

Day of Prayer and Fasting

Handbook and Resources

The Battle Belongs to the Lord:
Fighting for Each Other

Second Quarter 2017

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Revival
& REFORMATION

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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 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 verse: James 5:16
- Suggested sermon theme or possible topics for church:

We're All in This Together

The Great Controversy and the Church

The Battle, the Church, and God's People

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

- Suggested children's story:

Share the story of Nehemiah 4. While the people were working to rebuild the walls, the enemy tried to stop them. So Nehemiah had the people help each other. Some would build while others protected the builders. They would stand guard all day long (verse 22). Because they were spread out so far around the city, they devised a plan: when one group was being attacked, they'd sound the trumpet, and everyone would rush over to help (verses 19, 20). With everyone working together and taking care of each other, they were able to rebuild the walls in 52 days, and all their enemies saw that God was with them.

To make the story more fun, you can have the kids build a wall—but each child can only use one hand and everyone has to work together. Or, to make it more realistic, have several children attempt to build a wall while others come and try to keep them from accomplishing their task. Ask them how hard it is to build when someone keeps trying to stop you. Then have them try again, but this time have some children stand guard so that those attempting to stop the work can't get to them. Finally, ask how hard it was to build with someone helping. Point out that hard things are always easier when we help each other. [Disposable cups are an inexpensive "building material."]

- Prayer theme for 2nd quarter Day of Prayer and Fasting is "Fighting for Each Other." Also pray for World Church Prayer Requests.
- Suggested afternoon program and activity: Schedule about two hours for this time, but allow the Holy Spirit to lead. Many groups plan on prayer for a full afternoon.
- Day of Prayer and Fasting devotional: "Fightin' Prayers." This could be shared before the prayer time or used with the sermon, if desired.
- Additional fasting information and other prayer resources are available in the appendix.

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 pray and ask God to indicate what type of fast He wants them to undertake.

While fasting is a "given" in the Bible (see Matt. 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 in prayer by fasting any more than we can earn our own salvation. Also, fasting doesn't 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 as we put away earthly distractions, we will have a more receptive frame of mind to what God wants to do in our life 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.

Introduction: After a few songs to set a reverent atmosphere, have the song leader lead everyone in the hymn “The Church Has One Foundation” (*Adventist Hymnal*, #348).

Follow with this Scripture: “Confess your trespasses one to another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

Opening Prayer and Official Welcome: Have the Prayer Ministries director or a designated leader welcome everyone to the time of prayer. Share the “Fightin’ Prayers” devotional if it has not already been used during the church service. Then go over the prayer theme for the Day of Prayer and Fasting. You’ll find this on page 10. If possible, you might print up multiple copies of this section for people to have during the prayer time. This might also be a good time to remind people to keep each prayer brief, so that multiple people can pray.

Prayer Time: Two hours minimum. This time will go quickly. Many enjoy spending the whole afternoon in prayer. Keep the focus and emphasis on actual time in prayer. This is the day to pray! The time will go quickly.

Closing: In closing the prayer time, sing a few songs of praise, thanking God for what He’s going to do. Encourage members, even after the Day of Prayer and Fasting is over, to continue to pray for people of other faith groups in their community and to seek for ways to reach out to them.

Ending the Day of Prayer and Fasting: Have a special potluck supper or evening meal to break the fast together as a church family.

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" (Ellen G. White, *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.

We encourage you to start with a time of **praise and confession** before beginning to really intercede for the prayer themes. 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 brothers and sisters of other faiths, 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. If you're going to divide up your group to pray, begin this time together as one large group. Then separate into smaller prayer bands. When it's time to move to confession, lead again.

We encourage a brief time for **private confession** to God first, and then **corporate confession** especially for sins like apathy and lethargy in reaching souls for Christ. This time of confession might be followed with singing "Amazing Grace."

As you pray for people, 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" (Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 168).

Encourage the group to **agree with each other in prayer**, claiming Matthew 18:19. These are ideas to help get started, but it's most important that the Holy Spirit leads!

Spend the afternoon praying for the members of your church—praying together for those in attendance and also praying for those who are not there. Take your church membership list and print it off. Depending on how large it is, you may want to divide your group into smaller prayer teams, giving each group a few names to pray for. If your church is small, then pray together for all of the names.

You may want to create a slip of paper with each member and/or family name. You can let members know ahead of time that you will be praying for every church member and invite them to share specific requests that they would like to have lifted in prayer. Include these requests on the slips of paper. Then encourage those in the prayer session to take the slips of paper home and send a short note, postcard, or email, letting people know they were prayed for specifically.

It could be helpful to divide the names into several groups: active/attending members, missing members who are no longer attending because of their own choices, shut-in members who are no longer attending because of health/age, and children/youth/young adults. Give names of members and any specific requests to those praying. Or have the slips of paper in a basket/container and have each prayer warrior draw out a name and pray for it.

Please remind people that prayer is not a time for “holy gossip.” No sharing of “concerns” or information that isn’t public knowledge.

End this afternoon of prayer by coming back together and spending time in **thanksgiving and praise**.

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

Fighting for Each Other

Prayer Requests

A. Members. Pray specifically for every member and each person attending your church. If there aren't specific requests, some areas to pray about include:

- Spiritual growth/relationship with God
- Health
- Relationships—marriage, parenting, friendships
- Finances
- Jobs/school
- Challenges and struggles
- Temptations/battle with sin
- Passion and purpose—that each one would find their way to serve God

B. Missing Members. Pray specifically for the missing members—those who are no longer attending by choice.

- Pray not only for the areas listed above, but pray specifically for their relationship with God and with the church.
- Ask God to heal any wounds they've felt inflicted by the church or church members.
- Pray that God will give them the desire to come back to church or to find a church in their new community.

C. Church. Pray for your church to be an accepting, grace-filled church where every person, no matter where they are in their journey with God, will feel welcomed and wanted.

D. Shut-Ins. Pray for the shut-in members of the church. This can be a difficult time in life for people. They may feel forgotten and like they have no purpose.

- Pray for the areas above, but pray specifically for their health.
- Ask God to help them find purpose and passion even with their limited abilities and to show them ways they can continue to serve Him. Ask Him to help them feel encouraged that they are making a difference even if they can't be as active as they may have once been.
- Ask Him to help them feel connected to Him and to the church.
- Pray for ideas and opportunities to minister to this group of people who may have once been a vital part of the church and are now feeling forgotten.
- Ask God to raise up those who will visit and care for these members.

E. Young People. Pray specifically for the children, youth, and young adults of the church.

- Young people are choosing to leave the church, thinking it is not a relevant part of their lives and not a way for them to make a difference (Barna).
- While praying for the areas above, pray specifically for their salvation.
- Pray that God protects them from all harm—not just physical but also emotional, mental, and especially spiritual.
- Pray for a passion and love for God that will not end.
- Pray that they experience a personal and intimate relationship with Christ. Pray that church isn't just a habit but a place where they find people who truly care about them, where they find courage and help in their day-to-day lives, and where they discover ways to serve God with their unique gifts and abilities.
- Ask God to convict you of ways that the church is failing or letting down young people. Ask Him to show you ways to connect with the kids, teens, and young adults of your church.

F. Leaders. Specifically pray for the leaders of your church. The enemy works extra hard to take out leaders and those serving in ministry.

- Pray for their protection—again, not just physical but also spiritual, emotional, and mental.
- Pray for courage and strength as they face temptations.
- Pray for their relationship with God, that it will always be their top priority and that they will never be too busy for time with God, for they can do nothing without this connection.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment as they lead.
- Pray that the church will be encouraging and not critical. Pray that even in those moments when a leader needs to be talked to about something, that it is done with much love and prayer.

In addition, please remember **World Church Prayer Requests:**

- Notably, we ask that you uplift the millions of unreached people living in the large cities of the world.
- Please pray that God will raise up workers: medical missionaries, church planters, and urban missionaries to reach these people.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to work through our various ministries and services such as Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Adventist World Radio (AWR), Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), and others to reach the unreached.
- Pray for personal revival and reformation and for a sense of our own mission.
- Pray for children who attend our schools and for those who attend public campuses around the world. May they find courage to stand for right and witness for truth.
- Pray for our families across the world, that they may be a light in their neighborhoods, giving hope and peace to those who are abused or abandoned.

Continue to Fight for Each Other in Prayer

There is something powerful about hearing another person pray for you—really pray for you and the things that are the heaviest on your heart. It's also incredibly encouraging to know that others are praying for you. Let's not just pray for each other one day a year. Here are some ideas for keeping members praying for each other throughout the year:

- Provide ways people can **share prayer requests** whenever there is a need:
 - Have a prayer request box where members can drop off specific requests. Then make sure to have people praying for those requests.
 - Include a prayer request slip of paper in the pew racks that people can fill out and place in the offering plate. Then make sure to have people praying for those requests.
 - Have a prayer request page on your website where people can submit prayer requests—and again, make sure someone is following up and praying.
 - Create a private prayer group on Facebook (make sure it's private so that only those in the group can see it) where church members can share requests and “pray” for each other by posting a short prayer for the requests shared.
- Create a **prayer room** at church that is open on Sabbath—a place where people can go and have someone pray with them. Staff it throughout Sabbath morning and for a short time after church. Remind people that someone is available to pray with them.
- Each week, **focus** on a different family/couple/single of the church for whom to pray. Encourage people not only to pray for this member(s) during the week but also to drop them a note, email, text, or Facebook post letting them know prayers are being lifted for them. Make sure to include inactive or shut-in members on this prayer focus schedule.
- Create a **MUCK** group for your church—Mothers United in Christ for Kids. This is a group of moms committed to praying specifically for the salvation of children—no matter how young or old they are. Share the list of children's names with all who have committed to pray. Encourage moms to share updates with the group regularly.
- Share the resource (in the appendix) “Praying Like Crazy” with prayer warriors and encourage them to continue praying for others.

APPENDIX

“Fightin’ Prayers”

Devotional Thought for Day of Prayer and Fasting

Life can be hard.

We face challenges and struggles that can seem overwhelming. Finances. Health. Relationships. Battles with sin and temptations. Loneliness.

It surprises us sometimes.

We want life to be easy. Things to work out. Bills to be paid. Good health. Friendships to last. Our spouse and/or children to always love us and love God. Victory over temptation.

Part of the problem is that we forget. We forget that the Great Controversy is more than just the name of a book on our shelf. It is our life. The daily battle we live in.

The Bible warns us. Jesus told His disciples that “the thief . . . [comes] to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). We tend to skip that part of the verse and go right to “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” We want that abundant life. We don’t want to think about having an enemy who is constantly and persistently out to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8).

As Nehemiah and the Jews began work on rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, they probably hoped to get to the task, have it go smoothly, quickly, and easily, and see the walls back up and protecting the city.

But that’s not what happened.

As soon as they began working on the wall, their enemies became angry. “But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews” (Nehemiah 4:1). Sanballat’s attacks on the Jews are some of the same attacks we each face today as we attempt to live the lives God created us to live and do what He’s called us to do.

“What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in day?” (verse 2).

Attack #1: You don't have what it takes.

Sanballat questioned the Jews' ability to complete the task. Our enemy does the same thing. He tempts us to believe that we don't have what it takes. He wants us to believe that we can't so we won't. Won't accomplish what God has called us to do. Won't stand up against temptation. Won't reach out to others in friendship to share Christ.

But Sanballat wasn't done. "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall" (verse 3).

Attack #2: It won't work.

Next Sanballat suggested that their attempts at rebuilding were pointless because nothing they did would work or last. Even a fox would be able to knock down their walls. The message: you don't have what it takes, and whatever you do won't work. Sound familiar? Our enemy attempts to discourage us by convincing us that nothing we do will work. It's pointless. We can try and try, but we won't make any lasting difference.

Sanballat's words didn't make much of an impact on the Jews. "So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work" (verse 6). The people focused on their task and ignored Sanballat's attacks. How were they able to keep building and believing that God would help them complete the wall? They prayed. They told God about their enemies and asked God to take care of them (verses 4, 5). Note that they prayed together, "Hear O *our* God, for we are despised . . ." (emphasis supplied). They were in this together and would pray together against the enemy.

When their enemies saw that the work was progressing and the walls were being restored, "they became very angry, and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion" (verses 7, 8).

Attack #3: Overwhelm them.

Have you ever felt like everything was working against you? Like everything that could go wrong was going wrong? Have you faced so many battles at once that you didn't know which one to fight first? Like Sanballat, Tobiah, and the others, our enemy loves to overwhelm us with what feels like more than we can handle.

The Jews again turned to God. "Nevertheless we made *our* prayer to *our* God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night" (verse 9, emphasis supplied). They had people watching day and night. We, too, can persist in prayer against the enemy day and night.

The enemy is relentless. If he can't take you out one way, he'll try another. The Jews' adversaries didn't give up. They just tried a different tactic. "They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease" (verse 11).

Attack #4: Make it subtle.

They wouldn't see it coming. They wouldn't recognize it as an attack. Our enemy likes to do that too. He attacks subtly so we don't recognize him as the enemy. He slowly leads us to make tiny choices that lead us away from God—but we don't realize it at first. He causes us to believe things about ourselves and who we are that aren't true—but it feels like the truth. And He also subtly lies to us about God, about His love and forgiveness, about His grace and salvation, in ways that cause us to doubt God or His goodness.

But it wasn't just their enemies who attacked the Jews. They were also making the rebuilding hard for each other. Many were struggling to put food on the table and pay back the money they borrowed from their leaders in order to be free. These leaders were demanding "usury" (Nehemiah 5:7). They loaned money to those coming back from captivity, taking advantage of their need while enriching themselves. The returning captives were struggling to make ends meet and rebuild the wall and their lives—and the leaders were making it even harder.

Attack #5: Friendly warfare.

It's not just enemy attacks that cripple our hearts. Many times the attacks of friends hurt even more. Criticism. Judgment. Misunderstanding. Betrayal. The wounds of a friend cut deeply.

Nehemiah became very angry when he found out what was happening. He immediately reprimanded the leaders: "According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren?" (verse 8).

Nehemiah's words silenced the leaders. He challenged them to fear God and to restore everything to the Jews, along with a portion of the interest they had charged. And they did.

Despite all the attacks, the Jews finished rebuilding the wall in only 52 days. "And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God" (Nehemiah 6:16).

How were they able to accomplish so much in so little time despite such huge obstacles?

They fought for each other.

Battle plan #1: Fight for your family.

The first step in Nehemiah's battle plan had families working together and protecting each other. "Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. . . . 'Do not be afraid of [the enemy]. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses'" (Nehemiah 4:13, 14).

Our first battle plan, before anything else, should be to pray and fight for our family. Our sons. Our daughters. Our spouses. Those who live in our homes.

Battle plan #2: Fight for each other.

Next, Nehemiah assigned half the people the job of rebuilding the wall while the other half guarded them. "So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor" (verse 16).

Imagine how our churches would change if we worked together like this. People praying for those who were working and serving God. People praying for Sabbath School teachers as they taught classes. People praying for those going out and giving Bible studies. A prayer team fighting for those attending an evangelistic series and praying for power and authority for those teaching. Prayer warriors consistently and persistently praying for the pastor and leaders of the church. Members praying for each other throughout the week.

Nehemiah also recognized the need for leaders to pray for the people.

Battle plan #3: Praying Leaders.

"And the leaders were behind all the house of Judah" (verse 16). The leaders supported the builders and protectors by being right there behind them, fighting with them and for them.

Earlier in the Old Testament, Samuel also recognized that he had a responsibility to pray for those God had put under his care. He considered it sin if he didn't. "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23). As leaders, we have a responsibility to pray for those God has called us to lead.

Nehemiah also made sure each person was armed and ready for battle.

Battle plan #4: Believe there is an enemy and be prepared for battle.

“Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built” (Nehemiah 4:17, 18). They worked, aware that there was an enemy set on destroying them. And they worked alert, prepared and ready for battle.

God encourages us to do the same. “Above all else, guard your heart” (Proverbs 4:23, NIV). Peter writes, “Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, NLT).

So the people worked. Fighting for their families. Fighting for each other. The leaders had their backs. And they were prepared and alert and watching. They knew they had an enemy and were watching for their attacks. But Nehemiah also recognized that the people could fight best when they all fought together.

Battle plan #5: Rally together to fight for each other when the battle rages.

“Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, ‘The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us’” (Nehemiah 4:19, 20). When one group or person was attacked, the trumpet would sound and everyone dropped what they were doing and came together to fight.

Too many of us try to go it alone when we’re fighting a battle. We don’t let other people know. We don’t ask for prayer. We don’t admit that we’re even struggling. We smile and say we’re fine, even when we’re not. Too many times, we assume everyone else has it all together. We’re the only ones struggling. No one else loses the battle with temptation. No one else has a marriage that is barely holding on. No one else feels like a failure as a parent. Everyone else has a dynamic prayer life and loves studying the Bible—we’re the only one who is struggling to feel connected to a God who doesn’t seem to be answering our prayers.

That’s not God’s battle plan.

“Encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV).

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16, NKJV).

“I also tell you this: if two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, My Father in heaven will do it for you” (Matthew 18:19, NLT).

God longs to see us coming together honestly, sounding the “trumpet” when we need others to fight for us, and praying together. Fighting for one another.

It was this battle plan that enabled the Jews not only to finish rebuilding the wall in only 52 days but also to show the world how powerful God is. “And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; *for they perceived that this work was done by our God*” (Nehemiah 6:16, emphasis supplied).

We may not be rebuilding a wall, but we are called to rebuild lives. Our lives. The lives of those we love. And the lives of those in our communities. God has called us to fight for each other and for those who haven’t yet committed their lives to Him. We face many of the same battles the Jews did. We can fight those battles together and complete the work God called us to do, while also showing the world how great our God is.

“There is need of Nehemiahs in the church today,—not men who can pray and preach only, but men whose prayers and sermons are braced with firm and eager purpose. . . . The success attending Nehemiah’s efforts shows what prayer, faith, and wise, energetic action will accomplish” (Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, p. 177).

Summary—Just to Recap

As the people came together to rebuild the wall, their enemies also came together in an attempt to stop them:

- Nehemiah empathized with the people and pointed them to God.
- The enemy didn’t want to see the people accomplish what God called them to do.
- Nehemiah armed the people, put them in groups, called them together.
- By working together and protecting each other, the work was finished.

We, too, have an enemy out to keep us from being the people God created us to be and doing the work He created us to do. But God calls us to:

- Fight for our families in prayer.
- Fight for each other in prayer.
- Pray for those God has called us to serve as leaders.
- Believe that we’re living in a battle and be prepared and alert for the attacks of the enemy.
- Come together to pray.

Praying Like Crazy

What the Bible Says

*Be anxious for nothing, but in **everything** by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6, 7*

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. 1 Samuel 12:23

Steps to Praying Like Crazy

1. Be Connected to God
2. Believe the Battle
3. Believe God Answers
4. Believe the Promises
5. Be Thankful
6. Be Persistent
7. Be Radical

How We Live It

1. Pray with Others
 - Ask God to remind you to pray for them
 - Ask Him what to pray about—how do I pray for them/me; what do You want?
2. Pray Continuously
 - Life prompts
 - Driving
 - When you wake up at night and can't go back to sleep
3. Pray Scripture
 - Record the prayers in your Bible
 - Mark and date them
 - Journal

Prayer is not a magic wand. There are no “right” words that will cause God to finally answer. It’s a journey of trusting and believing. Prayer will change things. Especially you.

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What Do I Pray About?

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:14-19

1. Spiritual walk
 - An intimate, real walk
 - To experience God
 - To comprehend God's love
 - Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23)
 - God's favor (1 Chronicles 4:9-11)

2. Relationships
 - Friends
 - Co-workers and bosses
 - Classmates and teachers (school and church)
 - Bullies/enemies, difficult relationships
 - Spouse and girl/boyfriend
 - Parent/child

3. Personal
 - Purpose and passion
 - Wisdom, understanding, and largeness of heart (1 Kings 3:9; 2 Chronicles 1:10; Colossians 1:9, 10)
 - Character
 - Sin and temptation
 - Forgiveness
 - Health
 - Struggles and challenges

When praying for others...

- Pray with them
- E-mail prayers to them
- Send them prayers in notes and cards
- Pray over the phone
- Follow up and ask what God has been up to

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Are Your Children Stuck in the **MUCK**?

There are so many things in today's world that impact our children: Social Media. TV. Radio. Video games. Magazines. Peers. Music.

There are so many temptations to draw them away from God: Alcohol. Sex. Drugs. Smoking. The quest to be thin and beautiful. The desire to be cool and popular.

We long for our children to really know God. To have an intimate and passionate relationship with Him.

But too often they get stuck in the muck and mire of this world.

Let's get them stuck in a new MUCK.

Mothers United in Christ for Kids. MUCK.

What is MUCK?

A group of moms committed to praying for their children and the children of other moms. Praying specifically for their salvation and relationship with Christ.

They may be young children who are growing in God. They may be youth who are deciding what to do with God. Or adult children who have wandered away.

MUCK focuses on praying for these kids regularly, trusting God to do whatever it takes to bring them into a real relationship with Him.

How do you get your kids on the list?

By committing to pray for the list. All the kids. Regularly. It may be daily. Or weekly. But regularly.

Sign up today.

A list will be emailed to you. We hope to share answers to prayer as we learn them. And to update the list periodically.

Together we can make a difference.

Yes, I want my children stuck in the MUCK!

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Names and ages of children:

Note: We will only be praying for their salvation and relationship with God.

By submitting this sheet, you are committing to praying regularly for the children on the list.
How often will you commit to praying?

Daily Weekly Other: _____

Mail to: Insert your MUCK Coordinator's name and contact information here.

The Call to Biblical Fasting

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. And even now Jesus is fasting: He promised He would not drink grape juice again until we are all together in heaven (see Matthew 26:29).

Have you ever thought about the fast Christ is currently keeping for you and me?

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.

Hudson Taylor once said, "Perhaps the greatest hindrance to our work is our own imagined strength; and in fasting we learn what poor, weak creatures we are—dependent on a meal of meat for the little strength which we are so apt to lean upon" (J. Hudson Taylor, ed., *China's Millions*, 1887).

Of course, in Bible times fasting wasn't merely a denial of food. It was a time of heart evaluation as the petitioner sought God's blessing or deliverance in some situation.

Inspiration encourages us: "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" (Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 90).

If a fast is not combined with extra time in the Word and seeking God in prayer, it would better to term it dieting! However, true biblical fasting is not about dieting, nor is it about self-righteous attitudes to impress others of our piety.

Referring to the outward type of fasting the hypocrites practiced, one Bible commentator writes,

Do we not often [even today] feel that there is something meritorious in the very inconveniences which we suffer in our acts of self-denial? . . . [However,] the pain and inconvenience which we may endure by the most rigid fasting are not meritorious in the sight of God. They are not that at which he aims by the appointment of fasting. He aims at justice, truth, benevolence, holiness (Isa. 58:6, 7); and he esteems the act of fasting to

be of value only as it will be the means of leading us to reflect on our faults, and to amend our lives (Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible* [1834] on Isaiah 58:5).

It's important to remember that we can't earn God's blessing or answers by prayer and fasting any more than we can earn our own salvation. Fasting doesn't substitute for obedience or personal surrender. However, it is a means of cleansing the heart of distractions and helping us have a more receptive frame of mind to what God wants to do in our life and through our prayers. And we are promised, "To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth" (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 59).

Speaking to early Adventists, Ellen White writes, "It is your privilege to receive more of the Spirit of God, as you engage in fasting and earnest prayer." In fact, she correlates this fasting and prayer with the ability to more clearly present the truths of God's Word to the unconverted.

Continuing, she writes, "You need to accept the promises and assurances of God and walk out on them in faith. You need to learn how to present the truths of the Word to those around you in all their binding force and in all their encouragement, that the unconverted may feel the influence of the Spirit of God upon heart and mind and character" (*The Review and Herald*, Jan. 13, 1910).

In the book, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, Wesley Duewel writes the following:

The great leaders of the Reformation, in their spiritual warfare to restore purity to the church, naturally made great use of the biblical means of fasting. Martin Luther not only maintained the spiritual discipline of fasting one day a week but additionally fasted so often along with his three hours of daily prayer that he was often criticized for fasting too much. But he blessed the whole church and impacted the world for God by his prayers, fasting, and holy boldness. . . . John Calvin was called an inveterate [habitual] faster—and lived to see God's power sweep Geneva. The Moravians fasted, as did the Hussites, Waldensians, Huguenots, and Scottish Covenanters. Except for prevailing prayer that included fasting, we would have had no Reformation and no great awakenings over the centuries (p. 181).

Throughout the Bible we see many examples of God's people fasting: for wisdom (Daniel 1; Acts 14:23), for deliverance (Esther 4:16; 2 Chronicles 20:3), when beginning in ministry (Matthew 4), when seeking spiritual revival (Nehemiah 9:1; Joel 1:14; Jonah 3:5), when seeking victory over demonic oppression (Matthew 17:21), and many more.

Ellen White also has written a number of reasons why and when we should consider fasting. Consider the following:

- We should fast when searching out the truth of Scripture so our understanding is clear.ⁱ
- We should fast when seeking heavenly wisdom that God has promised.ⁱⁱ
- We should fast when seeking God's direction in making important plans.ⁱⁱⁱ
- We should fast when dedicating our talents to God's service.^{iv}
- We should fast when requesting God's help in crisis.^v
- We should fast when contending with demonic oppression.^{vi}
- We should fast when seeking God for more laborers for the harvest.^{vii}
- We should fast for unity among church members.^{viii}
- We should fast when seeking heart cleansing and spiritual renewal.^{ix}
- We should fast when seeking to overcome spiritual temptation.^x
- We should fast when seeking to develop an appetite for plain food.^{xi}
- We should fast when seeking to conquer a disease (only for a meal or two).^{xii}
- We should fast over our decaying zeal and languishing spirituality.^{xiii}
- We should fast as we seek a deeper walk with God in the last days.^{xiv}
- We should fast when seeking to see the lost brought into the Kingdom.^{xv}

In addition to fasting when specific problems or issues arise, there is also an *advance fasting* we might consider. This is what Christ did in the wilderness for 40 days *before* He started His ministry. This is what we should do *before* we make big decisions, or *before* we go forward in our work, as we want to make sure we have God's full blessing upon our lives.

Prayer and fasting should go hand in hand! Prayer is the means by which we grasp the invisible things of God, while fasting is the means by which we let loose and cast away the visible things that we are prone to depend upon. Ultimately, the goal of true fasting should be the fulfillment of Isaiah 58. This is the kind of fast that God is calling us to.

The true fast is no mere formal service. The Scripture describes the fast that God has chosen,—“to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke;” to “draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul.” Isaiah 58:6, 10. Here is set forth the very spirit and character of the work of Christ. His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. Whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew's feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost. Not in idle mourning, in mere bodily humiliation and multitudinous sacrifices, is the true spirit of devotion manifested, but it is shown in the surrender of self in willing service to God and man (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 278).

The Daniel Fast

The Daniel Fast is based upon the prophet Daniel's fasting experiences as recorded in the Bible. While we don't know Daniel's complete menu, we are told a few things. In Daniel 1, Daniel chose not to eat the royal food that he was being served and ate only vegetables and drank water. Another time (in Daniel 10:2, 3) he deprived himself of choice food, meat, and wine as he sought the Lord in prayer. Most commentaries believe "choice food" would have been bread and sweets.

You will find some variation in the specific guidelines for the modern-day Daniel Fast, in what different people think you should or should not eat. **But our word of advice is, don't stress about the details. Just keep it simple. The most important part of the fast is not necessarily what is on your plate but what is happening in your heart.**

Ellen White writes, "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" (*The Review and Herald*, Feb. 11, 1904).

The intention of today's Daniel Fast is not to duplicate exactly what Daniel did but rather the spirit in which he did it. Daniel's passion for the Lord caused him to hunger and thirst more for spiritual food than for physical food, which should be the desire of anyone choosing to participate in this type of fast.

With that in mind, here are some general guidelines.

Fasting Guidelines

It's important not to get too hung up on what we should and shouldn't eat. Again, remember that the most important part of the fast is what is happening in our hearts. We deny ourselves physically so that we can seek the Lord in prayer with fewer distractions and more clarity of mind. We fast because we desire to grow closer to Him. Our particular fast may look a little different than someone else's fast, but that's OK. Some people may choose to be stricter than others in their food choices; however, that doesn't make them more spiritual or holy. That just means they are being led to do something different. Thus, these food guidelines are meant to be just that—a guide. They are given to help create some healthy boundaries for a fast. But ultimately, the decision on how and what to fast from should be between us and God.

Food List for Modern-Day Daniel Fast

- **All fruit:** fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned
- **All vegetables:** fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned

- **All whole grains:** amaranth, barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa, millet, and whole wheat
- **All nuts and seeds:** almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, and sunflower seeds; unsweetened almond milk; nut butters
- **All legumes:** canned or dried: black beans, black-eyed peas, cannellini beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), great northern beans, kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans, and split peas
- **All quality oils:** avocado, coconut, grape seed, olive, peanut, sesame, and walnut
- **Beverages:** distilled water, filtered water, spring water, or herbal teas
- **Other:** unsweetened almond milk, coconut milk, rice milk, or soy milk; herbs; spices; salt; unsweetened coconut flakes; seasonings; Bragg's Liquid Aminos; soy products; and tofu

Foods to Avoid on the Daniel Fast

- **All meat and animal products**
- **All dairy products:** butter, cheese, cream, eggs, milk, etc.
- **All sweeteners:** agave nectar, artificial sweeteners, cane juice, honey, molasses, raw sugar, syrups, stevia, sugar, etc.
- **All leavened bread and yeast:** baked goods and Ezekiel bread (if it contains yeast and honey)
- **All refined and processed food products:** artificial flavorings, chemicals, food additives, preservatives, white flour, white rice, etc.
- **All deep-fried foods:** corn chips, French fries, potato chips, etc.
- **All solid fats:** margarine, shortening, etc.
- **Beverages:** carbonated drinks, coffee, energy drinks, and regular tea

For more inspiration on fasting, I recommend reading the chapter "Fasting" in the compilation *Counsels on Diet and Foods* by Ellen White.

Remember that fasting for more effective prayer and spiritual breakthrough is not about mastering a method but about having a change of heart. Only as we listen to the Holy Spirit's promptings and allow Him to lead us into deeper surrender will our fasting truly be effective.

—Melody Mason
 United in Prayer Coordinator
General Conference World Headquarters

ⁱ *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 187.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 364.

^{iv} *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 134.

^v *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 517, 518.

^{vi} *The Desire of Ages*, p. 431.

^{vii} Letter 26, 1883.

^{viii} Letter 98, 1902.

^{ix} *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 187, 188.

^x *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 202.

^{xi} *Counsels on Health*, p. 148; *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 190; G.D. Strunk, "Fasting," *Canadian Adventist Messenger*, Dec. 21, 1978, p. 5.

^{xii} *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189.

^{xiii} *Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 37.

^{xiv} *A Call to Stand Apart*, p. 69.

^{xv} *Ibid.*

Spiritual Breakthrough

by Janet Page

Would you like to make your spiritual life come alive? Develop a deeper passion for God? Be able to better discern God's will for your life? See God move in a powerful way in your life, your family, your church, and your community? Have a deeper understanding of Scripture? Have more energy and feel better? Be happier and full of God's joy and peace?

Try Fasting and Prayer!

Don't panic and please don't stop reading. It's really true. Fasting will change your life and the lives of those you pray for.

You don't have to go without food to fast.

You could do the following:

- Leave off desserts.
- Eat simple foods like fruits, vegetables, and bread.
- Skip lunch or supper (use the time to pray).
- Stop eating between meals.
- Do 1, 2, or 3 days of just fresh vegetable and fruit juice (be sure to check with your physician beforehand).
- Omit television, videos, computer, books, stereo, or radio (use the time to pray).
- Eat simple foods.
- Get a map of your community and have the children join in praying over the streets.
- Prayer walk the neighborhood.
- Pray together: one subject at a time; keep it short; go back and forth.

Why Fast?

Because God wants us to fast. "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 of 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*, p. 188).

Fast only as God directs you. As you spend time with God, ask Him to give you a desire to fast and to show you when, how long, and what type of fast to do.

"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*, p. 187).

Fasting Is...

- An attitude of the heart in which we interrupt our life to pray for a specific matter or cause.
- A tool that may be used to glorify God and realize answers to prayer.
- A means by which we can worship the Lord and submit ourselves in humility to Him.

For further study, read Isaiah 58 and “Fasting” in *Counsels on Diet and Foods* by E. G. White. This book is available at your local Adventist Book Center or online at www.adventistbookcenter.org. 🙏

JANET PAGE, General Conference ministerial associate for Shepherdess International and Prayer Ministries, is passionate about knowing Jesus, reaching people for Him, and prayer. As Prayer, Shepherdess, and Women’s Ministries coordinator for the Pennsylvania and Central California conferences in North America, Janet has seen God work to change lives in miraculous ways when His people come together in prayer. Often a speaker for weekend retreats, she loves sharing her favorite subjects—Jesus and spending time with Him. She also travels with her husband, Jerry, speaking at leadership events around the world.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

For some fascinating biblical examples of the purpose of fasting:

The Disciple’s Fast:

“To loose the bonds of wickedness” from ourselves and others. Isa. 58:6; Matt. 17:21

The Ezra Fast:

“Undo the heavy burdens.”

Isa. 58:6; Ezra 8:23

The Samuel Fast:

“To let the oppressed [physically and spiritually] go free.” Isa. 58:6; 1 Sam. 7:6

The Elijah Fast:

To “break every yoke.” Conquering mental and emotional problems. Isa. 58:6; 1 Kings 19:4, 8

The Widow’s Fast:

“To share your bread with the hungry” and to care for the poor. Isa. 58:7; 1 Kings 17:16

The Paul Fast

To allow God’s light to “break forth like the morning,” bringing clearer perspective and insight as we make crucial decisions. Isa. 58:8; Acts 9:9

The Esther Fast:

That “the glory of the Lord” will protect us from the evil one. Isa. 58:8; Esther 4:16; 5:2