

Day of Prayer and Fasting

Handbook and Resources

Pioneer Prayer: Prayer Works

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Revival
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Visit www.revivalandreformation.org for information.

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Why a Day of Prayer and Fasting?

Imagine you are a parent about to leave your children, knowing you will not see them again until the Kingdom of Heaven. What is the most important thing you could say to them?

Jesus had that dilemma as He prepared to return to heaven after His crucifixion. What was the burden of His last words to His disciples? As we read through His last prayers and counsel in John 15-17, we discover repeating themes: unity, love, and seeking God through prayer. Jesus longed for His fledgling church to come together in purpose, harmony, and mission. Today, amid perhaps unprecedented polarization in the world, our nations, and our church, we too need to heed Jesus' counsel to seek His Spirit and come together for mission. The task seems daunting and impossible in our humanity. That's why we need to pray as never before for the miracle of reconciliation that only God can bring.

We invite you to pray "in your closet." We invite you to pray with your local church family. And we invite you to the global Revival and Reformation initiative of prayer and fasting. Perhaps you will not choose to fast totally from food. Perhaps you will fast from desserts or social media, or eat sparingly of plant-based food for a time.

"Now and onward till the close of time the people of God should be more earnest, more wideawake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Feb. 11, 1904).

As you choose to focus more deeply on prayer, God will bless you and strengthen your heart for the challenging days ahead.

Cindy Tutsch

For Revival and Reformation Committee

Suggested Planning Guide

Program for the Day:

- A devotional/sermon, “Prayer Works,” is included in the appendix of this resource. It can be used for the morning worship program or as a devotional before the prayer time. If it is used for the morning worship service, a scripture reading and children’s story are suggested below.
- A suggested afternoon prayer program is provided. We recommend scheduling 1-2 hours for this time; however, many plan to pray together for a full afternoon. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead.
- Copy and share the information on fasting at least a week before so that members understand fasting and prayer and can choose how they want to be involved in fasting during the day. A handout is provided in the appendix.
- Make copies of the handouts “Prayer Outline: Pioneer Prayer” and “Testimony Handout for Prayer Time” for attendees.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:20

Suggested Children’s Story: *Tell how Jesus used His miracle power to help others.*

Points to emphasize:

- *Briefly tell a story of one of Jesus’ miracles.*
- *Jesus was able to do any miracle (healing, feeding crowds, raising the dead).*
- *Jesus always unselfishly served others and never served Himself.*
- *Jesus could have called ten thousand angels to save Him from His trial and the cross, but if He hadn’t died on Calvary, He couldn’t have saved us—which is His greatest joy.*
- *If we follow Jesus, our greatest joy will be to work for others.*
- *God loves to answer our prayers, especially when we are doing His work and helping others.*

Ask the children what they need to help others and have a short prayer time with them.

Suggested Program Format

Place: Gather in the sanctuary, outside under some trees, or, if your group is small, meet in a comfortable room that offers privacy and no distractions.

Opening: Music always sets the mood for worship, so begin with a few songs of worship to inspire reverence and encourage seeking after God. Invite group members to share short 30-second testimonies of answered prayers or praises to God between songs.

Welcome: The leader should welcome people and share a few words of instruction:

- This is a time of prayer and seeking God.
- Anything shared is confidential and should not be shared outside the room.
- Don't take prayer requests ahead of time. Explain that this is a time to pray, not talk, so prayer needs will be prayed about during the prayer time, not talked about first.
- Get comfortable. Feel free to change positions—sitting, kneeling, etc.
- Raise your head when you pray. Pray loud enough for others to hear.
- Prayer is more than just our words. Claim scripture and pray God's promises back to Him. Sing a verse or two of a song, with others joining in.
- When someone prays for a need or person, others are invited to add their own prayers and lift up the need or person aloud. There is power in hearing others pray for the needs and people on your heart (Matt. 18:19).
- Claim the righteous life, sacrifice, and ministry of Christ in prayer (John 14:14; Revelation 8:3).
- When possible use inclusive pronouns "we," "us," and "our," instead of "I," "me," and "my" (Matthew 6:9-13) in prayer.
- The theme of the afternoon is "Pioneer Prayer." Take turns at the beginning to read the Testimony Handout. Then pray for family, friends, each other, and the world.

Notes for the Leader:

- *Remember that silence in prayer time is fine. Don't feel the need to fill every silence or end the prayer time prematurely. While some people jump in and pray quickly, others take longer to feel comfortable praying aloud. When silence happens, let it linger. Just count a few seconds—even just 30 seconds if you're uncomfortable with silence—to give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to nudge people.*
- *If your congregation isn't used to praying together in groups and including scripture and singing during the prayer time, you may need to lead by example. Or you*

might ask others ahead of time to lead by example, intentionally praying a request from the Testimony Handout or starting a song during the prayer time. While taking time to pray is the priority, this is also an opportunity to teach people how to pray corporately.

Devotional: If the sermon/devotional reading has not already been shared, the coordinator or a designated leader may read it before the prayer time.

Prayer time: An outline, "Pioneer Prayer," is provided for the prayer time. The leader should walk participants through prayer, beginning with the Testimony Handout and using the outline as a guide.

Closing: Close the prayer time with praise and thanksgiving. Choose perhaps one or two praise songs to end the program.

Some churches may choose to have a meal together after the prayer time to break the fast. Keep the meal simple, but make the tables attractive to create a special atmosphere.

APPENDIX

Prayer Works

By Richard Constantinescu, pastor and Revival and Reformation Committee member

I know that prayer works. As a college junior at the turn of the millennium, I had a spinal injury that caused me pain and difficulty. I went to a doctor, but he couldn't help me. All week long my spine hurt so much that I couldn't sit or walk without limping. Each day my pain grew worse and I couldn't work.

I was a literature evangelist in college, earning money while sharing my faith. In a few days, I was supposed to travel to Reno, Nevada, to work with a group of other literature evangelists. I knew I wouldn't be able to walk from door to door. Why hadn't God healed me so I could work and save souls?

I suddenly remembered Mark 11:24, a verse I had memorized. Christ promised, "Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." I decided to claim this promise. I thought that if God wanted me to do *His* work, it was *His* responsibility to heal me so I could. If He chose not to, I wouldn't worry any more about it. I was ready to accept His will, and I knelt to claim the promise in my empty dormitory room.

I told God of my pain and that I wanted to work for Him. I told Him I believed He could heal me according to Mark 11:24, and that I depended on Him. I asked, according to His will, that He would heal me in the name of Jesus. After a simple prayer, I said, "Amen." As soon as I said "Amen," I felt a hand touch my right shoulder from behind, and a healing power went down my spine to the soles of my feet. I stood to my feet, and my pain was completely gone. I ran from door to door that day with my books!

Yes, prayer works. While I was studying at the seminary, my wife was pregnant with our first child. We were both very busy and needed our sleep while we were in ministry and school. Before the birth, we knelt and prayed that our baby would sleep well at night—not for our own benefit, but so we could continue working efficiently and healthfully for God.

God mightily answered that prayer! Our firstborn child slept an average of 11 hours a night. Sometimes she would sleep 14 hours, and we were afraid she wouldn't wake up! We prayed the same prayer for the rest of our three children. They all slept an average of 11 hours a night. We truly do not know what it is like to stay up at night with babies!

Yes, prayer works. One day while at the seminary, I needed to buy some items for my wife and child. I only had two dollars and some change.

As a husband and father, I felt bad that I wasn't able to provide more for my family. I remembered the Bible promise in Philippians 4:19: "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." I remembered 1 Timothy 5:8, which says that "if any man does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith."

I thought, *If God was my Father, wouldn't He provide for me also?* I knelt and said a simple prayer: "Father, You promised to provide for all my needs in Philippians 4:19. I need to provide for my family, and I have no money to do that. You said that if anyone doesn't provide for their household, they deny the faith. You are my Father, and You know how to provide for Your family. I am part of Your household, and You always keep Your own Word. Please provide for me today so I can provide for my family. In Jesus' name, Amen."

That evening after I finished working at the university print shop, we took our small income and drove toward the cheapest grocery store in town to buy just a couple of things. It was sunset, and a college student on a bicycle two sizes too small asked for directions to the healthier, more expensive, food store in town.

I began giving directions but decided that since it was getting dark, I would just put her bicycle in our van and drive her there. It was only a mile away, but we couldn't afford gasoline to drive her to the store, then drive the extra mile back to the less expensive store. We decided to buy what we could at the more expensive store—the store we had specifically avoided.

As we walked into the brightly lit store, a woman stopped us between the produce and aisle section of the store. She was a member of a small Bible study group that I led. After a short greeting she said, "It's good to see you! I've been wanting to give you this!" and slipped something in the front pocket of my work shirt. I thanked her, not knowing what it was, and we parted ways. When I looked to see what was in my shirt pocket, I saw a crisp, folded \$100 bill. We felt like the wealthiest people! We praised God and began placing vegetables, fruits, cereals, and all we needed in our cart. Our thanksgiving and joy could not be measured!

After we finished our shopping, we stood in line with our baby girl to pay. A friendly man standing two places behind us started a conversation with us. He asked where I worked, and I told him. He said he was visiting town for his daughter's graduation and that this was his first time here. He asked me how seminary was. He answered his own question and said, "It's hard, isn't it?" I thought maybe I didn't look like a very good student, so I didn't know how to respond. He reached forward and said, "I mean financially," and placed something into the same pocket of my plaid work shirt that the other woman had. I thanked him, not knowing what it was. When I paid for the groceries, I saw a second, crisp, folded \$100 bill identical to the first one. What a miracle!

When I had claimed God's promises earlier that day, He sent the college student on the bike for us to help, which redirected me to the store to which we would not have otherwise gone,

and then He gave us \$100 twice in the same shirt pocket—half of which was from complete stranger we never saw again! God is a mighty God! He is so kind, good, and loving!

Yes, I know that prayer works. It's likely that you have your own precious stories of answered prayer to share with others. Prayer is one of the main reasons I love being a child of God. It is not so much because we receive physical blessings that I love prayer. It is mainly because we have regular assurance that we have a heavenly Father who cares for and loves us. There is nothing sweeter than talking to God and having Him answer through His Word, Spirit, and abundant providences.

Whenever I read or hear amazing stories of God's answers to prayers, I think, "God, I want to know You like that! Please transform my heart so I can hear Your Spirit and experience You working in my life."

Nothing makes one person more deserving than another. We all need God's grace! He loves each of us. As Peter said, "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34, 35). The wonderful blessings of God can be ours today, regardless of who we are, if we fulfill the conditions given in His Word! If you want a deeper experience with God, this is the day to ask Him for it. "There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God" (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250, 251).

He will even do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways (Isaiah 55:8). We simply need to step forward upon the platform of promise, the stage of God's grace, and claim the promise of God's Spirit for ourselves, our church, and our world. I want to continually experience that type of eternal blessing.

The early Christian church and our Adventist pioneers experienced the mighty power of God. God's power has not diminished, no matter how many miracles He has performed. There are new frontiers of blessing waiting! There are undiscovered treasures your heavenly Father wants to give you! Because of Jesus' death on Calvary, the richness of heaven is poured out in the Holy Spirit for whoever asks, seeks, and knocks. Those who seek Him with all their hearts will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13). Will you claim that promise? Will you determine to be a pioneer in prayer? Why not tell God about that decision now and ask Him to bless you?

Testimony Handout for Prayer Time

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 308-318

Christ delights to take apparently hopeless material, those whom Satan has debased and through whom he has worked, and make them the subjects of His grace. He rejoices to deliver them from suffering and from the wrath that is to fall upon the disobedient. He makes His children His agents in the accomplishment of this work, and in its success, even in this life, they find a precious reward.

But what is this compared with the joy that will be theirs in the great day of final revealing? "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face;" now we know in part, but then we shall know even as also we are known. 1 Corinthians 13:12.

It is the reward of Christ's workers to enter into His joy. That joy, to which Christ Himself looks forward with eager desire, is presented in His request to His Father: "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." John 17:24.

The angels were waiting to welcome Jesus as He ascended after His resurrection. The heavenly host longed to greet again their loved Commander, returned to them from the prison house of death. Eagerly they pressed about Him as He entered the gates of heaven. But He waved them back. His heart was with the lonely, sorrowing band of disciples whom He had left upon Olivet. It is still with His struggling children on earth, who have the battle with the destroyer yet to wage. "Father," He says, "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am."

Christ's redeemed ones are His jewels, His precious and peculiar treasure. "They shall be as the stones of a crown"—"the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Zechariah 9:16; Ephesians 1:18. In them "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Isaiah 53:11.

And will not His workers rejoice when they, too, behold the fruit of their labors? The apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonian converts, says: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy." 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20. And he exhorts the Philippian brethren to "be blameless and harmless," to "shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." Philippians 2:15, 16.

Every impulse of the Holy Spirit leading men to goodness and to God is noted in the books of heaven, and in the day of God everyone who has given himself as an instrument for the Holy Spirit's working will be permitted to behold what his life has wrought.

The poor widow who cast her two mites into the Lord's treasury little knew what she was doing. Her example of self-sacrifice has acted and reacted upon thousands of hearts in every land and in every age. It has brought to the treasury of God gifts from the high and the low, the rich and the poor. It has helped to sustain missions, to establish hospitals, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and preach the gospel to the poor. Multitudes have been blessed through her unselfish deed. And the outworking of all these lines of influence she, in the day of God, will be permitted to see. So with Mary's precious gift to the Savior. How many have been inspired to loving service by the memory of that broken alabaster box! And how she will rejoice as she beholds all this!

Wonderful will be the revealing as the lines of holy influence, with their precious results, are brought to view. What will be the gratitude of souls that will meet us in the heavenly courts as they understand the sympathetic, loving interest which has been taken in their salvation! All praise, honor, and glory will be given to God and to the Lamb for our redemption; but it will not detract from the glory of God to express gratitude to the instrumentality He has employed in the salvation of souls ready to perish.

The redeemed will meet and recognize those whose attention they have directed to the uplifted Savior. What blessed converse they have with these souls! "I was a sinner," it will be said, "without God and without hope in the world, and you came to me, and drew my attention to the precious Savior as my only hope. And I believed in Him. I repented of my sins, and was made to sit together with His saints in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Others will say: "I was a heathen in heathen lands. You left your friends and comfortable home, and came to teach me how to find Jesus and believe in Him as the only true God. I demolished my idols and worshiped God, and now I see Him face to face. I am saved, eternally saved, ever to behold Him whom I love. I then saw Him only with the eye of faith, but now I see Him as He is. I can now express my gratitude for His redeeming mercy to Him who loved me and washed me from my sins in His own blood."

Others will express their gratitude to those who fed the hungry and clothed the naked. "When despair bound my soul in unbelief, the Lord sent you to me," they say, "to speak words of hope and comfort. You brought me food for my physical necessities, and you opened to me the Word of God, awakening me to my spiritual needs. You treated me as a brother. You sympathized with me in my sorrows and restored my bruised and wounded soul so that I could grasp the hand of Christ that was reached out to save me. In my ignorance you taught me patiently that I had a Father in heaven who cared for me. You read to me the precious promises of God's Word.

You inspired in me faith that He would save me. My heart was softened, subdued, broken, as I contemplated the sacrifice which Christ had made for me. I became hungry for the bread of life, and the truth was precious to my soul. I am here, saved, eternally saved, ever to live in His presence, and to praise Him who gave His life for me."

What rejoicing there will be as these redeemed ones meet and greet those who have had a burden in their behalf! And those who have lived, not to please themselves, but to be a blessing to the unfortunate who have so few blessings—how their hearts will thrill with satisfaction! They will realize the promise: “Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”

“Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isaiah 58:14 (KJV).

“Fear not: . . . I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” Genesis 15:1 (KJV).

“I am thy part and thine inheritance.” Numbers 18:20 (KJV).

“Where I am, there shall also My servant be.” John 12:26 (KJV).

Prayer Outline: Pioneer Prayer

Opening: The prayer topics below are from the Testimony Handout, which the group should read either together or individually. The leader will divide the prayer topics among the group, or ask individuals which prayer topics they would like to pray about. Volunteers should write their initials on the blanks by their topics, and the group leader should note them too. The group leader may open prayer by thanking God for every person in the room and asking that each heart will be blessed. Before someone prays for a new topic, they should try to agree aloud with the previous one. Please keep individual prayers short, under two minutes.

1. ____ Thank God that He delights to take those whom Satan has debased, and through whom he has worked, and make them the subjects of His grace (Romans 5:8).
2. ____ Pray for God to make us His agents in the accomplishment of this work (Acts 1:8).
3. ____ Pray that we will enter Christ's joy for the salvation of souls (Hebrews 12:2).
4. ____ Thank the Lord that His heart is with us while we struggle against the destroyer on earth (Isaiah 59:19).
5. ____ Pray that soon we will be in heaven with Jesus (John 17:24).
6. ____ Thank the Lord Jesus for His suffering and love for us (Isaiah 53:11).

10-Minute Open Prayer Time: When the last volunteer finishes, a time of open prayer begins. This is the time to uplift other prayer requests. Have a song leader sing one verse to end the open prayer time.

7. ____ Pray that God's church will be "blameless and harmless," to "shine as lights in the world; holding fast the word of life" (Philippians 2:15, 16).
8. ____ Pray to be instruments for the Holy Spirit's working (1 Corinthians 12:6, 7).
9. ____ Pray that we will be as sacrificial as the widow who gave her two mites.
10. ____ Pray that we will be as sacrificial as Mary, who poured perfume over Jesus' feet.
11. ____ Pray that we will direct sinners to the Savior (John 12:32).
12. ____ Pray that we will go to any place that God leads us in order to share the gospel of Jesus (Matthew 28:19).

10-Minute Open Prayer Time: Song leader sings one verse to end the open prayer time.

13. ____ Pray that we may supply food and clothing to the needy and open the Word of God to them (James 2:15, 16).
14. ____ Pray that we may have a burden for the lost (Luke 19:10).
15. ____ Thank God that we will receive recompense at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).
16. ____ Thank God that we will ride upon the high places of the earth (Isaiah 58:14).
17. ____ Thank God that He is our shield and our “exceedingly great reward” (Genesis 15:1).
18. ____ Pray for church leaders and delegates as they prepare for General Conference Session.

5- or 10-Minute Open Prayer Time: Take time for thanksgiving and praise, with the prayer leader closing. God bless!

Register for Weekly Pioneer Prayer at www.RevivalPlan.com/pioneerprayer

An Invitation to Fast and Pray

“Now and onward till the close of time the people of God should be more earnest, more wide-awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer. Entire abstinence from food may not be required, but they should eat sparingly of the most simple food” (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 188-189).

“In the Bible, fasting is not an option. It’s a given. Matthew 6:17 doesn’t say, ‘If you fast,’ but rather, ‘When you fast.’ Fasting has always been part of the lifestyle of believers, just like praying and studying the Bible. In fact, every major character in the Bible fasted. If you study out all the fasts in the Bible, you will find that every time God’s people prayed *and fasted*, God worked mightily on their behalf. From deliverance from their enemies in battle to supernatural deliverance from prison, to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and on and on, we see a pattern. And this pattern repeats itself all down through Christian history” (Melody Mason, United in Prayer coordinator, General Conference).

We’re inviting members to join us for a day of prayer and fasting for our church and specifically for those we long to see come to know Christ in a real relationship that leads to salvation and a life of commitment to God. Let’s pray together for our children. Friends. Family. Neighbors. Co-workers. Community.

What is Fasting?

Fasting is more than not eating. In fact, the real emphasis of fasting is not skipping meals, but increasing prayer. Fasting is choosing to do without something in order to pray more intentionally and with more focus. Many choose to skip meals, but not everyone can do without food completely, and not everyone chooses that type of fast. You may choose to eat simpler, lighter meals. Or you might fast from an item or two, such as dessert or processed foods. Fasting can also include doing without social media, television, or other time-consuming habits.

If you do choose to fast completely from food (making sure to drink enough water and/or juices), use the time you would typically use for cooking and eating to pray. If you fast from an item or two, every time you’re tempted to eat that item, pray instead. Every time you’re tempted to check out social media, pray.

Remember that fasting does not guarantee that your prayers will be answered in the way you desire. Fasting doesn’t mean God will hear us better or reward us more. Fasting is about what happens in our own hearts and minds. It makes us more aware of our weaknesses and more dependent on God. Fasting creates an intentionality about prayer and reminds us to pray more focused prayers for what is deepest in our hearts.

We invite you to first pray and ask God how you should fast—what is He inviting you to give up in order to spend more time with Him in prayer?

Then we invite you to join us for a day of prayer and fasting together as a church. Even if you choose not to fast at all, join us for a day of prayer. Spend time before our Sabbath services praying and inviting God to prepare your heart and mind. Invite Him to convict you of any sins that stand between you and Him. Confess those. Ask for cleansing, healing, and forgiveness. Invite Him to show you whom He wants you to pray for. Bring those names to our Sabbath afternoon prayer time, and we will join you in praying for them.

Some are uncomfortable praying aloud, so they avoid times of corporate prayer. We invite you to join us anyway. You can pray with us silently, lifting up the prayer requests of others and praying for the people and things God brings to your heart. And for those who fear their prayers aren't "good enough," know that God hears not only our words but also our hearts. He's not looking for "good enough" prayers but for sincere worshipers seeking Him. He welcomes even faltering prayers where we stumble over our words and may not "say it right." Even if we don't know what to pray, He knows. He hears. And He invites us to pray together.

"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19).

We look forward to praying together with you.