

Day of Prayer and Fasting

Handbook and Resources

Made Strong Through the Power of the Word:

Interceding for Our Marriages

(With Special Prayer Time for Singles)

Second Quarter 2018

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Revival
& REFORMATION

Prepared for church group and individual use by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in coordination with the Revival and Reformation Committee. Prepared by Melody Mason for the Day of Prayer and Fasting global initiative.

Visit www.revivalandreformation.org for information.

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Contents

Why a Day of Prayer and Fasting?	4
Suggested Planning Ideas	5
Suggested Program Format	7
Pointers for Prayer Leaders	8
Interceding for Our Marriages (Prayer Theme and Outline)	10
Appendix	
“When Divorce is the Best Solution” Devotional	14
The Discipline of Fasting	17
Prayers and Promises to Claim for Your Marriage	19
“My One Desire” Prayer Sheet for Singles	23

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 wide-awake, 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 Ideas

- Key Verses: 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 5:21-28; Ecclesiastes 4:9

- Suggested sermon themes or possible topics for church:

The Battle for a Godly Marriage

Building an Affair-Proof Marriage

Creating Heaven on Earth in Your Home

When Divorce is the Best Solution

- Suggested children's story:

First, tell the story of God creating a helpmeet for Adam. Then share the first miracle that Jesus ever performed at the wedding of Cana (John 2:11). Why did Jesus smile upon marriage? Is it because a strong marriage reflects the closeness experienced in the Godhead?

Explain that God gave two institutions at Creation (marriage and Sabbath) that have been especially protected and preserved, even after the Fall. Share a modern-day testimony (from your own life or that of someone you know) about how a husband and wife have been stronger working together than apart.

- **FOR LEADER:** A suggested afternoon prayer program is provided. We recommend that you schedule about two hours, minimum, for this time. Many plan on prayer for a full afternoon. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead in regard to time.
- **FOR LEADER:** See "Pointers for Prayer Leaders" (pages 8, 9).
- **FOR LEADER and ATTENDEES:** Make copies of prayer theme sheets (pages 10-12) for attendees.
- **FOR SINGLE ATTENDEES:** Print "My One Desire" to hand out to singles (page 24).
- **FOR LEADER and ATTENDEES:** Organize a list (if possible) of all the couples in your church so that people can pray over them by name, whether or not they are present. Leave space at the end to include names of couples who may show up at church that day. Hand this list out to everyone during prayer time. Otherwise, just pray for names you remember.
- **FOR LEADER:** We've provided a Day of Prayer and Fasting devotional: "When Divorce is the Best Solution" (see page 14). This could be shared before the prayer time or used with the sermon, if desired.

Things to keep in mind regarding fasting:

While not everyone is able to skip food, encourage those who can to fast from something during the morning and afternoon of this special day.

Possible types of fasting could include: water fast, juice fast, Daniel's fast, dessert/or rich foods fast, social media fast, etc. Encourage members to ask God what type of fast He wants them to undertake.

While fasting is a "given" in the Bible (see Matthew 6:16), we must remember that fasting is not a magic key to righteousness or blessings, nor is any other spiritual discipline we undertake. We can't earn God's blessing or answers to prayer by fasting, any more than we can earn our own salvation. Also, fasting isn't a substitute for obedience or personal surrender and Christ-like love. In fact, we are told, "Fasting or prayer that is actuated by a self-justifying spirit is an abomination in the sight of God" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 280).

However, even if people choose not to fast, we don't want to discourage them from being part of the day's prayer activities. Remember, God knows the heart, and the decision to fast or not to fast (or how to fast) should be between a person and God, not dictated by anyone.

The whole purpose of the Day of Prayer and Fasting is to lay self aside as we intercede for others. As we seek the Lord with humility of heart, and put away earthly distractions, we will be more receptive to what God wants to do in our lives and through our prayers.

As Pastor Derek Morris says, "We fast from the world so we can feast on Jesus!"

Suggested Program Format

Place: Gather together in the church sanctuary to begin this time of prayer.

Opening the Prayer Time: After a few songs to set a reverent atmosphere, have the song leader lead everyone in the hymn “Have Thine Own Way, Lord” (*Adventist Hymnal*, no. 567), as we pray that God would have His way in our homes, our marriages, and even in our singleness.

Opening Prayer and Official Welcome: Have the Prayer Ministries director or a designated leader welcome everyone to the time of prayer. If someone isn’t married, they are still encouraged to take part, as there’s something special for the singles as well. Then have the leader share the devotional “When Divorce is the Best Solution” (see page 14).

Follow by reading 1 Corinthians 13.

Instructions: Give instructions for the actual prayer time! See “Pointers for Prayer Leaders” (pages 8, 9) for prayer tips to emphasize and instructions for the afternoon.

- Hand out the prayer theme sheet for the Day of Prayer and Fasting (pages 10-12).
- Hand out a list of all married couples in the church, if possible.
- Hand out the sheets “Prayers and Promises to Claim for Your Marriage” (pages 19-23).
- Tell singles that they will get a special sheet when groups separate.

Actual Prayer Time: Two hours, minimum, divided between group prayer and couple/singles group prayer. This time will go quickly. Many enjoy spending the whole afternoon in prayer. Keep the focus on actual prayer time, rather than talking or sermonizing. This is the day to pray!

Closing: When closing the prayer time, sing a few songs of praise, thanking God for what He will do. Encourage members to continue praying for the marriages of those they love.

Ending the Day of Prayer and Fasting: Have a special evening meal to break the fast together. You might consider doing a special “Love Affirmation Banquet” in honor of the couples in the church, with a sharing time at the end where people can share what they appreciate about their spouse or about the couples in attendance. They can also share how they met—their love stories. Affirmation does wonders for love! Also encourage everyone to share praises and affirmations of God. He fills the needs in our hearts that no one else can fill!

Pointers for Prayer Leaders

While people are encouraged to pray multiple times, remind them of the importance of keeping their individual prayers brief. Ellen White writes, "Make short prayers in meetings, and lengthy prayers when you talk and commune with God in your closet" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, p. 130). So, while the prayer time can be long, the individual prayers should not be. Praying short prayers tends to keep the prayer time active and moving. It also binds the members' hearts together and keeps adults and children from growing restless.

Praise and Confession Time:

We encourage you to start with a time of **praise and confession** before beginning to really intercede for the prayer themes, both corporately and as couples. Based on Psalm 100:4, we are to enter God's gates with praise. And, based on Psalm 66:18 and Isaiah 59:1, 2, if we want God to hear our prayers, our sins must be confessed and put away.

If starting with praise and confession, you might begin the prayer time as follows: "Dear Lord, we come before You today with hearts full of praise. Before we give You our requests for our marriages and homes, we want to take a few minutes just to praise Your name. Thank You for being our mighty King and deliverer." Then allow others to pray. When it's time to move to confession, lead again. We encourage a brief time for both corporate and private confession. This time of confession might be followed with singing "Amazing Grace."

Prayer Time for Marriages:

As you pray for the different marriage themes, whether for yourself or others, encourage everyone, by your own example, to pray God's Word, claiming His promises. Be specific! Pray in faith! And allow this time to go as long as the Holy Spirit leads.

Feel free to interject, throughout the prayer time, well-known hymns and songs that correspond with the prayers being prayed. "As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer" (*Education*, p. 168). Encourage the group to agree with each other in prayer, claiming Matthew 18:19.

Prayer Time for Couples/Singles/Children:

Partway through the afternoon, send the couples to pray alone together for 30 minutes to one hour. (Singles and children/youth should have their own prayer groups led by someone during this time.) Couples can spread out around the sanctuary or prayer room, or go to a private place of their choosing. Ask them to come back and join the group again at a specified time.

***Special Prayer Time for Singles (Non-married, Divorced, or Without Spouses Present):**

Designate a single person to lead. When the couples separate for their own prayer time, have the singles (no matter what their category) form their own prayer group and read/pray through the attachment "My

One Desire.” The prayer time should focus on asking God to be our one desire, our heavenly love, and the spouse that we do not yet have or that we’ve lost.

Some singles may wish to take the prayer theme sheet and pray on their own during this time. That is acceptable, too. Once the couples come back together, the singles’ group should rejoin them as well. While it’s hard to be single on a “couples’ day,” encourage them to pray for couples, too, whether parents or loved ones.

Again, these are just ideas to help you get started. It’s most important that the Holy Spirit leads the prayer time!

For more pointers on leading group prayer, download *Praying for Rain: A Mini Handbook for United Prayer* at www.revivalandreformation.org.

Interceding for Our Marriages (Prayer Theme and Outline)

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor."

Ecclesiastes 4:9

CORPORATE PRAYER TIME FOR EVERYONE:

- **PRAISE GOD:** Begin the time of prayer by praising and worshiping God for who He is. Truly, He can heal and restore broken hearts. He can also make good marriages even better!
- **PRAISE GOD FOR YOUR SPOUSE:** No matter your current relationship, take time to praise God for your spouse, for your parents' marriage, or for the future spouse He might give you. Praise Him for the marriages that have impacted your life and for the good things He's done in and through these relationships.
- **CORPORATE CONFESSION:** Next go into a time of corporate confession, asking God to forgive us for our selfishness and pride and for allowing the enemy a foothold in our homes and relationships. (Encourage people to confess whatever God lays on their hearts, while at the same time, keeping personal, private sins private.)
- **PRIVATE CONFESSION:** Take time for personal, silent confession, asking God to search hearts and bring to attention any unconfessed sins that need to be made right.
- **SUPPLICATION FOR MARRIAGES OF CHURCH LEADERS:** Pray that God puts a hedge of protection around the marriages of our church leaders, from the local pastor to the division level. The enemy always attacks by starting with the home and personal life. Pray that God would overrule the purposes of the enemy.
- **SUPPLICATION FOR MARRIAGES OF CHURCH MEMBERS/ATTENDEES:** Pray over a list of all the married couples in the church. Many of the couples listed may be in attendance. Take time to circle and pray for each couple in attendance, if possible.
- **SUPPLICATION FOR MARRIAGES OF BACKSLIDDEN MEMBERS:** Pray for the marriages of those who no longer come to church. "It takes two to tango," they say, and many may be spiritually discouraged because of a marriage partner. Pray that God will bring these couples not only back together, but back to church together.
- **SUPPLICATION FOR MARRIAGES OF NEIGHBORS/FRIENDS:** Pray for the marriages of those closest to us. They may not be church members, or of our faith, but God wants to restore their broken hearts as well. Pray for marriages of friends and loved ones who may not have been mentioned yet.

- **SUPPLICATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE DEALING WITH PAIN OF SEPARATION OR DIVORCE:** Pray for those in the church who are currently divorced, that they will sense God's love and feel that they have a church family who supports and loves them. Pray that they will find love and happiness again, if it is God's will, and that what the enemy has meant for evil, God can turn to good! (Perhaps ask all divorcees to come to the center and circle them collectively as a group in prayer.)

- **SUPPLICATION FOR FUTURE MARRIAGES:** Pray for the unmarried singles in the church, that God will lead them to the right godly companion in His time. Pray that they allow God to make the choice and that they don't rush ahead blindly in unwise love choices. (Perhaps ask all singles to come to the center and circle them in prayer collectively as a group.)

COUPLE PRAYER TIME: Each couple should find a private place to pray together.

- **COUPLE PRAISE:** While holding hands with your spouse, praise God for the good things about your spouse and for the ways He's blessed you and helped you grow through your spouse's influence. Be specific in your appreciation.
- **COUPLE CONFESSION:** Ask God to forgive you for ways that you may have wounded your spouse through your words, actions, or choices. Be specific! (Ask your spouse to forgive you for whatever God brings to your mind.)
 - Ask God to forgive you for pride, selfishness, and for the times you've been more worried about defending your rights than for caring for your spouse and their needs. (Ask your spouse to forgive you for whatever God brings to mind.)
 - Ask God to forgive you for not reflecting His love and mercy (as depicted in 1 Corinthians 13) to your spouse and/or family.
- **COUPLE SUPPLICATION:** Pray together over the "Prayers and Promises for Your Marriage," taking time to ask your spouse for forgiveness for ways that you have not lived up to these promises and biblical instructions as you should have.
 - Pray that you would have not only a happy marriage but also a thriving marriage that helps others come to the kingdom because of your testimony.
 - Pray that anything that the enemy has meant for evil, God would turn to good (Exodus 50:20).
 - If you have time, read 1 Corinthians 13 and pray over it together. Ask God to make it a reality in your life!
- **COUPLE THANKSGIVING:** End by praising God for what He can and will do as you both surrender and yield to Him. Thank God again for your spouse and the chance to help each other prepare for heaven. Commit to continue praying together and putting God first in your relationship.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Before returning to the main group, ask each other what you can do to show mutual love and respect in a meaningful way in the coming weeks; attempt to practice what is communicated, in God's strength. Make a plan to continue praying together, not just once in a while but daily!

WORLD CHURCH PRAYER TIME: In addition to praying for marriages in the church, please remember the following World Church prayer requests during this day of prayer and fasting.

- Please pray that our churches worldwide become houses of prayer, where members intercede on behalf of our marriages, our homes, our children, and the nations around us.

- Please pray for new members that came into our church during the Total Member Involvement evangelistic series that took place in Ukraine, Georgia, Romania, and Moldova in February 2017.
- Please pray for your local church pastor, conference leaders, and union and division leaders. Ask God to give them wisdom and strengthen them for their tasks.
- Please pray especially for the work to go forward in the difficult 10/40 region of the world. Pray for more missionaries to enter this region.
- Please pray that every member in your church will feel the call to get involved in sharing the gospel with those in their sphere of influence.
- Pray that we would be strong as a church and individually, no matter the trials that come as we get closer to the soon coming of Jesus.

APPENDIX

“When Divorce is the Best Solution”

By Martin Kim, pastor, prayer evangelist, and missionary

“As your pastor, I highly recommend divorce,” I told my members on a recent Sabbath. I knew I had their attention now. No one was going to sleep through the rest of this sermon. I could imagine the thoughts racing through their minds: *Is he preaching heresy? Will this be the last sermon this pastor preaches from our pulpit?*

Before I explain to you why I recommended divorce as a solution for marital problems, let me set the context by explaining the six stages of marriage. The reason we have these six stages is because of the entrance of sin into this world. If humans had not fallen and we were still living in the Garden of Eden, we would have only experienced stage one and stage six of marriage. But because of temptation and the entrance of sin, we have all six stages.

Stage one: The Honeymoon. Everything is great and life is perfect at this stage. My advice to newlyweds would be to enjoy every minute of it. It would also be good to practice saying the following: “I love you. I’m sorry. Will you forgive me? I forgive you.”

Saying these things requires very little effort when you are in the honeymoon phase. It’s good to get into the habit of saying these things because when stage two rolls around, it can be painfully difficult to say them. Mignon McLaughlin, a U.S. journalist and author, nicely summed up the honeymoon stage this way: “Pity all newlyweds. She cooks something nice for him, and he brings her flowers, and they kiss and think: *How easy marriage is.*”

Before we move to stage two of marriage, consider this important question: Why doesn’t God allow us to continue in the honeymoon phase throughout our entire marriage? Why does our loving God allow the blissful honeymoon phase to come to an end?

Have you ever thought about that? I believe it is because God is more concerned about our holiness than He is about our happiness. The reason He is so concerned about our holiness is because ultimately, He’s concerned about our happiness. There is no true happiness apart from holiness. In Matthew 5:8, Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” Another way of saying this is, “Happy are the holy.”

Interestingly, in Matthew 5:4, Jesus also says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” This is a comforting promise for those who are mourning because of their marriage. For many, marriage has become a burden, a curse.

Notice what Ellen White has to say about Jesus’ promise to those who mourn: “The Savior’s words have a message of comfort to those also who are suffering affliction or bereavement. Our sorrows do not spring out of the ground. God ‘doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.’ Lamentations 3:33. When He permits trials and afflictions, it is ‘for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.’ Hebrews 12:10” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings*, p. 10). I would like to paraphrase the last sentence this way: “When He permits the honeymoon phase to come to an end, it is ‘for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.’”

The passage goes on to say: "If received in faith, the trial that seems so bitter and hard to bear will prove a blessing. The cruel blow that blights the joys of earth will be the means of turning our eyes to heaven. How many there are who would never have known Jesus had not sorrow led them to seek comfort in Him!"

Once again, I would like to paraphrase the last sentence this way: "How many there are who would never have known Jesus had not the honeymoon stage come to an end, leading them to seek comfort in Him!" Our God, who desires for us to be partakers of His holiness, allows us to go from the honeymoon stage on to the next stage.

When I asked my members what they thought stage two was, one member shouted out, "The nightmare stage!" I guess that could be a fitting description. Stage two is: *What was I thinking?* When stage two comes around, people find themselves thinking, "My spouse and I are complete opposites." For a lot of couples, what initially drew them to their spouse will later bother them. For example, the shy introvert who is attracted to the outgoing extrovert may later resent the spouse who is always away spending time with friends instead of being at home with family.

The next stage is where divorce usually happens. Stage three is: *Everything would be great if you changed.* When we marry someone, we choose the partner out of the 7 billion people on this planet, and then suddenly we say, "You have to change." It's been said that women get married thinking, "I'll change him." Men get married thinking, "She'll never change."

Now, if you are in stage three, and it is so bad that your home and marriage are falling apart, I highly recommend divorce. Yes, you read correctly. Let me repeat: "I highly recommend divorce." I wholeheartedly agree with this quote from *God's Little Instruction Book for Couples* by Jerry McCant: "You can never be happily married to another until you get a divorce from yourself. Successful marriage demands a certain death to self."

In 1 Corinthians 15:31, the apostle Paul shares, "I die daily." In Galatians 2:20, he says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

We, too, must die to self if we want a successful marriage. Consider these words in the marriage preparation manual *Before You Say "I Do"* by H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts: "Marriage is a refining process that God will use to have us become the man or woman He wants us to become. Think about it. God will use your marriage for His purpose. He will mold and refine you for your own benefit and for His glory" (p. 8).

What is marriage? It is a "refining process," a furnace. It gets extremely hot in a furnace. We must remember that the purpose of the fire is not to destroy you, but it is to consume the dross. Ellen White has a lot to say about the refining furnace. We are told, "The refining furnace is to remove the dross. When the Refiner sees His image reflected in you perfectly, He will remove you from the furnace. You will not be left to be consumed or to endure the fiery ordeal any longer than is necessary for your purification" (*Our High Calling*, p. 312). We can successfully get past stage three if we are willing to get a divorce from self and recognize that God desires to conform us into the image of Christ.

Stage four is: *I choose to love and accept you as you are.* God is calling us to do for our spouse what He has done for us. God chose to love us, and it wasn't when we started repenting and getting our act together. The Bible says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were

still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). When Jesus was beaten and mocked, His response was, "I love you." When they pounded the nails into His hands, His response was, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). In Ephesians 5:25 Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." God is calling us to love our spouses with unselfish love as He has loved us.

If we can die to self and learn to love unselfishly by His strength and grace, we can advance to stages five and six. Stage five is: *I'm blessed to have you in my life*. And stage six is: *I want to grow old with you*.

As we journey with our spouses heavenward, let us ever keep in mind that God is using our experiences in marriage to daily transform us so that we may reflect the character of Christ. We are told, "God's work of refining and purifying must go on until His servants are so humbled, so dead to self, that, when called into active service, their eye will be single to His glory. . . . God brings men over the ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ and the spirit of heaven, and they are victors over themselves" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 86).

Let's remember that God will bring us "over the ground again and again" until we become like Christ. This may explain why your spouse continues to do the same irritating, annoying thing that drives you up the wall day in and day out. If this is your experience, I highly recommend that you get a divorce from yourself today. May we be able to say with the apostle Paul, "I die daily."

The Discipline of Fasting

By Dr. Derek Morris

A. Fasting in the Scriptures

- a. Types of fast
 - i. Normal fast—Luke 4:1, 2.
 - ii. Partial fast—Daniel 10:3.
 - iii. Absolute fast—Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9.
 - iv. Supernatural fast—Deuteronomy 9:9.
- b. In the teachings of Jesus
 - i. Study Matthew 6:16-18 and 9:14, 15.
 - ii. What can we learn about fasting from the teachings of Jesus?

B. Insights on spiritual fasting in the writings of Ellen White

- a. "The fasting which the word of God enjoins is something more than a form. It does not consist merely in refusing food, in wearing sackcloth, in sprinkling ashes upon the head. He who fasts **in real sorrow for sin** will never court display. The object of the fast which God calls upon us to keep is not to afflict the body for the sin of the soul, but to aid us in perceiving the grievous character of sin, in humbling the heart before God and receiving His pardoning grace" (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 87).
- b. "The true fasting which should be recommended to all, is abstinence from every stimulating kind of food, and the proper use of wholesome, simple food, which God has provided in abundance. Men need to think less about what they shall eat and drink of temporal food and much more in regard to the food from heaven, that will give tone and vitality to the whole religious experience" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 188).
- c. "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).
- d. "For certain things, fasting and prayer are recommended and appropriate. In the hand of God, they are a means of cleansing the heart and promoting a receptive frame of mind. We obtain answers to our prayers because we humble our souls before God" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 187, 188).
- e. "The spirit of true fasting and prayer is the spirit which yields mind, heart, and will to God" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189).
- f. "All the fasting in the world will not take the place of simple trust in the word of God" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189).

- C. The purpose of a spiritual fast
 - a. Fasting helps us to focus our attention upon God.
 - b. Fasting calls us to prayer.
 - c. Fasting exposes those things which control us.
- D. How should we fast?
 - a. Plan a 24-hour partial fast.
 - b. Eat sparingly of very simple food, or you may wish to drink only fruit juices.
 - c. Drink plenty of pure water.
 - d. Begin your fast with prayer following a wholesome breakfast. Break your fast the following morning with a light meal of fresh fruit and a special time of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord! Remember that you should not “advertise” your fast. Such an attitude leads to spiritual pride and robs you of the special blessings that God desires to bestow during this time.
 - e. Consider setting aside a day each week for this type of spiritual fast.
- E. Plan a normal or absolute fast in times of great need
 - a. In times of crisis, God may impress you to enter into a normal or absolute fast.
 - b. Realize that you must severely limit your activities during such a fast. (You should consult your physician if you suspect that such a fast might endanger your health.)
- F. Do not become extreme—there is no virtue in a marathon fast
 - a. Ellen White writes: “You are not called upon to fast forty days. The Lord bore that fast for you in the wilderness of temptation. There would be no virtue in such a fast; but there is virtue in the blood of Christ” (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189).

Dr. Derek Morris is president of the Hope Channel and host of the Hope Sabbath School TV program.

Prayers and Promises to Claim for Your Marriage

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You came up with the plan of marriage. You designed us to be one flesh. Show us how to be “one flesh” for your glory and honor!

“And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’ . . . Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:18, 24).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You can make our homes and marriages strong. In fact, You desire our lives to be stronger together than they were apart. Please show us how to have a marriage for Your honor and glory. Help me to point my spouse toward heaven!

“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1).

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, for the gift of love. Help me not to forget the early attentions and ways I loved my spouse when we first came together. Help me not to grieve the Holy Spirit by the way I treat my spouse today, but rather make heaven sing with joy!

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:30-32).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You have given us the ultimate example of unselfish, unconditional love. I don’t have this kind of love naturally, Lord. But I know You can give this love to me! Show me how to love my spouse like You do.

“I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31).

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You want to dwell in my home! Show me how to make our home a little “heaven on earth,” where the angels love to visit. Show me how to speak in love, respond in love, and serve unselfishly in love.

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

“. . . make your home a little heaven on earth. You can do this, if you so choose. You can make home so pleasant and cheerful that it will be the most attractive place on earth . . .” (*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 200).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You are so longsuffering and patient with me. Forgive me for the times I’ve been offended, for the time I’ve wasted defending my pride and my wounded self. Show me what it means to lay down my life in love, as You’ve done for me!

“If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties. Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the hours which have been spent in justifying self” (*Early Writings*, p. 119).

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:22, 25).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, for my spouse! Help me to honor them, respect them, love them, nurture them, and encourage them heavenward in their life and ministry. Help me be their biggest cheerleader and fan! Help them to daily see a picture of Jesus in ME! Teach me to love like You, Lord.

“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. . . . Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land” (Proverbs 31:10-12, 23).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You have given us an example of perfect love. Perfect love crucifies self rather than crucifying others. I have so far to go, Lord! Please change me, grow me, help me be the spouse You’ve called me to be.

“Crucify self, in the place of seeking to crucify your [spouse]. ‘If any man will come after Me,’ Christ said, ‘let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’ Matthew 16:24” (Letter 11, 1905).

“Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble” (Psalm 119:165).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You gave us an example of what it means to serve. Rather than looking to be served, may I be the first to SERVE my spouse! Please make our home a taste of heaven on earth.

“And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave” (Matthew 20:27).

“The sweetest type of heaven is a home where the Spirit of the Lord presides. If the will of God is fulfilled, the husband and wife will respect each other and cultivate love and confidence” (*Adventist Home*, p. 15).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You made man and woman different for a reason. WIFE: Help me to honor and respect my husband as the house-band of our home. HUSBAND: Help me to love and cherish my wife for all that she is in You.

“Let bride and bridegroom, in the presence of the heavenly universe, pledge themselves to love each other as God has ordained they should. . . . The wife is to respect and reverence her husband, and the husband is to love and cherish his wife. . . . [HUSBAND’S PRAYER:] Help me that I may be kind, pitiful, tenderhearted, forgiving. Help me to be a real house-band in my home and to represent the character of Christ to others” (*Adventist Home*, pp. 103, 215).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You can teach me how to truly uphold the arms of my spouse through prayer. May my prayers be a language of love and source of encouragement for the incredible person that You’ve brought into my life! Teach me how to pray with and for my spouse daily.

“He longs to have you expect great things from Him” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 146).

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find” (Matthew 7:7).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You have given me two ears and one mouth, which means I should listen twice as much as I talk. Help me not to needlessly complain, criticize, nag, or tear down my spouse with my words. Help me to use my words to edify and build my spouse for Your glory.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11).

“Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. . . . Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:26-27, 29).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You are my rock and foundation. Help me to always be a stepping stone (rather than a stumbling block) to encourage my spouse into a deeper love relationship with you. United as a couple, may we be a power for Your glory in the church!

“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches” (Proverbs 24:3, 4).

“The wife, united with the husband in the fear of God, is to be a strength and power in the church” (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, p. 179).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You will give my spouse courage and strength to stand strong for You, no matter the crisis or storm we face in the future. Help us not to be ashamed of Your name!

“Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me’” (Matthew 16:24).

“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You can shield my spouse from the lies of the enemy. Give them mental strength to run from temptation and to seek Your arm of strength. In sorrow or trial, may You be their Fortress and Deliverer.

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You can make my husband/wife strong where they are weak. You can deliver them from what Satan seeks to bind them with. You can make them a strong victor for You when they kneel in humility and surrender before Your throne.

“I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel” (Isaiah 45:2, 3).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You alone can quench our thirst. May we never settle spiritually but constantly thirst for a deeper and deeper walk with You. May we also seek to grow deeper as a couple, with more understanding, love, patience, and joy!

“But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that although we will do everything we can to make each other happy, You alone are our source of love and fulfillment. Help us to keep our eyes on You and keep being filled by You so that we can give to each other.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. . . . We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:11-13,19).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You promise when we honor You, we will be fruitful. May my spouse be that fruitful tree planted by the rivers of water. May our marriage prosper and be fruitful. Let it be a testimony of the God of miracles that we serve, for You are good!

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3).

My One Desire

(prayer sheet for singles, divorcees, or those who live alone)
by Melody Mason, author of *Daring to Ask for More*

It's tough living as a single in a couple's world. I know, I've been there! And yet, throughout four decades of singlehood, Jesus has shown me again and again how much HE loves me and how He longs for me to find my complete satisfaction, joy, love, and identity in Him. What He has given me during this single season of my life can never be replaced by human love, no matter how wonderful it may be. In fact, He's truly become my best friend, my all-in-all, my Heavenly Love, and I'm jealous to guard His affections.

Psalm 27:4 says, "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in His temple."

This has become my prayer, and I pray it will be your prayer, too. In fact, this must be your prayer if you are to find complete peace and happiness, whether in a relationship or alone.

No matter your circumstances, your age, the heartache you have been through, whether you're male or female, or whether there are any prospects on the horizon, there's only one thing you should focus on at this time: allowing Jesus to be YOUR one true Love. If you do, you will discover He is much more than you ever imagined He could be!

I encourage you to pray through the following prayers and promises that have meant so much to me. Ask Him to occupy that place in your heart that only He can fill.

Prayers and Promises for the Single

Lord, I confess that I don't always desire Your presence as I should. I'm lonely and I long for companionship, or at least for someone who will always be there. Help me recognize that YOU are my heart's desire! You are my companion and truly all that I need. Help me to seek after You with all my heart, before I seek after any earthly love or companionship. May Psalm 27:4 truly be my prayer. May You be my heavenly bridegroom.

"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27:4).

"Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

"For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused, says your God" (Isaiah 54:5-7).

"Human love should draw its closest bonds from divine love. Only where Christ reigns can there be deep, true, unselfish affection" (*Adventist Home*, p. 68).

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3).

Jesus is the perfect Heavenly Love!

Lord, I really want a companion/friend who is completely committed to God and will draw me closer to my Heavenly Father. Help me to recognize that YOU are that companion for You and Your Father are already ONE. No one can draw me closer to the Father than You.

Jesus said, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30).

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” (John 14:6).

In this world, friends betray you, and those you love often let you down. How I long for a friend and companion that I can always trust. But You are that person! There is no one with higher standards and stronger integrity than You. Though others forsake me, You will never forsake Your children. You are always there when I cry to You.

Others testified, “[He] committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22).

“For the Lord will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance” (Psalm 94:14).

“I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them” (Isaiah 42:16).

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37).

Heavenly Father, in this world, there’s so much spiritual confusion. Sometimes I don’t know what to think, what to believe, or where to stand. How I long for someone to stand next to whom I can trust—someone who knows, lives, and prays Your Word. You put these desires within me for spiritual companionship. Help me to recognize that You are this person, for YOU are the living Word, and You are praying for me.

Jesus opened up His arms with love as He whispered, “I am the living Word, and I came to live with you” (John 1:14, paraphrased).

He prayed all night . . . not just for anyone, but for me! (See Luke 6:12; John 17:20.)

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

"For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Thank you for Your Word, Lord! Help me to learn how to cling to it.

"If we desire to know and to do God's will, His promises are ours: 'You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free'" (*From Heaven With Love*, p. 166).

"Grasp His promises as leaves from the tree of life: 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.' John 6:37. As you come to Him, believe that He accepts you, because He has promised. You can never perish while you do this—NEVER" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 65, emphasis supplied).

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

Lord, I try to serve others, but sometimes I just long for someone to be there for me, to lovingly serve me. However, I am rebuked, for You left Heaven to serve me! This didn't just happen at the cross, but You are serving me today as You intercede on my behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. Help me to grasp hold of Your arm of strength as I move forward with hope and courage toward the Promised Land, knowing that You truly do supply all my needs. As You pour Yourself out lavishly on my behalf, may I not hoard my blessings for myself but, in return, pour my life out for others. Help me not to be selfish with my love, my time, my thoughts, and my prayers.

"[Jesus] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7).

He not only fed the five thousand long ago, but He also feeds me today (Mark 6:41).

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalm 81:10).

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).

Heavenly Father, You are so good to me! Often I grumble and complain at being alone. Please forgive me. Not only did you leave the Kingdom of glory to come and win my love, but often I don't even appreciate Your gift. Yet You continue to reach out in love. Teach me to love others as You have loved me.

I remember Jesus' words as the nails were driven into His hands: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

I also remember that when even a little sparrow fell, He noticed and cared, and yet how much more He cares for me today! "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31).

God's Word tells us, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, KJV).

God—The greatest being
So Loved—The greatest principle
The World—The greatest people in need (that's ME)
That He Gave—The greatest action
His Only Begotten Son—The greatest gift
That Whosoever Believeth—The greatest invitation
Might Not Perish—The greatest rescue from the greatest disaster
But Have Eternal Life—The greatest lasting privilege and eternal joy

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Heavenly Father, I have often prayed for someone with whom I could share my deepest thoughts and dreams; someone who would walk with me through joys and through sorrows; someone who would not only hold my hand but also my heart—someone I could stand beside and love with all my heart. And now I recognize that You are that person, my Heavenly Love! Help me to never again take for granted what You've done for ME!

"I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who called you by your name, am the God of Israel" (Isaiah 45:3).

Jesus said nothing as He laid down His heavenly honor to come to earth to win me. Although I doubted His love and resisted His advances at first, He slowly, sweetly, tenderly won my heart and love. Then He led me to His great banqueting house, and the banner He put over me was love (Song of Solomon 2:4, paraphrased).

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good," He tenderly whispered (Psalm 34:8). And as He looked deep into my heart, I knew that nothing would separate us (Romans 8:35-39), for He had won my heart forever!

Then I realized that it was He, Jesus, who made the ultimate sacrifice of love, not for just anyone, but for me. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone [that means for ME!]" (Hebrews 2:9).

Tears rolled down my cheeks as I stood in awe. And my heart melted. "I found the one I love. I held him and would not let him go" (Song of Solomon 3:4).

Lord, You've done so much for me! Thank you! I have to be honest, though. You've told us that hard times are coming upon our world. I don't want to go through these hard times alone.

He promises, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2).

Jesus is not just any man—He is all this and so, so much more: my Judge, my Lord, my Savior, my Creator, my Redeemer, and my King (Isaiah 33:22). Truly He is my All in All, the True Love I have yet to really understand and know!

Heavenly Father, Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." I used to pray this while asking for a spouse, for a friend, for companionship, but help me to realize that YOU are the desire of my heart! Everything I need, I find in You. May my heart truly learn to sing Your praises, no matter the circumstances of my life, for if You are for me, who can be against me?

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

"Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. . . . Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing" (Psalm 34:3-5, 9-10).

"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27:4).

No matter where life takes me, may Jesus always be my one desire!

To download prayer promise cards for marriage or other needs, visit: www.revivalandreformation.org