficient weapon against Satan’s attacks (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 pp. 295, 296, 345, 346).

I told them about the promise Jesus gave in Matthew 18:19, 20. “Truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (NIV). It doesn’t say “If 200 or 300 ask” but “If 2 or 3 ask” for something in agreement, in unity. And it is not “I might do it” but a very clear “I *will* do it.”

I told my few listeners, “It’s not an option to do nothing. We must pray and work, and God will give the results as He promised.” It was a strong sermon on the power of prayer.

As my wife and I drove home, I told her, “We need to move. There is no hope of growth or in fact of anything in this church.” She repeated back to me my sermon, with Jesus’ promise, and she asked me, “Why don’t you call them to prayer?” I hesitantly did so. Those few ladies came every morning at 6:30 a.m. to pray together for the Holy Spirit, church growth, families, the city, God’s plan for our church, and clarity on what we needed to do. Three months later the church had an attendance of about 120.

God is calling you to continually remain in Him, pray without ceasing, never disconnect, and walk with Him. He invites you to abide in Him, and you must daily invite Him to abide in you. That’s your only source of true power. That’s your

safety. As long as you are connected to God, Satan has no power over you. Christ in you and you in Him is the single way to growth and success.

Let's pray together.

### **Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)**

*All prayer groups have different ways of praying together. We encourage you to spend the next 30-45 minutes in united prayer, in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads. We encourage short conversational prayers (1-3 sentences). This allows for more people to pray multiple times. Below are some examples of praying through Scripture based on the theme. You may pray through other passages also and include other subjects in your prayer time. See the Leader's Guide and World Church Prayer Requests for prayer ideas.*

### **Praying God's Word — John 15:5**

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

#### **"Remain in Me and I in you"**

*Jesus, teach us how to abide in You every day. Without You, we are like dead branches separated from the life-giving vine. Walk with us, work in us, speak through us. Please dwell in our hearts and love the world through us.*

#### **"You will bear much fruit"**

*Lord, we know that all righteousness comes from You. Grow the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Fill us with Your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let our lives reflect Your spotless character to everyone we meet.*

#### **"Apart from Me you can do nothing"**

*Lord, our own righteousness is like filthy rags. We break our promises, offend our enemies, and betray those we love. Apart from You, we are helpless and lost. We need Your love, Your patience, and Your grace in our hearts every day. Keep us close to Your side.*

### **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 grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

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

**Local Requests:** Pray for current 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:* Abide With Me (#50); Draw Me Nearer (#306); In the Garden (#487)

*Other Songs:* Into My Heart; As the Deer; Open My Eyes, Lord; Unto Thee, O Lord