



Quarterly Day of Prayer and Fasting

Preparing for the Final Events: Preparing by Studying the Word

Handbook and Resources

2nd Quarter 2024

Sabbath, April 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/prayerdays for more information.

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A Call to Study the Word

The return of Jesus is imminent, sooner than many expect. Consequently, numerous individuals will find themselves unprepared and caught off guard by His sudden arrival. This is a stark reminder not to procrastinate or place other matters above spiritual readiness.

Loving Jesus with every aspect of our being necessitates prioritizing Him above all else. Any other focus or stressor, anything that preoccupies our thoughts and prayers, essentially becomes a form of idolatry, replacing Jesus in our hearts. It's crucial to ensure that our bond with God remains the most important aspect of our lives, as Matthew 6:33 urges us to "Seek first the kingdom of God."

Proper preparation for Jesus' second coming cannot happen during the final crisis. It happens today, and every day. Just as athletes, soldiers, and students prepare well in advance for their respective challenges, we too must be proactive in our spiritual preparation, not waiting until the last moment when it's too late. Embracing today, this day, as the time for salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2) is essential because tomorrow is never guaranteed.

How Do You Prepare?

Jesus, throughout His life and particularly during His discourse on the Mount of Olives, provided clear guidance on preparing for the end times. He foretold of unprecedented troubles and emphasized the need to watch, pray, be alert, filled with His spirit, and stand on His Word, using parables to illustrate these principles.

This quarter, following our previous focus on prayer, we shift our attention to studying the Word. This is part of our ongoing exploration of the four key principles of spiritual preparedness: **Prayer, watchfulness, the study of His word, and service.**

Spending Time in the Word

In Matthew 24, 25, Luke 21, and Mark 13, Jesus explicitly cautions us against deception from false messiahs, prophets, doctrines, and even Satan himself. In these times of widespread crisis, our spiritual strength and growth toward maturity are crucial. "The enemy is preparing to deceive the whole world by his miracle-working power. He will assume to personate angels of light, to personate Jesus Christ" (*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 96).

Our strength lies not in our wisdom but in Christ, and we come to know Him through His Word. As John 17:17 (KJV) states, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." We grow in spiritual life and wisdom through engaging with Scripture.

"The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform marvelous works in our

sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Scriptures" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 593).

Therefore, prayer and scripture study are vital. They go together. Throughout history, prayer and the Word have protected and strengthened God's people from and for any crisis. They have sustained them and given them courage and victory.

"Let much time be spent in prayer and close searching of the word" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 65).

Neglecting prayer and scripture study makes us vulnerable to Satan's distractions. He aims to divert us from preparing for the end times, focusing on heaven, studying the Word, prayer, and daily inviting Christ into our life. He will use any type of distraction to make sure that we have no time for these essential things. He would not care much if we went to church, kept the Sabbath, believed in God, or even got involved in the church. Yet he is furious when we have a serious commitment to prayer and study of the Word, as the other things are not enough.

Through daily prayer and study of the Word, we deepen our relationship with God, grow stronger in our faith, and stand firm on the "It Is Written" that Jesus used to combat Satan's temptations. This is the only way we can prepare for eternity and stand in the final crisis.

Worship is a daily practice of spending time with God, engaging in prayer, scripture study, and reflection on His love, character, and plans. It's what Satan most abhors and seeks to disrupt, as worship is what he covets for himself.

Historically, revivals in Israel always began with restoring worship, prioritizing God, and eliminating idols. Such spiritual reawakening always led to blessings in other aspects of life.

"The Bible is God's voice speaking to us, just as surely as if we could hear it with our ears" (*My Life Today*, p. 283).

In the parables of Matthew 25, Jesus taught the importance of constant readiness, exemplified by keeping our lamps and oil reserves full. This symbolizes maintaining our spiritual vitality through daily engagement with God. It will be too late to fill the lamp during the crisis!

Early mornings should be devoted to connecting with God through prayer and scripture, keeping our spiritual reserves replenished. "Morning by morning, those who kneel before the Lord and renew their vows of consecration to Him, He will grant them the presence of His Spirit, with its reviving, sanctifying power" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 511).

God's Word fortifies us for spiritual battles, acting as our weapon, cleanser, guide, and means for a closer walk with Him. Just as we need physical bread for survival, we require the spiritual

nourishment of Scripture. It's not merely a duty but a passionate quest to discover and know God. "We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know 'what saith the Lord.'" *The Desire of Ages*, p. 360).

Engaging deeply with a few verses, praying over them, and reflecting on their meaning helps internalize the Word much better than reading a lot but not remembering much. The Word becomes our safety in times of trouble, revealing deeper truths the more we explore. The deeper you dig, the more treasure you find. Then worship time will become your life, your food, your water, it will be your treasure. It will transform you and those around you.

"Those who will put on the whole armor of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them" (*Prayer*, p. 185).

God is calling you to make worship, prayer, study of the Word, and being in the presence of God a priority this year. Do this daily. This is the right preparation for the soon-coming crisis and for Jesus' return.

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 and focus on the Word.
- **The sermon** should be centered in the need and value of the Word. It should clearly emphasize the study of the Bible as being as essential as food is for our bodies. It should present the Bible as the single protection against sin, Satan's attacks, and any false doctrines.
- **Children's Story:** Highlight the importance of daily prayer and study of the Word.
- **Afternoon Prayer Program:** Meet with the whole church, or in groups in a comfortable room, or in someone's home. If meeting in person is impossible, you might use a video conference call service such as Zoom or meet via telephone or some other online platform.
- **Prayer Time:** Before starting your prayer time, share the above thoughts, inspired passages, and quotes with the group. Have a few Bible verses centered on the value of the Word. Read them in groups or together with the whole congregation. Pray together over them.
- **Call the congregation to a clear commitment** to the daily prayer and study of the Bible.

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. Have a few Bible verses and quotes that emphasize the vital need for daily time in worship, prayer, and study of the Word. Have them read it and discuss it. Bring the group back together to close with a time of thanksgiving.
- Children praying: Set an area aside for smaller children and assign someone to watch over them while the prayers occur. Children can also be introduced to simple concepts about God and prayers 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 afternoon/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.