

Day of Prayer and Fasting

Handbook and Resources

Pioneer Prayer: In His Steps

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Revival
& REFORMATION

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Visit www.revivalandreformation.org for information.

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Contents

Why a Day of Prayer and Fasting?	4
Suggested Planning Guide	5
Suggested Program Format	6
Appendix	8
Sermon/Devotional: "In His Steps"	9
Testimony Handout for Prayer Time	12
Prayer Outline: "Pioneer Prayer"	14
An Invitation to Fast and Pray (print and share with members the week before)	16

Why a Day of Prayer and Fasting?

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

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

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

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

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

Cindy Tutsch

For Revival and Reformation Committee

Suggested Planning Guide

Program for the Day:

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

Scripture Reading: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Suggested Children's Story: *Tell how God answered the prayers of Daniel by delivering him from the lions.*

Points to emphasize:

- *Briefly tell how Jerusalem was destroyed because of Judah's unfaithfulness.*
- *Daniel was faithful in prayer and to God's Word.*
- *Daniel prayed three times daily toward Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10).*
- *Daniel's life was transformed by communion with God, and his enemies could find no fault in him (Daniel 6:4).*
- *God delivered Daniel from the lions as promised in 2 Chronicles 20:9.*
- *Those who have the character of Jesus, through daily communion and faithfulness, will live with Him forever (Daniel 3:17, 18).*
- *If we seek first God's kingdom, He will give us what we need (Matthew 6:33).*

Ask the children if they want to be like Daniel and set aside time for prayer to God. Have a short prayer and ask God for the character of Jesus—just like Daniel had.

Suggested Program Format

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

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

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

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

Notes for the Leader:

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

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

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX

In His Steps

By Richard Constantinescu, pastor and Revival and Reformation Committee member

A seminary student had not taken enough math credits during his undergraduate studies and was advised to complete a college-level algebra class. Although skeptical that he needed math for his career choice, he registered at a local college to satisfy the requirement.

He soon discovered that he loved math! It was predictable. He was pleased to find that the most difficult mathematical problems could be solved if a series of small steps was taken. When the conditions were properly met, he consistently found the correct answer. He loved it so much that he said "Amen!"

Someone has said, "God is like math—you can count on Him." How true it is! The Bible says, "The Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9). His mercies and compassion "are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:23). His faithfulness is great. God's conditions are just and merciful and He invariably keeps His promises.

2 Chronicles 7:14 is a promise containing a mathematical expression. God said to Solomon, "IF My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, THEN I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (emphasis supplied). This verse contains the mathematical expression IF-THEN. We need not guess the outcome, if the condition is fulfilled. When God's required conditions are met, the result will surely follow!

God always honors His Word in this regard. King Jehoshaphat took God at His Word, praying, "IF, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, THEN thou wilt hear and help" (2 Chronicles 20:9, KJV). God worked mightily for Jehoshaphat, who believed His prophets, and will work just as mightily for you today!

Centuries later, God honored this promise to Daniel, who took Him at His word. Daniel was a captive in Babylon from the house of Judah. The sword and judgment had come upon Daniel's land. Three times a day he humbled himself before the Lord, at the risk of His life, and prayed toward God's sanctuary. God did "hear and help," miraculously delivering Daniel from the wicked men of Babylon and closing the lions' mouths.

Prayer works, but only if we do it! If we want the result, we must fulfill, by God's grace, the

condition. God is a God of order and organization. No part of the conditional formula of 2 Chronicles 7:14 may be neglected if we want to realize the fulfillment of the amazing promise—the healing of His people. He has not left us alone without a Savior. He sent His Eternal Son who “humbled Himself” (Philippians 2:8), taught us to pray, and walked in obedience. Today He invites us to “follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21) and experience the sure results of God’s faithfulness.

God’s people have often been delivered in answer to prayer and repentance. We don’t have time to speak of Abraham, Jacob, David, Elijah, Elisha, Esther, and the early church. If we wish to have the same results as Jesus, His apostles, and the church of old, we must do as they did. We must follow in the steps of the early believers as they followed Christ. No other right way exists.

The experiences of the godly men and women of Scripture can be ours now. “Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 464). The prophet Malachi predicted God’s church would return to the spirituality of earlier times. “He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years” (3:3-4). Now is the time to have a revival of early godliness!

God promised He would send “Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:5, 6). Elijah rebuilt the altar and reestablished prayer and the true worship of God. Elijah, first and foremost, is noted in Scripture as a man of prayer (James 5:17). In these days of turmoil, natural disasters, and moral depravity, we must seek true revival and reformation.

Elijah, in his prayer on Carmel, prayed to the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (1 Kings 18:36). If we would have the Spirit of Elijah before the second coming of Christ, we must humbly pray and repent as a matter of active priority, and not just good intention. “The greatest victories gained for the cause of God are not the result of labored argument, ample facilities, wide influence, or abundance of means; they are gained in the audience chamber with God, when with earnest, agonizing faith men lay hold upon the mighty arm of power” (*Gospel Workers* (1915), p. 259).

We are told of the effective prayerfulness of our church pioneers:

“When the message of truth was first proclaimed, how much we prayed. How often was the voice of intercession heard in the chamber, in the barn, in the orchard, or the grove. Frequently we spent hours in earnest prayer, two or three together claiming the promise; often the sound of weeping was heard and then the voice of thanksgiving and

the song of praise (*Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 161, 162*).

Lest we remain complacent, we are counseled,

“Now the day of God is nearer than when we first believed, and we should be more earnest, more zealous, and fervent than in those early days. Our perils are greater now than then. Souls are more hardened. We need now to be imbued with the spirit of Christ, and we should not rest until we receive it” (ibid).

Humility and prayer are only part of the revival formula of 2 Chronicles 7:14. With prayer, we must seek God’s presence in the Bible and in the testimonies of His Spirit, and turn from our evil ways. We should ask for and receive the gift of repentance and turn wholeheartedly to Christ for healing.

The formula for revival remains unchanged. The Spirit of Elijah will return to God’s church at the end of days. We can be confident of God’s plan and know that there are no shortcuts or counterfeits for promised revival. We should obey Him in humility, trusting in the sacrifice of Christ. Do you today desire to have the Spirit of Elijah, of the patriarchs and prophets, of Christ, of the apostles, and of our church pioneers? Let us, as Elijah prayed, turn back to God and follow His steps, so that we can see the mighty, promised revival. Amen.

Testimony Handout for Prayer Time

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, pp. 101-103

Recently in the night season I was awakened from sleep and given a view of the sufferings of Christ for men. His sacrifice, the mockery and derision He received at the hands of wicked men, His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, His betrayal and crucifixion—all were vividly portrayed before me.

I saw Christ in the midst of a large company of people. He was seeking to impress their minds with His teachings. But He was despised and rejected by them. Men were heaping upon Him abuse and shame. My distress was very great as I looked upon the scene. I pleaded with God: "What is to be done with this congregation? Will none give up their exalted opinions of self and seek the Lord as little children? Will none break their hearts before God in repentance and confession?"

There was presented to me Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the mysterious cup trembled in the Redeemer's hand. "Father, if it be possible," He prayed, "let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Matthew 26:39. As He pleaded with the Father, great drops of blood fell from His face to the ground. The elements of darkness were gathered about the Savior to discourage His soul.

Rising from the ground, Christ went to the place where He had left His disciples, bidding them watch and pray with Him lest they be overcome with temptation. He would see if they understood His agony; He needed their human sympathy. But He found them sleeping. Three times He went thus to them, and each time they were asleep.

Three times the Savior prayed: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." It was here that the destiny of a lost world trembled in the balance. Should He refuse to drink the cup, the result would be eternal ruin to the human race. But an angel from heaven strengthened the Son of God to accept the cup and drink its bitter woe.

How few there are who realize that all this was borne for them individually! How few who say: "It was for me, that I might form a character for the future immortal life."

As these things were presented to me so vividly, I thought, "I shall never be able to present this subject before the people as it is;" and I have given you only a faint representation of what was shown me. As I have thought of that cup trembling in the hands of Christ; as I have realized that He might have refused to drink, and left the world to perish in its sin, I have pledged that every energy of my life should be devoted to the work of winning souls to Him.

Christ came to the earth to suffer and die, that, through the exercise of faith in Him and the appropriation of His merits, we might become laborers together with God. It was the Savior's

purpose that after He ascended to heaven to become man's intercessor, His followers should carry on the work that He had begun. Shall the human agent show no special interest in giving the light of the gospel message to those who sit in darkness? There are some who are willing to go to the ends of the earth in order to carry the light of truth to men, but God demands that every soul who knows the truth shall seek to win others to the love of the truth. If we are not willing to make special sacrifices in order to save souls that are ready to perish, how can we be counted worthy to enter into the city of God?

There is an individual work to be done for each one of us. I know there are many who are placing themselves in right relation to Christ, whose one thought is to bring the message of present truth before the people of the world. They stand continually ready to offer their services. But my heart aches when I see so many who are satisfied with a cheap experience, an experience that costs them but little. Their lives say that for them Christ has died in vain.

If you do not feel that it is an honor to be a partaker of the sufferings of Christ; if you feel no burden of soul for those who are ready to perish; if you are unwilling to sacrifice that you may save means for the work that is to be done, there will be no room for you in the kingdom of God. We need to be partakers with Christ of His sufferings and self-denial at every step. We need to have the Spirit of God resting upon us, leading us to constant self-sacrifice.

Prayer Outline: Pioneer Prayer

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

1. ____ Thank the Lord Jesus for His sufferings and sacrifice for us (2 Corinthians 9:15).
2. ____ Pray for a deeper understanding of Gethsemane and Calvary (Philippians 3:10).
3. ____ Pray that we daily accept Christ and be impressed with His teachings (Isaiah 53:1-3).
4. ____ Thank the Lord that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).
5. ____ Pray that our hearts will be broken before God in repentance and confession (2 Corinthians 7:10, 11).
6. ____ Ask God for His will to be done in our lives, not our will (Matthew 26:39).

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

7. ____ Pray that we resist the elements of darkness around our souls as Christ did (James 4:7).
8. ____ Pray that we learn to watch and pray, that temptation will not overcome us (Matthew 26:41).
9. ____ Pray for angels from heaven to strengthen us in our difficulties (Psalms 34:7).
10. ____ Pray that by Jesus' sacrifice, we form characters for the future immortal life (1 Corinthians 6:11).
11. ____ Pray that we devote all our energy to the work of winning souls to Christ (Romans 1:14).
12. ____ Pray that, by exercising faith in Christ and through the appropriation of His merits, we may become laborers together with God (1 Corinthians 3:9).

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

13. ____ Pray for willingness to make special sacrifices in order to lead others to righteousness (Daniel 12:3).
14. ____ Pray for a deep experience and knowledge of God (John 17:3).
15. ____ Pray that we receive God's Spirit, enabling us to proclaim the Three Angels' Messages (Revelation 14:6-12).
16. ____ Thank God for the honor of partaking in the sufferings of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:5).
17. ____ Pray for the Holy Spirit to rest upon us (Isaiah 11:2).
18. ____ Pray for church leaders, delegates, and final preparations for the General Conference Session.

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

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

An Invitation to Fast and Pray

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

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

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

What is Fasting?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We look forward to praying together with you.