Day of Prayer and Fasting

Handbook and Resources

The Battle Belongs to the Lord: Fighting for the World

Fourth Quarter 2017 Sabbath, October 7



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 Tamyra Horst for the Day of Prayer and Fasting global initiative.

Visit <u>www.revivalandreformation.org</u> for information.

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Why a Day of Prayer and Fasting?

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

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

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

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

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

Cindy Tutsch For Revival and Reformation Committee

Suggested Planning Ideas

Church Service

- o Key verse: Matthew 28:19, 20
- Suggested sermon theme or possible topics for church: Turn the World Upside Down Into All the World Go . . . Make Disciples Called to Share Him

• Suggested children's story:

Tell a children's story about the "little maid" who served Naaman's wife. Through her influence Naaman learned of the prophet Elisha and began his journey to physical and spiritual healing (2 Kings 5). Make the point that she was just a little girl, but God still used her to help others learn about Him.

• Afternoon Program

- We suggest scheduling 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: "Turn the World Upside Down." This could be shared before the prayer time or used with the sermon, if desired.
- The prayer theme for 4th Quarter Day of Prayer and Fasting is "Fighting for the World." Please include World Church prayer requests during your prayer time.
- 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 "Seeking the Lost" (*Adventist Hymnal*, #373).

Follow with this Scripture: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and Io, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Opening Prayer and Official Welcome: Have the Prayer Ministries director or a designated leader welcome everyone to the time of prayer. Share the "Turn the World Upside Down" devotional if it has not already been used during the church service. Then go over the prayer requests for the Day of Prayer and Fasting. You'll find these 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!

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 praying 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, followed by **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!

Pray for people groups from around the world. Print and copy a world map and give to those in attendance. Invite them to lift up the various people groups and countries. If people in your PRAYER AND FASTING HANDBOOK 8 church know of specific requests for countries where they have friends or family, jot these requests down on the map before copying so they can be prayed for specifically.

Move outside of your church to the **neighborhood** around you and spend time prayer walking it. Have people walk in small groups of just 2-4 people and pray aloud for the homes, families, and businesses you pass. While some may choose to just walk the streets and pray from the sidewalk, encourage others to knock on doors, let neighbors know that you are praying for them, and ask if they have any specific requests. Offer to pray with them right there. Leave a card with your church information and encourage them to contact you at any time if they have a prayer need or other need you can help with. Create door hangers to leave on doors when no one is home, letting people know that you prayed for them (include your church's name, address, and contact information). Invite them to share specific requests and give them an email address or website address for doing so.

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

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

Fighting for the World

Prayer Requests

- Pray for **people groups from around the world**. Look at the map provided by the prayer leader. Millions of unreached people live in the large cities of the world. If people in your church have requests for countries where they have friends or family, pray for these requests specifically.
- Pray for the **neighborhood** around you and spend time prayer walking it.
- Pray aloud for the **homes, families, and businesses** you pass. You can even knock on doors, let neighbors know that you are praying for them, and ask if they have any specific requests. Offer to pray with them right there. Leave a card with your church information and encourage them to contact you at any time if they have a prayer need or other need you can help with. Create door hangers to leave on doors when no one is home (include your church's name, address, and contact information). Invite them to share specific requests and give them an email address or website address for doing so. (One great place to share prayer requests is www.wepray.mobi.)

In addition, please remember World Church prayer requests:

- 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 the World in Prayer

Let's continue to pray for our neighborhoods and communities—and the world—beyond just one day a year. Some ways to do this include:

- **Prayer walk your neighborhood** on a regular basis, such as one Sabbath afternoon a month. Offer to pray with people and/or leave a note that you are praying for them.
- **Pray for your community leaders**—mayor, town council, police officers, fire fighters, etc. Send each group a note letting them know you are praying for them and inviting them to share any specific requests with you as needed.
- Host a prayer booth at community events. Have members on hand to pray with people individually. You might consider setting up a little tent to give pray-ers privacy. Have a prayer request box where people can drop in their requests. Pass out cards listing contact information for your church and ways for people to get in touch to share requests in the future.
- Create a map of the world on your bulletin board. Tag it with specific requests for individual countries and groups.
- Have your children's SS classes adopt a country and pray for it regularly. Contact the Adventist headquarters in that country and let them know your class is praying. Ask for specific prayer requests. Help children learn more about the country they've chosen—the traditions, foods, etc.—so that they feel more connected to the people and culture.

AdventSource.org has several resources for cross-cultural ministry available on their website. Learn how to reach out to people in your neighborhood and people from other parts of the world who may be moving into your community:

- Praying for the World Next Door
- Reach the World Next Door training kit
- Reach the World Next Door leader's guide

APPENDIX

"Turn the World Upside Down"

Devotional Thoughts for Day of Prayer and Fasting, October 7, 2017

"So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two 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 6:15, 16).

Fifty-two days. The wall was done. The city safe. The enemy defeated. And the people encouraged.

Despite persistent opposition and attacks of the enemy, Nehemiah refused to let anything distract him from what God had called him to do and led his people in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. But he accomplished more than just building walls.

His work brought hope and courage to the Jews. They had worked together and taken the first step in rebuilding their lives and their nation. They were now more eager and hopeful that they could rebuild their homes and worship their God. Word would soon spread, and other captives would come home. Israel would grow and flourish again. They would rebuild the temple and recommit their lives to the God who had rescued them.

But it wasn't just Israel and the Jewish people who were impacted by all God had done. "And all the nations around us saw these things . . ." (verse 16).

The nations were watching. They knew the Jews had been captive. They knew Jerusalem had been destroyed. Their enemies persistently attempted to prevent them from rebuilding the walls. But despite all they did, the walls went up and Jerusalem was protected. They saw what had happened and knew that there was only one explanation:

"They perceived that this work was done by our God" (verse 16).

They knew that it wasn't because the Jews were special or above average in skill or strength. They weren't master builders. Or mighty warriors. They were captives finding their way home. Ordinary people who hadn't been able to defeat their enemies 70 years earlier.

Yet here they were. An incredible feat in a short period of time—despite constant attack.

The nations knew that it wasn't because of the people but because of their God. They were ordinary people with an extraordinary God who worked through them and for them. They marveled and feared. Who was this God and why did He care about these people? PRAYER AND FASTING HANDBOOK

Hundreds of years later, within these very walls, would come another time when the nations would see ordinary people accomplishing extraordinary things and recognize that it could only happen because of their God.

At that time, the followers of Christ in Jerusalem were growing in numbers because of the ministry of Peter and John. These fishermen who had followed and failed Jesus were now preaching with a boldness and authority that caused others to stop and listen. Their teaching led thousands to be baptized and gather together to study and pray. As the new church grew, amazing things happened.

One day, as they walked to the temple to pray, Peter and John came across a man lame from birth who was begging for alms at the temple gate called Beautiful. The two apostles had no money to give him, but they offered what they did have: the power of Jesus (Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:19-21). Instantly the lame man was "walking, leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:1-10). Everyone who saw the transformation was amazed. People came running to Peter and John. And Peter, seeing an opportunity, again began teaching about Jesus and calling the people to repentance and salvation. The number of believers grew to about 5,000 (Acts 4:4).

But not everyone was excited.

The rulers, elders, scribes, and high priest were not happy. They had never seen anything like it. Thinking they had ended things when they crucified Christ, they wanted to put an end to this growing movement. And they wanted to know how it was happening. "By what power or by what name have you done this?" (verse 7).

With boldness—and by the power of the Holy Spirit—Peter responded. Basically he told them, "It's all Jesus."

And the leaders and scribes couldn't deny it. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (verse 13).

Peter and John were just a couple of ordinary fishermen. They hadn't been to the rabbinical schools. Hadn't apprenticed under one of their scholars or teachers. Yet here they were preaching with authority and boldness and a power that was transforming lives and creating a powerful, unstoppable movement.

And there could only be one reason.

They had been with Jesus. "The light and love and power of an indwelling Christ shone out through them, so that men, beholding, marveled" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 65).

When God's people trust Him and step out in faith to do what He's called them to do no matter what, things happen and people see God through them. Let's make that personal. When *you* trust Him and *you* step out in faith to do what He's called *you* to do no matter what, lives will be impacted and transformed.

It's the way God works: through His committed people.

Nehemiah was in a foreign land. A captive serving the king. God broke his heart for his city and called him to lead the rebuilding of the walls. Nehemiah let nothing keep him from this task. As a result, the nations around Jerusalem saw God.

Peter and John were called to preach. They didn't let their lack of education or lack of position stop them. They spoke with boldness and healed people as they went. The threats of the religious leaders couldn't dissuade them. (Prison couldn't deter them—they just witnessed there, too.) And people recognized that the only reason they could do what they were doing was because of the time they had spent with Jesus.

Another follower of Jesus, the apostle Paul, walked away from everything he was—the position, respect, "righteousness"—and did what God called him to do. He became a traveling preacher, often beaten and jailed but persistently sharing Jesus wherever he found himself—whether on his own accord or because he was in prison. Those who opposed him recognized that God was using him to turn "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

What do people see when they look at us? What do our lives reveal about God? When we face trials or attacks from enemies, what does our response tell people about the Jesus we talk about? The world is watching. Maybe the whole world isn't watching you, but there are people in your family, workplace, and community who are watching you. They're watching to see the difference God makes in your life—in how you respond to trials and in the way you treat other people.

It doesn't matter who you are. Nehemiah was a captive who served a foreign king. Peter and John were fishermen, blue-collar workers. Paul had once been respected by the leaders of his community, but now he was despised by them. God still called each of them, and He calls each of us. He calls the young. Old. Educated. Uneducated. Rich. Poor. God still calls His people today to turn the world upside down. To rebuild lives. To begin a movement. To share Him—His story, His salvation, His love. To live lives that reveal a powerful God who loves and protects His people and works through them to impact the world. His call is the same for every one of us. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and Io, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

He is first calling you to a personal relationship with Him. Nehemiah, Peter, John, and Paul were only able to do what they did *because* of their connection to God. They had been with Him—in person or through study and prayer. Our first priority needs to be time with Jesus. Not just checking off a list of things we think we should do but connecting with Him in a personal and real way that changes us.

Then He is calling each of us to *go*. Each one of us has a role to play. We have a story to share about what God has done in our lives. It's really that simple. "Go . . . and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you" (Mark 5:19). He has gifted each one of us in a way that will encourage and build the church (1 Corinthians 12). He challenges us not to see our unique role as less important—or more important—than anyone else's but to believe that we are needed. We are created for this time, to make a difference.

If we do whatever He's called us to do, He will use it to change the world. Just as He did for Nehemiah, Peter, John, and Paul. "If through living faith and sanctified obedience to God's word, we reveal the love and grace of Christ, if we show that we have a true conception of God's guiding providences in the work, we shall carry to the world a convincing power. A high position does not give us value in the sight of God. Man is measured by his consecration and faithfulness in working out the will of God. If the remnant people of God will walk before Him in humility and faith, He will carry out through them His eternal purpose, enabling them to work harmoniously in giving to the world the truth as it is in Jesus. He will use all—men, women, and children—in making the light shine forth to the world, and calling out a people that will be true to His commandments. Through the faith that His people exercise in Him, God will make known to the world that He is the true God, the God of Israel" (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 274).

God calls us to make Him known to the world.

Are you ready to turn the world upside down?

Summary—Just to Recap

Nehemiah and the Jews finished rebuilding the wall in just 52 days. And the nations around them saw that it happened only because of God.

Peter and John preached and thousands were baptized and joined this new movement. The leaders of their day marveled and knew that it was because they had been with Jesus.

Paul and others turned the world upside down. God calls us to do the same: "Go and make disciples."

It's up to us to respond.

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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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.