

Day of Prayer and Fasting

Handbook and Resources

Growing Strong Through Life's Trials

As We Pray for Deeper Faith

Second Quarter 2021

Sabbath, April 3

Revival
& REFORMATION

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An Invitation to Fast and Pray

If ever there was a time in history that we should be urgently seeking for stronger, deeper faith, it is now. Our world is in crisis. All around us people are experiencing extreme trials, pain, and suffering without really understanding why. As a result, spiritual deceptions are taking many captive. We need to be rooted in the Word of God so we can stand strong and help others find the spiritual answers they so desperately need. But before Jesus comes, we are told we must go through a refining experience. Could that be happening right now?

Ellen White writes, "The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 621).

Is your faith being tested today? Are you learning to prove the promises of God's Word?

Recognizing our great need of stronger faith, we invite you to join our church family for a special day of prayer and fasting. Our theme will be "Growing Strong Through Life's Trials as We Pray for Deeper Faith." Our prayers will focus on heart needs: praying to become more like Jesus, growing faith for the hard times, and gaining courage to witness. We will pray especially for deeper faith in God's Word, so we can have confidence even when the suffering we experience doesn't make sense.

Why is this day of prayer accompanied by fasting?

We fast because we are in earnest for God's blessing. When we read the Bible, we see that fasting is not an option. It's a given. Matthew 6:17 doesn't say, "If you fast," but rather, "When you fast." If we study all the fasts in the Bible, we find that every time God's people prayed *and fasted*, God worked mightily on their behalf—from deliverance from enemies in battle to supernatural deliverance from prison to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we see a pattern. This pattern repeats itself all through Christian history. Fasting has always been part of the lifestyle of believers, just like prayer and Bible study. In fact, every major character in the Bible fasted.

We are told, "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, emphasis supplied).

Fasting is more than just skipping meals. Fasting is choosing to do without something in order to pray more intentionally and with more heart and soul focus. Many choose to skip meals, but not everyone can do without food completely, and not everyone chooses this type of fast. That's okay. We encourage you to pray and ask God what type of fast He wants you to do. You might choose to eat more simply, or you might choose to fast from social media, television, or other time-consuming habits. Whatever you do, it's important to remember that fasting isn't about earning a heavenly reward. The main point of fasting is removing distractions so we can seek Jesus more wholeheartedly. As Derek Morris, president of Hope Channel, likes to say, "We fast from the world so we can feast on Jesus."

We invite you to be part of this special day! Whether you choose to fast or not, we believe God has a special blessing in store for you.

Perhaps you are wary of corporate prayer because you don't like to pray aloud. We invite you to join anyway. You can pray along with others silently, lifting up the prayer requests of others and praying for the people and things God brings to your heart. And if you fear that your 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 worshippers seeking Him. 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" (Matt. 18:19).

Hebrews 10:24, 25 says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

The Day is fast approaching! Don't miss the encouraging, faith-building blessings that God has for you when you join with others to pray.

Preparation & Overview for Leaders

- Distribute the handout “An Invitation to Fast and Pray” to church members at least a week or two before this special day so members can prepare.
- Instead of including a full sermon this quarter, we are providing material to help local leaders prepare their own sermon. A Sabbath morning church service that focuses on this quarter’s prayer theme may inspire more members to join in your afternoon prayer time.
- A children’s story is included to help children see the power of prayer.
- A devotional reading for the afternoon prayer program, “Praying for Greater Faith: Faith to Stand and Witness in the Coming Storms,” is provided. This devotional reading should be followed by a corporate prayer time.
- We encourage you to pray together as a group for the first three parts of the prayer focus, then divide into smaller groups for more personal requests. People might feel more comfortable sharing and praying in a smaller group. You can do “breakout rooms” in Zoom, if meeting online. After the personal prayer time, bring the group back together to close with a time of thanksgiving.
- We recommend scheduling a minimum of 1-2 hours for this afternoon prayer program; many plan to pray together for a full afternoon, however. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead.
- Print or e-mail the handouts “Prayer Focus for United Prayer” and “Powerful Prayer Promises” for the afternoon prayer time.
- If you have questions about how to lead a United Prayer group, see the instructions in these materials at the end of the “Suggested Afternoon Program.”

Suggested Sabbath Morning Program

Suggested Order of Divine Worship Service

Day of Prayer and Fasting, April 3, 2021

Prelude

Platform participants enter

Doxology

Invocation

Offertory

Offering Response

Offertory Prayer

Hymn: "How Firm a Foundation" (SDA Hymnal #509)

Children's Story: "Praying for Poisoned Tom"

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:1 & John 20:29

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb.11:1).

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Intercessory Prayer

Special Music

SERMON: "Growing Strong Through Life's Trials as We Pray for Deeper Faith"

Closing Hymn: "Faith of our Fathers" (SDA Hymnal #304)

Benediction and Announcement of Details for Afternoon Prayer Program

Postlude

Suggested Afternoon Program

Place: Gather in the sanctuary, outside under some trees, or, if your group is small, meet in a comfortable room in someone's home that offers privacy and no distractions. If meeting in person is not permissible, Zoom is an online video conferencing service that might be an option for you (zoom.us). You can also meet by phone.

Opening Praise and Worship (15-20 minutes): Music always sets the mood for worship, so begin with a few songs of worship to inspire reverence and encourage seeking after God. Invite a few members to share 30-second testimonies of answered prayers or praises between songs.

Welcome and Announcements:

The following instructions should be shared briefly before the prayer time.

- We are here to pray as a family. Remember that everything shared is confidential.
- We won't be taking prayer requests ahead of time. The devil loves it when we talk about our requests instead of praying over them. We will simply pray and agree with one another in prayer.
- Please be comfortable during the prayer time. If meeting together in person, feel free to change positions—sitting, kneeling, standing, etc. If on Zoom, you might consider turning off the camera during prayer for fewer distractions.
- Speak up so we can hear you, or be sure to unmute your microphone if on Zoom.
- Claim scripture and pray God's promises back to Him. (Use the provided promise sheet.)
- Claim the righteous life, sacrifice, and ministry of Jesus in prayer (John 14:14; Rev. 8:3).
- People can pray multiple times, but please allow everyone an opportunity to pray and speak up without one person dominating the prayer time.
- Last but not least, **keep prayers brief** (a single thought or 1-2 sentences). Save lengthy prayers for the prayer closet. People tend to grow weary with long prayers. We are told the angels grow weary, too (*Prayer*, p. 258).

Opening Prayer: Designate a person.

Share the Devotional: Have someone share the devotional ("Praying for Greater Faith: Faith to Stand and Witness in the Coming Storms")

NOTE TO PRAYER LEADER: Remember that silence in prayer time is fine. Don't feel the need to fill every silent moment 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. Allow God to speak silently to hearts.

If your congregation isn't used to praying together in groups and including scripture and singing during the prayer time, you should lead by example.

If you are concerned because you've never led united prayer before, you can learn more by reading *Praying for Rain: A Mini-Handbook for United Prayer*. It can be found online here: <https://www.revivalandreformation.org/resources/all/praying-for-rain>.

Time to Pray!

Corporate Prayer Time: Take 1-2 hours for corporate and small group prayer, or longer as the Holy Spirit leads. We encourage you to follow the "Prayer Focus" themes, included in these materials, and intermingle other prayers as the Holy Spirit leads.

A Time of Praise (Corporate Prayer Time)

The prayer focus might help the prayers get going, but it's not just to read. Encourage people to pray the specific prayers that touch their hearts. Pray from the heart. Those are the prayers God truly loves to hear.

Praying for Greater Faith (Corporate Prayer Time)

During this time, we'll ask God to truly give us greater, stronger faith, like biblical men and women. We'll pray for faith like God's followers in Hebrews 11 and other Bible passages.

Praying for Greater Witness (Corporate Prayer Time)

Pray that God will truly use us as His special witnesses in the last days of Earth's history. God has given us a special end-time message for the world.

Praying for Personal Needs and the Church (Small Groups)

Take this time to divide into small groups and pray for personal and church needs.

Close with Praise (Corporate Prayer Time)

Come back together to close the prayer time with corporate praise. Worship God and thank Him, not just for what He's already done, but for what He's going to do.

Encouragement: After the prayer time ends, encourage people to keep praying for one another, or set up small prayer groups in their homes if they haven't already. (If members would like to join daily united prayer calls happening in their part of the world, encourage them to learn about *24/7 United Prayer*. More information can be found online: [revivalandreformation.org/resources/all/join-us-for-24/7-united-prayer](https://www.revivalandreformation.org/resources/all/join-us-for-24/7-united-prayer).)

Break the Fast with a Special Evening Meal: Some churches may choose to have a meal together after the prayer time to break the fast. Keep the meal simple but make the food and atmosphere attractive to create a special occasion. If social distancing prohibits this, do a "praise picnic." Take turns sharing praises and more testimonies of answered prayer, even if it's over Zoom.

Praying for Poisoned Tom

By Andrew McChesney

Ema Macura has loved animals for as long as she can remember. When she was three, she begged for a horse. Mother explained that a horse was too big to keep in their city apartment in Serbia. So Ema asked for a smaller pet.

"Can I have a dog?" she said one day. Father didn't think a dog was a good idea. "Our house is too small for a dog, and we don't have a yard," he answered. "Animals need a bigger place with a yard. Jesus didn't make them to live in a small, closed place like an apartment."

Ema didn't give up. "Can I have a cat?" she said. Father and Mother said she could have a pet if they moved to a house with a yard.

Ema patiently waited to move. Father worked as a pastor, and pastors move every few years in Serbia. When Ema was seven, the family finally moved, and the new house had a yard! Then a woman at church offered Ema a kitten. Her cat had just given birth to a litter of kittens.

Ema was thrilled and spoke with Mother. "You promised that we could have a pet when we moved to a house with a yard," she said. "Pleeeeeease." Mother couldn't refuse. "OK, we'll adopt a kitten," she told Ema.

Ema chose a handsome gray-striped kitten and decided to name him Tom.

Not long after Tom arrived in their home, Mother found brown cockroaches in the bathroom. Father went to war against the cockroaches. He bought poison shaped into small orange balls and hid five of the balls in the bathroom. He then ordered Ema and her older brother, Luka, to keep the bathroom door shut at all times so Tom wouldn't get in.

One Sunday, Ema and the family loaded the car for a day-trip to visit their grandfather and grandmother in Croatia. Tom could not go with them. As Mother finished packing, she took some laundry out of the bathroom and forgot to close the door. Tom immediately realized that no one was watching and dashed into the bathroom. He found an orange ball and ate it. Father entered the bathroom just in time to see Tom swallow the last of the orange ball.

"He's eating poison!" Father shouted. "Who left the bathroom door open?" Ema rushed to the bathroom. Mother and Luka also came running.

Father tried to remove the poison from Tom's mouth, but it was too late. Ema began to cry. Tom had eaten a very large amount of poison, and he was a tiny kitten, only two months old.

Ema cried so hard that she couldn't speak. Father and Mother tried to comfort her. "Maybe God will do a miracle," Father said.

Mother suggested praying. The family closed their eyes in the hall outside the bathroom door. "God, please save Tom so he doesn't die," Father said. "Please, Jesus, keep Tom alive," Ema said, sobbing.

Nothing more could be done. No veterinarian was available, and another family was waiting to join them on the trip. Father shut Tom in a room with plenty of food and water, and the family left for Croatia.

The family prayed many times for Tom as they traveled. They also prayed at the grandparents' house. At mealtime, Ema prayed, "Thank you, Jesus, for the food, and please keep Tom alive and help him to get well."

Grandmother told Ema not to worry. "Cats vomit when they eat something bad," she said. "Maybe Tom will throw up the poison."

When the family arrived back home that evening, Mother suggested that it would be best if she entered the house first. As soon as she opened the door, Tom ran out. Ema squealed with joy. "Tom, you're alive!" she exclaimed.

Father and Mother were also happy. Luka offered a prayer of thanksgiving. "Thank you, God, for saving Tom," he said. "We have seen that Your power is great." Mother later found that Tom had vomited the poison in the room.

"God is great, and He hears prayers from us young children," Ema said. "Thank you, Jesus, for protecting both us and our pets."

That's the end of the story. I'm sure that everyone was more careful not to leave the bathroom door open after that. Ema and Luka loved Tom even more since God had spared his life.

You know, sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers right away. It took time before Ema's prayer to get a cat was answered. Sometimes, even after our prayers are answered, bad things happen in our lives—like when Tom ate the poison. God allows these things to happen to grow our faith and help us trust Him more. So don't forget, whenever you are in a difficult situation, pray to God. He hears your prayers, and He can work a miracle for you, just as He did for Ema. Even if He doesn't answer right away, don't give up. Keep praying!

Sermon Suggestions & Ideas

[We encourage you as the pastor/speaker to develop your own personalized sermon for this special Sabbath. These Bible verses, questions, quotes, and thoughts might help as you prepare.]

Sermon Title/Theme: Growing Through Life's Trials as We Pray for Stronger Faith

Bible verses and questions to consider as you prepare your sermon:

Heb. 11:1 – What is faith and why is it so important?

Rom. 12:3 – Does everyone have faith?

2 Tim. 1:7; John 10:10 – Where does fear come from?

Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 15:57 – Where does faith come from?

1 Cor. 15:14-17 – In Whom is our faith rooted?

Hab. 2:4 – Why is it so important for the Christian to have faith?

Num. 14:28 – Do we limit God with our lack of faith and by speaking doubt?

Rom. 8:14-39 – What does God promise through our trials and suffering?

Rom. 8:24, 25 – Why can we pray for things we don't see and keep holding on?

Ps. 119:71, 75 – Does God allow trials in our lives for a reason?

2 Cor. 4:7-10 – What does God wish to reveal in our characters?

Matt. 15:24-28 – Can we worship God even when it seems like He's not answering our prayers?

Mal. 3:2, 3; Ps. 119:71 – Why does God use trials to purify us?

Gen. 50:20 – How can something that the enemy meant for evil be turned to good?

Ps. 56:8 – Are any of our tears lost or overlooked by God?

Rev. 2:10 – What is the reward for being faithful to the end?

Rev. 21:4; Jer. 31:13 – What will happen to all our sorrows?

Excerpts from the book *Daring to Ask for More* by Melody Mason

If we study our Bibles, we find that *faith* is one of the most emphasized gifts in all of Scripture. This is because it is *the gateway* to receiving all other gifts.

The sick are healed by faith (Matt. 9:22); by grace we are saved through faith (Eph. 2:8); we are justified by faith (Rom. 3:28); the disciples worked by faith (Acts 6:8); we carry a shield of faith (Eph. 6:16); the just live by faith (Rom. 1:17); the righteous walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7); we are children of God by faith (Gal. 3:26); and in the end, the thing that counts the most is the faith that works by love (Gal. 5:6). In reality, the whole foundation of Christianity is built upon the foundation of faith, and the gospel is rendered powerless in our lives without it. This is why the devil is so intent on bringing doubt and unbelief into our lives today! Not only will our

ministries *fail to thrive* if we don't live by faith, but we *ourselves* will wither spiritually without it.

As Christians, we fight a daily battle, a battle of *fact versus feeling*. The outcome of this significant battle will determine what type of faith we hold. Let me explain.

Fact is what we find in God's Word. Fact, although built upon unseen realities and invisible promises, does not waver, as it reflects the unchanging nature of God. That is, He cannot lie (Titus 1:2); He will not change (James 1:17); He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8); and He is more eager to give us good gifts than we are to give good gifts to our children (Luke 11:13). When we base *faith on fact*, we have a firm foundation to weather any storms.

Feeling, on the other hand, is constantly wavering, as it is based on our personal experiences, changing emotions, anxieties, spiritual lethargy, and unanswered prayers. Rather than counseling with the Word of God for its decisions, feeling takes counsel from self, from worldly wisdom, from skeptical friends, and from past unproductive Christian experiences. When we base *faith on feelings*, which come and go, it's as if we are building our house upon the sand. Any storms that come along may knock it over.

When feelings lead the way, faith always follows—whether into apathy or ecstasy. Unfortunately, some view *warm emotions* as being evidences of faith. Faith is not just a warm sensation you get when you think of something you hope for, or you think of something God might like to do. Faith must be rooted in the unchanging *facts* of God's Word—not in our changing emotions.

“Faith takes God at His Word, with or without feeling. It ‘is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ We can believe our fellowmen, and can we not trust the Word of God? When we go to Him for wisdom or grace, we are not to look to ourselves to see if He has given us a special feeling as an assurance that He has fulfilled His Word. Feeling is no criterion. Great evils have resulted when Christians have followed feeling. How do I know that Jesus hears my prayers?—I know it by His promise. He says He will hear the needy when they cry unto Him, and I believe His Word. He has never said to the ‘seed of Jacob, seek ye Me in vain.’ If we walk in the light, we may come to the throne of grace with holy boldness. We may present the promises of God in living faith, and urge our petitions. Although we are weak, and erring, and unworthy, ‘the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.’ . . . When we have offered our petition once, we must not then abandon it, but say, as did Jacob when he wrestled all night with the angel, ‘I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me,’ and like him we shall prevail” (*Bible Echo*, September 24, 1894).

If we are waiting to *feel* like we can trust God completely *before* we trust God completely, we will probably never trust Him. If we are waiting to *feel* like praying *before* we pray, we may never pray.

Just imagine how Abraham's *feelings* contradicted his faith as he and his son climbed the mountain to the place where God had asked him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Yet, he was in the center of God's will. Just imagine how John the Baptist must have *felt* locked up in prison while Jesus was out working miracles. And yet, even Jesus said that no greater prophet had been born among women than John the Baptist. Just imagine how the Israelites were *feeling* when they were backed up against the Red Sea with the mightiest army on earth coming against them at full speed. And yet, God was just preparing for one of the greatest miracles of all time.

Inspiration tells us, "The enemy holds many of you from prayer, by telling you that you do not *feel* your prayers, and that you would better wait until you realize more of the spirit of intercession lest your prayers should be a mockery. But you must say to Satan, 'It is written' that 'men ought always to pray, and not to faint.' We should pray until we do have the burden of our wants upon our soul; and if we persevere, we shall have it. The Lord will imbue us with His Holy Spirit" (*Prayer*, p. 268).

In fact, when we feel least like praying, this is the time we need to pray the most. "By so doing we shall break Satan's snare, the clouds of darkness will disappear, and we shall realize the sweet presence of Jesus" (*Prayer*, p. 271).

One of my favorite quotes on prayer comes from the little book *Steps to Christ*. Here Ellen White writes, "Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence?" (*Steps to Christ*, pp. 94, 95).

The Bible tells us, "According to your faith let it be to you" (Matt. 9:29). It says, "Believe and then you'll receive" (Mark 11:24, paraphrased).

You see, prayer is the *key*, but faith *must make the move*. Faith is the force that turns the key in the lock and opens the door. And it does so because it trusts God; it trusts that there are amazing blessings behind that closed door. Are we willing to trust God today, regardless of how we feel, and turn the key in heaven's storehouse?

"How long will we keep living as though God cannot be trusted? How long will we keep looking to our feelings to tell us whether or not a path is correct? In these last days God is longing to pour out His Holy Spirit upon His people, but to do it, He needs to know that we can be trusted with Him. He needs to know that we will follow Him, *whether we feel like it or not*. Because when the devil looks and he sees those that will follow Jesus Christ *whether they feel like it or not*, he knows that his days are numbered" (quote attributed to Bernard Shaw in a sermon by Shane Anderson).

Faith can be described many ways, but to sum it up best, it is simply this: bold, daring, unflinching, unwavering, un-retreating confidence in God, in His Word, and in His ability to perform that which He has promised—even when we haven't yet seen it.

The Bible tells us, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

Additional Quotes from Inspiration:

“Many look back to the Israelites, and marvel at their unbelief and murmuring, feeling that they themselves would not have been so ungrateful; but when their faith is tested, even by little trials, they manifest no more faith or patience than did ancient Israel. When brought into strait places, they murmur at the process by which God has chosen to purify them. Though their present needs are supplied, many are unwilling to trust God for the future, and they are in constant anxiety lest poverty should come upon them, and their children be left to suffer” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 293).

“Talk and act as if your faith was invincible. The Lord is rich in resources; He owns the world. Look heavenward in faith” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 147).

“Never give place to a thought of discouragement in the work of God. Never utter a word of doubt” (*Evangelism*, p. 633).

“Despondency may shake the most heroic faith and weaken the most steadfast will. But God understands, and He still pities and loves. He reads the motives and the purposes of the heart. To wait patiently, to trust when everything looks dark, is the lesson that the leaders in God’s work need to learn. Heaven will not fail them in their day of adversity. Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on God” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 174, 175).

Personal Stories:

- *Share real-life stories about how God has grown your (the pastor/speaker’s) faith through some trial.*
- *Share stories of answered prayer.*
- *People often forget sermon points, but they remember stories!*

Make an appeal for listeners to stand for Jesus, no matter the storms. Invite them to trust His Word.

[Remember to invite people to attend the afternoon prayer time.]

Praying for Greater Faith: Faith to Stand and Witness in the Coming Storms

In Luke 18:8 Jesus asks a vital question: "When the Son of Man comes, will He *really* find faith on the earth?" (emphasis added).

Why is this such an important question?

In *The Great Controversy* we read: "The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 621).

Knowing that a time of greater difficulty and trouble lies ahead, how do we prepare? How do we develop unyielding faith that will witness for Him and not let go of His promises?

First, as we reflect on our great need, let's get a glimpse of what true faith is by turning to Hebrews, chapter 11. We've probably read this faith chapter many times, but let's read it again together. We will focus on this chapter later in our prayer time.

[Read the entire chapter of Hebrews 11.]

As this powerful chapter reminds us, faith is trusting God even when we don't see or understand what He's doing. It's trusting Him through pain, fire, and lack of material evidence. Faith is truly, as the Bible tells us, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

Matthew 8:5-13 also reminds us what true, raw, naked faith is. Here we read about the centurion who came to Christ in search of healing for his servant. Jesus responded, "I will come to your home and heal him." Most would have been delighted at this offer, but the centurion responded, "Oh Lord, I'm not worthy for you to come under my roof. Just *speak the word only*

and my servant will be healed” (Matt. 8:8, paraphrased, emphasis supplied).

This Gentile had faith in *Christ’s Word alone*! It was a faith even Israel had not shown. That’s why Christ marveled. Israel had the Old Testament Scriptures; they knew them by heart. They boasted of being the “people of the book,” the people of God. They read the Word of God, they preached it and taught it, but they didn’t believe it. However, this centurion believed there was power in the spoken Word *alone*, and as a result, Christ healed the man’s servant that very hour.

This is the kind of faith we need today—faith that can stand on God’s Word alone!

Unfortunately, we are told, “Many do not have the virtue of a living faith. They think they have faith, but it is only the thought or action of a moment” (*Christ Triumphant*, p. 54).

If you feel that your faith is weak, don’t despair! God has given us exactly what we need to grow faith just like the men and women of Bible times. Romans 10:17 tells us, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

During our prayer time together this afternoon, we are going to focus on praying that God would grow our faith. We are going to pray that He would truly make us strong through our trials, to stand on the pure Word of God alone.

While we live in unsettling times, and it is easy to be anxious and fearful about the future, we must remember that God allows us to go through trials to build and prepare us. In Psalm 119:71, 75, we read, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. . . . I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.”

L.B. Cowman, author of the wonderful devotional *Streams in the Desert*, writes, “In the lives of all the great Bible characters, God worked thus. Abraham, Moses and Elijah were not great in the beginning, but were made great through the discipline of their faith, and only thus were they fitted for the positions to which God had called them. For example, in the case of Joseph whom the Lord was training for the throne in Egypt, we read in the Psalms: ‘The word of the Lord tried Him.’ It was not the prison life with its hard beds or poor food that tried him, but it was the word God had spoken into his heart in the early years concerning elevation and honor which were greater than his brethren were to receive; it was this which was ever before him, when every step in his career made it seem more and more impossible of fulfillment, until he was there imprisoned, and all in innocence, while others who were perhaps justly incarcerated, were released, and he was left to languish alone. These were the hours that tried his soul, but hours of spiritual growth and development, that, ‘when his word came’ (the word of release), found him fitted for the delicate task of dealing with his wayward brethren, with a love and patience only surpassed by God himself” (Mrs. Charles E. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert*, May 12, available at <https://www.crosswalk.com/devotionals/desert/streams-in-the-desert-may-12>).

12th.html).

She continues, “No amount of persecution tries like such experiences as these. When God has spoken of His purpose to do, and yet the days go on and He does not do it, that is truly hard; but it is a discipline of faith that will bring us into a knowledge of God which would otherwise be impossible” (*ibid.*).

We will close this devotional with a timely blog entry from the late David Wilkerson. Wilkerson, author of the famous book *The Cross and the Switchblade*, spent most of his life on the streets of New York City ministering to gangs and drug addicts. As a result of his ministry and passion for Christ, thousands were set free from darkness.

On April 27, 2011, he wrote a simple blog entry, as he did most days. But this day was different. Not long after writing his entry, he went to town on a simple errand and was killed in a tragic car accident. Thousands came to pay their respects at his memorial.

Considering the life he lived and his sudden and inexplicable death, his final blog entry is deeply profound and still relevant to us today:

“To believe when all means fail is exceedingly pleasing to God and is most acceptable. Jesus said to Thomas, ‘You have believed because you have seen, but blessed are those that do believe and have not seen’ (John 20:29).

Blessed are those who believe when there is no evidence of an answer to prayer—who trust beyond hope when all means have failed.

Someone has come to the place of hopelessness—the end of hope—the end of all means. A loved one is facing death and doctors give no hope. Death seems inevitable. Hope is gone. The miracle prayed for is not happening.

That is when Satan’s hordes come to attack your mind with fear, anger, overwhelming questions: ‘Where is your God now? You prayed until you had no tears left. You fasted. You stood on promises. You trusted.’

Blasphemous thoughts will be injected into your mind: ‘Prayer failed. Faith failed. Don’t quit on God—just do not trust Him anymore. It doesn’t pay!’

Even questioning God’s existence will be injected into your mind. These have been the devices of Satan for centuries. Some of the godliest men and women who ever lived were under such demonic attacks.

To those going through the valley and shadow of death, hear this word: Weeping will last through some dark, awful nights—and in that darkness you will soon hear the

Father whisper, 'I am with you. I cannot tell you why right now, but one day it will all make sense. You will see it was all part of my plan. It was no accident. It was no failure on your part. Hold fast. Let me embrace you in your hour of pain.'

Beloved, God has never failed to act but in goodness and love. When all means fail—His love prevails. Hold fast to your faith. Stand fast in His Word. There is no other hope in this world." (Final blog entry by David Wilkerson the day he died, April 27, 2011, <http://davidwilkersontoday.blogspot.com/2011/04/when-all-means-fail.html>.)

How profoundly spoken! Hold fast to your faith. Stand fast in His Word. There is no other hope in this world!

Now it's time to pray that God will help us develop just such a faith! A faith that will not let go, no matter the storms we face. Let us pray that we will be shining witnesses for His glory.

Prayer Focus for United Prayer

[The following prayer thoughts are just to get us started. Don't feel that you need to pray every prayer listed here. God will also bring additional prayers to your mind. Pray as the Holy Spirit leads.]

A Time of Praise (Corporate Prayer Time)

- **Thank God** that He is a God who hears and answers prayer. (Matt. 7:7)
- **Thank God** that He cannot lie, and His Word does not return to Him void. (Isa. 55:11)
- **Thank God** that when we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (1 John 5:14)
- **Thank God** for His exceedingly great and precious promises. (2 Pet. 1:4)
- **Thank God** for forgiveness of sin and victory in Jesus. (1 John 1:9; 1 Cor. 15:57)

Praying for Greater Faith (Corporate Prayer Time)

- **Ask God** to teach us how to hunger and thirst for a deeper walk with Him. (Matt. 5:6)
- **Ask God** to give us greater faith like the men and women of the Bible. (Heb. 11:1)
- **Ask God** to give us courage and faith to worship in obedience, like Abel. (Heb. 11:4)
- **Ask God** to help us live set-apart from the world and walk in faith, like Enoch. (Heb. 11:5)
- **Ask God** to help us preach the truth boldly in faith, like Noah. (Heb. 11:7)
- **Ask God** to help us move forward in faith, following His call, like Abraham. (Heb. 11:8)
- **Ask God** to help us believe that He can still do the impossible, like Sarah. (Heb. 11:11)
- **Ask God** to help us put everything on the altar, even our treasured gifts. (Heb. 11:17)
- **Ask God** to help us, like Abraham, to trust that God can raise the dead. (Heb. 11:19)
- **Ask God** to teach us faith, like Joseph, even when all is going wrong. (Gen. 39:3)
- **Ask God** to give us faith, as Moses, to serve despite our weaknesses. (Heb. 11:24-26)
- **Ask God** to help us not be afraid to face our Red Sea of impossibilities. (Heb. 11:29)
- **Ask God** to help us live for one King, only the King of Heaven. (Heb. 11:27)

Praying for Greater Witness (Corporate Prayer Time)

- **Ask God** to wake us from our spiritual lethargy, so we can wake others. (Rom. 13:11)

- **Ask God** to help us not be spiritually deceived, as many are now. (Mark 13:22)
- **Ask God** to help us dig deeply in His Word so we can share the truth. (Isa. 8:20)
- **Ask God** to help us study Daniel and Revelation as we prepare for last days. (Rev. 1:1)
- **Ask God** to help us understand the significance of the Three Angels' Messages (Rev. 14)
- **Ask God** to help us know how to share the Three Angels' Messages. (1 Pet. 3:15)
- **Ask God** to help us see the significance of current events in prophecy. (1 Cor. 2:10)
- **Ask God** to remind us that our own obedience is a powerful witness. (1 Cor. 10:31)
- **Ask God** to help us pray in faith until the walls of Jericho fall. (Heb. 11:30)
- **Ask God** to help us not be afraid to stand up for those who are persecuted. (Heb. 11:31)
- **Ask God** to help us not be afraid even when the world turns against us. (Heb. 11:32-34)
- **Ask God** to give us eyes of faith to believe even when we can't see. (John 20:29)

Praying for Personal Needs & the Church (Small Groups)

- Pray for your family to be ready for Jesus' soon coming. (Rev. 1:7)
- Pray for your loved ones who have backslidden or never known Jesus. (2 Pet. 3:9)
- Pray for your children to walk with the Lord or return to the Lord (Jer. 31:16, 17)
- Pray for those who are not attending church and for ways to reach out. (John 13:35)
- Pray for Satan to remove the blinders of deception from those deceived. (Eze. 12:2)
- Pray for your local pastor/elders and church leaders and their families. (Eze. 34:8)
- Pray for the leadership of your local conference/union/division. (1 Tim. 2:1, 2)
- Pray for the General Conference leadership, for wisdom to lead. (1 Tim. 2:1, 2)
- Pray for your government and country leaders, for religious peace. (1 Tim. 2:1, 2)
- Pray for personal and local ministries to go forward in strength. (1 Thess. 5:24)
- Pray that we will be ready for Jesus' soon coming. (Matt. 24:42)

Close with Praise (Corporate Prayer Time)

- **Thank God** in faith for how He will answer all the prayers that we prayed. (1 Thess. 5:16-18)
- **Thank God** that His ways and thoughts are higher than we can comprehend. (Isa. 55:8)
- **Thank God** that He is able to do abundantly above all we ask or think. (Eph. 3:20)

- **Thank God** that He is in control and will carry us through the storms. (Heb. 13:5)
- **Thank God** that He is on the throne and will turn all things to good. (Rom. 8:28)
- **Thank God** that all our trials in this life will reap an eternal reward. (Rom. 8:18)

Powerful Prayer Promises

[A Collection of Bible Promises and Thoughts from the Spirit of Prophecy]

“Grasp His promises as leaves from the tree of life: ‘Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ John 6:37. As you come to Him, believe that He accepts you, because He has promised. You can never perish while you do this—never” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 66).

“As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

“All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. . . . Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 827).

“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” (2 Chron. 7:14).

“Just as long as the church is satisfied with small things, it is disqualified to receive the great things of God” (*Home Missionary*, Nov. 1, 1893).

“Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone” (Zech. 10:1).

“The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church is looked forward to as in the future; but it is the privilege of the church to have it now. Seek for it, pray for it, believe for it. We must have it, and Heaven is waiting to bestow it” (*Review and Herald*, Mar. 19, 1895).

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13).

“Will we wrestle with God in prayer? Will we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? This is what we need and may have at this time. . . . If we will walk humbly with God, God will walk with us” (*Prayer*, p. 87).

"If two of you AGREE on earth concerning anything that they ask, IT WILL BE DONE for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:19, 20, emphasis supplied).

"The greatest blessing that God can give to man is the spirit of earnest prayer. All heaven is open before the man of prayer. . . . The ambassadors of Christ will have power with the people after they have, with earnest supplication, come before God" (*Prayer*, p. 83).

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask ANYTHING according to His WILL, He hears us" (1 John 5:14, emphasis supplied).

"All that Christ received from God we too may have. Then ask and receive. With the persevering faith of Jacob, with the unyielding persistence of Elijah, claim for yourself all that God has promised" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 149).

"And WHATEVER things you ask in prayer, BELIEVING, you will receive" (Matt. 21:22, emphasis supplied).

"Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509).

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me . . . to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"If you want power you may have it; it is waiting your draft upon it. Only believe in God, take Him at His Word, act by faith, and blessings will come" (*Prayer*, p. 84).

"In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22).

"There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God" (*Christian Service*, p. 254).

"For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones'" (Isa. 57:15).

"From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 300).

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

"The greatest victories to the church of Christ or to the individual Christian are not those that are gained by talent or education, by wealth or the favor of men. They are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 203).

"You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you WILL receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24, emphasis supplied).

"It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 525).

"If you ABIDE in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it SHALL be done for you" (John 15:7, emphasis supplied).

"If we desire to know and to do God's will, His promises are ours" (*From Heaven With Love*, p. 166).

"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God ALL THINGS are possible" (Mark 10:27, emphasis supplied).

"Natural impossibilities cannot prevent the work of the Omnipotent One" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 535).

"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, emphasis supplied).

"An appeal to Heaven by the humblest saint is more to be dreaded by Satan than the decrees of cabinets or the mandates of kings" (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 82).

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have BELIEVED" (John 20:29, emphasis supplied).

"There is no danger that the Lord will neglect the prayers of His people. The danger is that in temptation and trial they will become discouraged, and fail to persevere in prayer" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 175).

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself STRONG on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (2 Chron. 16:9, emphasis supplied).

"The honor of His throne is staked for the fulfillment of His word unto us" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 148).

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly ABOVE all that we ask or think, according to the POWER [*His power*] that works in us" (Eph. 3:20, emphasis supplied).

"The Lord will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him" (*My Life Today*, p. 55).

"Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is NOTHING too hard for You" (Jer. 32:17, emphasis supplied).

"It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you expect great things from Him" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 146).

"Ask, and it WILL be given to you; seek, and you WILL find; knock, and it WILL be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7, emphasis supplied).

"In sincerity, in soul hunger, cry after God. Wrestle with the heavenly agencies until you have the victory. Put your whole being into the Lord's hands, soul, body, and spirit, and resolve to be His loving, consecrated agency, moved by His will, controlled by His mind, infused by His Spirit" (*Prayer*, p. 75).

"And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:32).

"Man can accomplish nothing without God, and God has arranged His plans so as to accomplish nothing in the restoration of the human race without the cooperation of the human with the divine. The part man is required to sustain is immeasurably small, yet in the plan of God it is just that part that is needed to make the work a success" (*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 319).

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

"We must look to Christ; we must resist as He resisted; we must pray as He prayed; we must agonize as He agonized, if we would conquer as He conquered" (*That I May Know Him*, p. 34).

"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19).

“Just believe and praise God and go forward. We are almost home. . . . Bear your whole weight on the promises of God. Believe it is your privilege to believe” (*Letter 31*, Jan. 1, 1887).

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