



Quarterly Day of Prayer and Fasting

Preparing for the Final Events:

Preparing by Prayer

Handbook and Resources

1st Quarter 2024

Sabbath, January 6

Prepared for church group and individual use by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in coordination with the Revival and Reformation Committee. Written by **Dr. Pavel Goia** for the Day of Prayer global initiative. Visit www.revivalandreformation.org for more information.

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A Call to Prayer

We are living in the final moments of Earth's history. Jesus's return is imminent, and we must be ready. Procrastination in our preparation is not an option. If you truly love Jesus and yearn for His return, the time to prepare is now. As Hebrews 3:15 (NKJV) urges, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

We often discuss the Second Coming and the importance of being born again, loving Jesus, and spreading the gospel. However, it's easy to become distracted by everyday life and other priorities. Satan's strategy is to keep us so preoccupied that we lose sight of these urgent times and fail to prepare. This is a critical time, and we cannot afford to have other priorities. Now, more than ever, is the time to prepare!

Recall Jesus's journey with His disciples toward Jerusalem. He forewarned them of His impending death, a message He had been sharing for three years. Despite hearing Him, the disciples failed to comprehend, preoccupied with thoughts of comfort, power and liberation from Roman rule. They lacked understanding of Jesus's true message.

Similarly, do we, despite attending church and reading the Bible, fail to truly understand God's message? Are we, like the disciples, only hearing what we want to hear? Jesus' message is clear: "I am coming very soon." Yet, we often pray for worldly concerns, overlooking the urgency of His message.

Jesus emphasizes that now is not the time for worldly priorities; it's a time to prepare for the final crisis. We are living in these final events, witnessing the fulfillment of prophecies. Yet, our focus is often elsewhere.

On the Mount of Olives, the disciples marveled at Jerusalem's splendor, unaware of Jesus' prophecy of the temple's destruction. This was inconceivable to them; the destruction of the temple symbolized the end of their nation and, they thought, the world. They asked Jesus about the signs of these events and the end of the world (Matt. 23:3).

Jesus didn't begin with physical signs like earthquakes or wars. He started with a warning to be vigilant and concluded with an urgent plea to watch and pray. He described the end times as increasing crises, akin to birth pains, overwhelming people's hearts and minds. He foretold of false messiahs, false prophets, and false doctrines, a crisis unparalleled in Earth's history. Yet, the end would only come after the gospel had reached all nations. Then he urged them to be ready.

So, how do we prepare?

We must be wary of false teachings, as even the most devout can be deceived. Satan will try to deceive even the elect. Who is that? You, me, those who read their Bible, those in the church pews

every Sabbath, those singing the hymns at Wednesday night Bible study. So, what should we do? Jesus says, "Be careful, watch and pray".

The key to resilience is prayer and God's Word. When Jesus faced Satan's temptations, He countered with scripture. Our defense against falsehoods lies in the Bible. Jesus' advice is to remain vigilant, pray, avoid distractions, and immerse ourselves in God's Word. He explained this preparation through five parables (Matt. 24:32–25:46), all emphasizing vigilance, prayer, reliance on scripture, and fulfilling our God-given mission. Therefore, let's heed Jesus's call: pray, be watchful, stand firm on God's Word, and actively serve, using the talents He has bestowed upon us.

How Do You Really Prepare for This Final Crisis?

Four essentials: Pray, watch, study the word, serve.

This **first** quarter, our focus is on one of these four essentials: Prayer.

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17, NKJV).

Maintain a continual connection; pray consistently, "Pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18, NASB). This doesn't mean abandoning work, school, gardening, or shopping. It means being in constant connection with the Source of all power and wisdom wherever you are, whatever you're doing. Jesus emphasizes this in John 15, highlighting the importance of remaining in Him.

"The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart ... Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324).

Attending church is important, as is not neglecting our assemblies. How else can we encourage, support, build up, fellowship, and serve if we isolate ourselves? However, Satan is unfazed by our church attendance, our knowledge of doctrines, or even our healthy eating habits. What truly frightens him is our prayer. "At the sound of fervent prayer, Satan and his whole hosts tremble" (*Counsels for the Church*, p. 319).

We must deepen our relationship with God, trust Him, and remain in Him. This is how we prepare for the final conflict.

In prayer, Satan loses his power over us. We are not alone; we are with God, and He is with us. He is our safety, our defender, our Rock, our Surety. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27, NKJV).

Satan strives to distract us from prayer, from our continual safe connection with God.

"The idea that prayer is not essential is one of Satan's most successful devices to ruin souls. Prayer is communion with God, the Fountain of wisdom, the Source of strength, and peace, and

happiness" (*Child Guidance*, p. 518).

"Satan is enraged at the sound of fervent prayer, for he knows that he will suffer loss" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 295).

In discerning God's works from Satan's, between the authentic and the counterfeit, prayer is crucial. "Go to God and to his Word, pray for divine enlightenment, that you may distinguish between the genuine work of God and the imitative work of darkness" (*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 389).

Pray, remain in Him, and do not separate from God. Walk and talk with Him as if you would already be in heaven; remain in His presence. As the hymn "In The Garden" (#487) beautifully expresses, "And He walks with me and He talks with me..." Similarly, "The faces of men and women who talk with God, to whom the invisible world is a reality, express the peace of God; they carry with them the atmosphere of heaven" (*Medical Ministry*, p. 252).

This is not about routine or crisis-driven prayers but about maintaining a continual connection with God. Our minds and thoughts should be steadfastly fixed on Him, engaging in genuine, earnest prayer. "There is need of prayer—most earnest, fervent, agonizing prayer" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 92).

Prayer should be a lifestyle, not just a habit or an event. "Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power... Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, and you lose your hold on God" (*Prayer*, p. 12).

Pray continually, making it as natural as breathing. Avoid rushed prayers; instead, spend quality time with God. "Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ's loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work" (*Education*, p. 260).

We are called to emulate Jesus in dedicating ourselves to prayer, becoming accustomed to continual, connected prayer. Prayer is vital; it brings power and peace.

"Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Wellspring of life. Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, and you lose your hold on God" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 249).

"Prayer of faith is the great strength of the Christian, and will assuredly prevail against Satan" (*Evangelism*, p. 609).

Prayer is a crucial element in preparing for the final crisis and for heaven, and it should start

today. Pray not just for help or blessings but to seek a relationship with God.

Consider fasting not just for answers or blessings but to hear His voice. Fasting should be a time to clear our minds, know God, focus on Him, and be filled with His presence, strength, and wisdom. "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*" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 188, 189).

"There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit on a languishing church and an impenitent congregation" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 133).

"If the Saviour of men, with His divine strength, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of prayer—fervent, constant prayer! ... Those who profess the truth for these last days, above every other class of professed Christians, should imitate the great Exemplar in prayer." (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 52)

God is calling us to prayer, the vital ingredient for preparing for the final crisis.

Sabbath Theme and Prayer Program Suggestions

Instructions for Leaders

- **Sabbath Morning Program Ideas:** Invite and inspire members to make it a special day of prayer. The sermon should be focused on prayer.
- **Children's Story:** Highlight the importance of prayer and the need for a continual connection with God.
- **Afternoon Prayer Program:** Meet either with the whole church, in groups in a comfortable room, or in someone's home. If meeting in person is not possible, you might use a video service such as Zoom or meet via telephone or some other platform.
- **Prayer Time:** Just before starting your prayer time, share the above thoughts and inspired passages and quotes with the group.

Suggestions for Planning a Day of Prayer:

- We recommend scheduling a minimum of two hours for your afternoon prayer program. Some may enjoy praying together for a full afternoon.
- Most of the time will be spent in corporate prayer, but if time allows, you may break into smaller groups for more personal prayer requests. Bring the group back together to close with a time of thanksgiving.
- Children praying: Have an area set aside for smaller children and assign someone to watch over them while the prayers take place. Children can also be introduced to simple concepts

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about God and simple prayers while in “play time.”

- Invite friends and family.
- Have everything ready for the prayer session. Prepare the songs in advance.
- Have a special supper and testimony time in the evening. Ask participants to bring a snack or potluck dish. Sharing a meal and friendly conversation after prayer helps to build a community spirit.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to lead your plans.