



Quarterly Day of Prayer and Fasting

Preparing for the Final Events and Soon Coming of Jesus

Handbook and Resources

3rd Quarter 2024

Sabbath, July 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 Be Continually Connected with God

As we look around, we see how Bible prophecies have been fulfilled, and now the very last prophecies are being fulfilled in front of our eyes. Jesus is coming soon! Now is the time to be ready.

In the 2024 first quarter's message, we said that for each quarter we will be looking into one of the four most important principles of preparation: pray, study the Word, watch, and serve. First quarter we focused on prayer. Second, we focused on the Word. Now we will focus on the concept of watching.

What does it mean to watch? In this case, it means to keep your eyes focused on Jesus, building a close, continual relationship with Him.

In the last week of Jesus' life on earth, as He and the disciples walked to Jerusalem, the disciples showed Jesus the splendor of the Temple, the pride of their nation. And Jesus shocked them by saying that Jerusalem will be destroyed to the degree that there will be not one stone on top of another. How could that be possible? Jerusalem was the Temple of God, the Most Holy One. It was where Shekinah glory used to be visible, where the 10 commandments written by God's own finger were placed, where God revealed His will through Urim and Thummim. It was the center of true religion, and not only that, but also a center of commerce in that area. It was a miracle edifice in the world. For them, destruction of the temple would be the end of their nation and their world.

The disciples asked Jesus for the signs of the destruction and the end of the world. Jesus doesn't start with war or pandemics, economical crisis or natural catastrophes. His first word is "Watch." In Matthew 24:4, 42 Jesus warns them to watch. How do you watch?

In a way, Jesus says, "Make sure you stay focused on the right thing, that you don't get distracted." Satan is trying to distract each of us with so many things. But all these will be consumed. Don't let anything distract your attention from the right focus.

I remember when I was young, the pastor took the youth from our church to the Black Sea. One day he challenged us to swim across a large lake. It would take several hours to cross it. And when you left the shore, you would not see anything but water in any direction. One could lose the right direction, just swim in circles, get tired and discouraged, give up, and die.

I called my father and asked him, "How can I win the race?", and I described the challenge. He had one word, focus. "Focus on the race son, keep your eyes fixed on the goal."

So, the pastor and a few parents took canoes and the youth jumped in the water with the understating that anyone who got tired would get in the boats. In the beginning, all participants

were optimistic and proud, all determined to win the race. All were fast, secure, and happy. However, one by one they started to get tired, to slow down, give up, and eventually climb in one of the boats. My friend and I kept going.

I found my rhythm. I sang a song in my mind and swam to the rhythm of the song. I let nothing distract me from the rhythm. I did NOT allow myself to think about anything else, or my eyes and my ears to see or hear anything else. I focused on the rhythm, focused on the goal.

In Matthew 24 Jesus asks His followers to do the same. He says to watch, stay focused, keep your eyes on the goal, the Captain of your salvation and His kingdom. Do not allow anything else to distract you. Whatever distracts you is what will choke your relationship with God and keep you from entering heaven.

Stay focused. Watch so nothing gets between you and God.

All real relationships take time. There is no such thing as having a close relationship with someone without spending quality time with them. You must start now, you must start today. You cannot procrastinate, have other priorities. You must encounter God today, remain in Him today. Today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). Today you prepare for tomorrow, and for eternity.

In Matthew 7:16 Jesus says that you will recognize His disciples by their fruit. And in John 15 Jesus clearly underlines that we must remain in Him and He in us, and that we should never separate from Him. He says that if we remain in Him, we surely will produce fruit, there will be growth and results. That fruit takes time to mature as well. A gardener doesn't plant a mango tree and expect for beautiful ripe mangoes to be hanging on the tree the next day. It takes good soil, nurture, sun, water, and time. Burying yourself in God, continually in His rich soil, will result in beautiful fruit.

But if we separate from Him, we alone can do nothing, there will be no growth, no results, no fruit. Salvation is in One Name (Acts 4:12). He who continually has Jesus, has life. And he who doesn't have Jesus has no life (1 John 5:12). Christ in you the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).

Jesus told His disciples, make God your priority. You will surely continue to go to school, work, continue to shop, cook, and eat, and do all other daily activities. Your relationship with God must be your priority. Nothing should absorb your mind to the degree that God is no longer number one, no longer the focus and center of your daily life. Satan constantly tries to have you worried and stressed about other things, but God promised that if you seek Him and His kingdom first, all other things will be provided (Matt. 6:33).

At the second coming some of the lost ones will assert that they should be saved because they attended church and done this and that. Jesus will say, "I don't know you." He clearly underlined a genuine relationship with Him as vital to our salvation. Salvation is only in Him.

In Ephesians 6:10 Paul says, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” We cannot be strong based on our own wisdom or strength. We can only be strong in Christ. Paul clearly underlines that our strength is only IN God, in His power alone, and not in ourselves. In Philippians he says, “I can do all things in Christ,” only in Him (Phil. 4:13).

We need God’s supernatural power against Satan’s attacks and supernatural forces. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

“As Christ in His humanity sought strength from His Father, that He might be enabled to endure trial and temptation, so are we to do. Daily we need help and grace and power from the Source of all power” (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 50).

“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).

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of this earth. Do not let your mind and heart get distracted. Do not let the worries of this life choke your relationship with God. Have no other priorities. God must be the focus and the center in everything you do, daily, continually. Pray without ceasing. Live what you preach, live what you sing –“And He walks with me and He talks with me” (“In the Garden”). Keep walking and talking with Him.

“If we place our affections on the things of earth, we shall become earthly, common, and evil. Our minds take the level of the things on which our thoughts dwell, and if we think upon earthly things, we shall fail to take the impress of that which is heavenly” (*Signs of the Times*, Jan. 9, 1893).

Jesus is asking you to love Him and have a strong relationship with Him. Love Him more than anything else. He desires a close relationship with you. Only in Him will you have assurance of salvation.

The way you prepare for the soon second coming is by a daily close relationship with God, by making Him the focus of your mind, the center of your heart, the desire and reason of all your actions. Stay connected.

If you want to be in heaven tomorrow, you must desire and experience heaven today. If you continually remain in God and God in you, you will experience His presence and His kingdom today.

“The faces of men and women who walk and work with God express the peace of heaven. They are surrounded with the atmosphere of heaven. For these souls the kingdom of God has begun. They have Christ’s joy. . .” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 312).

Prayer, study of God's Word, and a continual relationship with God are absolutely vital. These ingredients have always been essential for the Christian life. Moreover for the times we live.

The final crisis will be the strongest one in earth's history (Matt. 24:21). Only those that remain in Christ will make it to the end and be victorious.

Make a decision now. Every single morning put God first. Him, His Word, prayer, and a close connection with Him. Invite Christ daily in your heart, in your life in your family. Stop throughout the day periodically, for a few moments, and make sure you are still connected.

Grow continually stronger in your relationship with God. Get to know Him better, get to trust Him more, get to love Him with all your heart, more than anything else. This is the only way you can prepare for eternity and stand in the final crisis. Stay connected today, and tomorrow, and you will remain connected with Him until He comes, and also for eternity.

"If everyone who claims to be a child of God were filled with faith and light and life, what a wonderful witness would be given to those who come to hear the truth! And how many souls might be won to Christ!" (*Testimony for the Church*, no. 6, p. 64).

God is calling you to make prayer, study of the Word, and a close, continual relationship with God a priority this year. Do that daily. This is the right preparation for the soon-coming crisis and Jesus' soon coming.

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 on the need and value of a close, daily communion with Christ. It should clearly emphasize the relationship with God as the essence for our salvation.
- **Children's Story:** Highlight the importance of keeping your eyes focused on God, of being always with Christ and never alone.
- **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. Have a few Bible verses centered on our dependence of Christ, in our need to be in Him at all times. Pray together over them.
- **Call the congregation to a clear commitment** to the daily communion with Christ.

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 of being in Christ. Have them read and discuss it. 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 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.