

# Day of Prayer and Fasting

Materials for 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter — October 1, 2016

THEME:

*"Praying for the Church  
Next Door"*

Reaching out to those of other faiths, as well as unbelievers!

**Revival**  
and **REFORMATION**  
YOU, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR CHURCH, YOUR COMMUNITY

## Day of Prayer and Fasting Ideas and Resources

- Suggested sermon theme or possible topics for church: **Key Verse:** Psalm 2:8

*The Heathen Are to Be Our Inheritance!*

*Prayer and Fasting for the Church Next Door (as Well as for Those of Other Faiths)*

*Practical Relevance of the Three Angels' Messages—The Unique Seventh-day Adventist Message and Call*

- Suggested children's story:

2 Kings 5—Share the story of the Little Maid, who witnessed about the true God of Israel to her Syrian mistress. As a result, Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was healed of his leprosy and testified, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (verse 15). (*My Bible Friends* gives a beautiful rendition of this story.)

- Prayer theme for 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Day of Prayer and Fasting: "Praying for the Church Next Door," as well as World Church requests (see page 4).
- Suggested afternoon prayer program and activity: Schedule 2 hours minimum for this time, but allow the Holy Spirit to lead. Many plan on prayer for a full afternoon (see page 5).
- Day of Prayer and Fasting devotional: "Small Sacrifices, Big Blessings" (see page 8). This could be shared before the prayer time or used with the sermon, if desired.
- Corresponding outreach ideas to follow Day of Prayer and Fasting: see page 7 and attached handout, "Steps to Witnessing to Other Faith Groups." These ideas may take some time to put into action.
- Additional fasting inspiration and resources: "The Biblical Call to Prayer and Fasting" and "Spiritual Breakthrough." See additional attachments.

Additional online resources available:

- Helpful, practical resources to reach those of other faiths, including animists, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus: [www.reachtheworldnextdoor.com/other-religions.html](http://www.reachtheworldnextdoor.com/other-religions.html).

This website has downloadable prayer cards for different nationalities and religious groups, as well as a downloadable booklet called *Praying for the World Next Door*.

## **Things to keep in mind regarding fasting:**

While not everyone is able to skip food, encourage those who can to fast from something during the morning and afternoon of this special day.

Possible types of fasting could include: water fast, juice fast, Daniel's fast, dessert/or rich foods fast, social media fast, etc. Encourage members to pray and ask God to indicate what type of fast He wants them to undertake. (For more on the Daniel's fast, see the attachment, *"The Biblical Call to Prayer and Fasting."*)

While fasting is a "given" in the Bible (see Matt. 6:16), we must remember that fasting is not a magic key to righteousness or blessings, and nor is any other spiritual discipline we undertake. We can't earn God's blessing or answers in prayer by fasting any more than we can earn our own salvation. Also, fasting doesn't substitute for obedience or personal surrender and Christ-like love. In fact, we are told, "Fasting or prayer that is actuated by a self-justifying spirit is an abomination in the sight of God" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 280).

However, even if people choose not to fast, we still don't want to discourage them from being part of the day's prayer activities. Remember, God knows the heart, and the decision to fast or not to fast (or how to fast) should be between a person and God, not dictated by anyone.

The whole purpose of the Day of Prayer and Fasting is to lay self aside as we intercede for others. As we seek the Lord with humility of heart, and as we put away earthly distractions, we will have a more receptive frame of mind to what God wants to do in our life and through our prayers.

As Pastor Derek Morris says, "We fast from the world so we can feast on Jesus!"

## **Praying for the Church Next Door**

Emphasis on those of other faith persuasions. See bolded words for quick summary!

- Pray that **God will give us a heart** for those of other faith persuasions.
- Pray that we would become a **“house of prayer for all nations”** (Mark 11:17, NKJV).
- Pray for **specific friends** and loved ones of other faith groups.
- Pray for **co-workers** of other faith groups. Pray for them by name if possible!
- Pray for **classmates** of other faith groups. Pray for them by name if possible!
- Pray for the **different churches or worship places** in our communities.
- Pray for **those who attend these churches** or worship places to be led by the Holy Spirit into all truth (John 16:13).
- Pray for **Muslims**, even the radical jihad groups, that they come to know the true Jesus, not the Jesus displayed by Hollywood or lukewarm Laodicea.
- Pray for **God’s love to break down our natural prejudices** and flow to our Muslim brothers and sisters around the world.
- Pray for our **Hindu and Buddhist friends**, that their idols and gods would be put away and they discover the one true Father who made them and loves them.
- Pray for **Asians of various faiths** in our communities, who often run special restaurants. Pray for opportunities to build friendships with them.
- Pray for our **secular Jewish brothers and sisters** to see and accept Jesus. Pray that we would have a renewed interest in knowing and fellowshiping with Jews.
- Pray for any we know who are into **New Age, occultic, or eastern religions**. Pray that God will open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light.
- Pray that **we will have courage to reach out and witness** to people in these groups.
- Pray that **we will keep Sabbath holy, embrace the health message, and live such lives of integrity that people would be drawn to us** and want to know about Seventh-day Adventists.
- Pray that **God helps us share the Three Angel’s Messages** of Revelation 14. The vast majority of God’s children are still living in other faith groups. That’s why we are to give the call to “Come out of her my people,” as expressed in Revelation 18:4.

**In addition, please remember the following World Church prayer requests during this day of prayer and fasting:**

- Pray for Elder Ted N. C. Wilson (President), G. T. Ng (Secretary), and Juan Prestol-Puesán (Treasurer) as well as the many other General Conference leaders as they prepare for the Annual Council this October, where Division and Union leaders come together from all over the world to make decisions for the coming year for our church.
- Pray for our local pastors, leaders, conference presidents, and administrators to have wisdom, strength, and Holy Spirit power as they lead in their areas of responsibility.
- Pray for our teachers, doctors, nurses, health workers, lay evangelists, Bible workers, missionaries, and others serving God on the front lines.
- Pray for those standing for God, like Daniel, even in their secular career.

## *Suggested Afternoon Prayer Program and Activity*

# Time to Pray!

- **Place:**  
Gather together in the church, a fellowship hall, a Sabbath School room, or any place where you will be uninterrupted to pray. This prayer time can also be hosted in someone's home, or outside, weather permitting.
- **The Actual Prayer Time:**  
After a few songs to set a reverent atmosphere, have the song leader lead everyone in the hymn, "For You I Am Praying" (*Adventist Hymnal*, no. 284).

Follow with the Scripture: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8).

**Opening prayer and official welcome:** Have the Prayer Ministries director or a designated leader welcome everyone to the time of prayer, and share the "*Small Sacrifice, Big Blessings*" devotional (see page 8).

Then go over the prayer theme for the Day of Prayer and Fasting as listed above on page 4. If possible, you might print up multiple copies of this page for people to have during the prayer time. This might also be a good time to remind people to keep each prayer brief, so that multiple people can pray. (See "Points for Prayer Leader" on page 6.)

**Prayer time:** 2 hours minimum. This time will go quickly. Many enjoy spending the whole afternoon in prayer. You can also add time for praises, testimonies, etc. However, make sure you don't limit the actual prayer time with too much talking or sermonizing or sharing. Keep the focus and emphasis on actual time in prayer. This is the day to pray! The time will go quickly.

**Closing:** In closing the prayer time, sing a few songs of praise, thanking God for what He's going to do. Encourage members, even after the Day of Prayer and Fasting is over, to continue to pray for those of other faith groups in their community, as well as to seek for ways to reach out to them.

**Ending the Day of Prayer and Fasting:** Have a special potluck supper or evening meal to break the fast together as a church family.

## Pointers for prayer leader:

While people are encouraged to pray multiple times, remind them of the importance to keep their individual prayers brief. Ellen White writes: “Make short prayers in meetings, and lengthy prayers when you talk and commune with God in your closet” (*Manuscript Releases*, 10:130).

So while the prayer time can be long, the individual prayers should not be. Praying short prayers tends to keep the prayer time active and moving. It also binds the members’ hearts together and keeps adults and children from growing restless.

We encourage you to start with a time of **praise and confession** before beginning to really intercede for the prayer themes. Based on Psalm 100:4, we are to enter God’s gates with praise. And, based on Psalm 66:18 as well as Isaiah 59:1, 2, if we want God to hear our prayers, our sins must be confessed and put away!

If starting with praise and confession, you might begin the prayer time as follows: “Dear Lord, we come before You today with hearts full of praise. Before we give You our requests for our brothers and sisters of other faiths, we want to take a few minutes just to praise Your name. Thank You for being our mighty King and deliverer.”

Then allow others to pray. When it’s time to move to confession, lead again.

We encourage a brief time for private confession to God first, and then corporate confession especially for sins like apathy and lethargy in reaching souls for Christ. This time of confession might be followed with singing “Amazing Grace.”

Next it’s time for supplication. Encourage everyone, by your own example, to pray God’s Word as they pray for those of other faiths. Be specific! Pray in faith! And allow this time to go as long as the Holy Spirit leads.

Feel free to interject, throughout the prayer time, well known hymns and songs that correspond with the prayers being prayed. “As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer” (*Education*, p. 168).

Encourage the group to agree with each other in prayer, claiming Matthew 18:19.

Someone may say, “Lord, please be with our Pentecostal brothers and sisters whose church is across the street.” Someone else may add, “Yes, Lord, I agree. And please help me know how to witness to my Pentecostal friend Beth, whom I work with at the office.” And so the prayers continue, one after another.

These are ideas to help get started, but it’s most important that the Holy Spirit leads!

For more prayer pointers for leading group prayer, you can download *Praying for Rain: A Mini Handbook for United Prayer* at [www.revivalandreformation.org](http://www.revivalandreformation.org).

## *Corresponding Ideas for Reaching Those of Other Faiths*

After spending time in prayer for those of other faiths, it's time to connect in practical ways.

**Christ's method:** Let's remember Christ's method, first and foremost:

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me' " (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

There are many ways to mingle and win the confidence of others. One way is by showing interest in their faith and seeking to build bridges. To gain some practical ideas on how to do this, read the attached document, "*Steps to Witnessing to Other Faith Groups.*"

Remember, once you've made a special connection with someone or with a family, follow up on this connection by staying in touch, and reaching out to them periodically. Whatever you do, *don't stop praying for the churches and those of other faiths next door!*

**Start an interfaith Bible study group:** Another possibility is to work with some of your non-Adventist friends (people who are dedicated Bible believers, and people that you trust) to start a community interfaith Bible study. You may not be in control of the group or the studies, but as you interact with other believers who are studying the Bible, even if your understandings are different, their respect and trust in you and your knowledge of Scripture will grow, and they will be more open to what you share as time goes by. It would be ideal if two or three strong Adventists joined this group, but not so many that the other denomination believers get overwhelmed and decide to leave. Remember, this is not the time to try to monopolize but a time to slowly plant seeds. (This also would *not* substitute for a typical Adventist Bible study group or for studying with non-believers who wish to become Seventh-day Adventists. This idea is only to build trust and get connected with other Bible believers who might not attend a typical Adventist study.)

### **Ideas for your church family to network with other church families**

As Adventists, we are known for our community services and outreach initiatives. However, the next time your church wants to do something special for the community, why not consider networking with other churches, asking if they'd be willing to work together on a community project? As you do, you will be able to build trust, and walls will be broken down. And it will be easier to invite these new friends to future activities or events you host.

Consider possible projects your church and other churches could do together:

- Feeding the homeless
- Putting on a Fall Festival celebration or special community cooking fair
- Doing a community center building project, remodel, park additions, playground, etc.
- Planning a community benefit concert with raised funds going to a community project
- Planning a special all-night prayer time for community needs.
- Pray and ask God for more ideas. He has a thousand we haven't even thought of!

## *"Small Sacrifices, Big Blessings"*

Devotional Thoughts for Day of Prayer and Fasting, October 1, 2016

What started out as five prayer partners has turned into literally hundreds!

Philip and Chepchumba Rono, from Eldoret, Kenya, started a small prayer group of five people under the world church's Revival and Reformation program in 2011. As new prayer initiatives were shared (like 7-7-7), they continued to participate, and also encouraged their prayer partners to follow the programs as well.

Attendance soared after the couple placed an even greater emphasis on prayer and organized a second group in February 2014. The second prayer group grew in 2014 from 50 to 150, then to a crowd of 200 people who attended the 10 Days of Prayer in early January 2015. It then swelled to 300 people when 100 Days of Prayer<sup>1</sup> started in late March, and to more than 400 people in May.

In May 2015, during the 100 Days of Prayer initiative, members of the group invited pastors from other denominations to attend an all-night prayer session that was being held.

The pastors were so impressed by the reception and the lessons presented that they felt they needed to know more about Seventh-day Adventists. So the Ronos organized a three-day seminar immediately, and 50 pastors were invited to attend.

At the end of this seminar, a group of pastors asked if another three-day meeting could be held in their hometown so that their church members could attend. After that meeting, 14 of these pastors requested to be baptized as Seventh-day Adventist.

In August 2015, members of two of the churches whose pastors became Adventist decided to rename their churches as Adventist congregations. A member of the prayer group even donated US\$12,400 toward the purchase of the properties, and the local Adventist conference pledged to pay the difference. More pastors have joined the study, and in early February of 2016 there were 23 more pastors baptized. That makes a total of 37 pastors who have been baptized so far. Truly God is working in a big way.

In addition to helping bring in many new Adventist believers, the Ronos have also started a health center that is now reaching hundreds in their community. And the testimonies continue to multiply.

"The 100 Days of Prayer became a big miracle that took everyone by surprise," Philip Rono reported later. "It has always been our tradition to invite those of other faiths, but this time the number was big, and we were surprised with how the Lord moved them. Now we are having problems—good problems! What do we do with all these new Adventist pastors?"

The Ronos's passion for sharing Jesus is just what we hope to see repeated among every one of the church's almost 19 million members in the next five years. Their story offers a glimpse



of what could be possible in our own churches everywhere if every member got involved, earnestly prayed in groups, and then tried to reach out to those of other faiths.

What sparked the interest of those initial 12 pastors? Not a Bible prophecy seminar or a huge Adventist event. It was an all-night prayer meeting! Through this, and the power of the Holy Spirit, the Ronos and other Adventist believers were able to reach out to the churches next door, in the next village, and throughout their region.

## **Small Sacrifices, Big Blessings!**

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have been given a special task, to share the Three Angels' Messages with a dying world. This is not a message to be ashamed of. This is a message of reconciliation and hope, calling people back to a genuine, authentic walk with the Lord. This is a message that calls people out of spiritual confusion to the clear truths of God's Word.

However, we can't fulfill God's calling to share with our loved ones and those of other faith groups in our own strength. The task is too great! Because of this, we need to seek the Lord as never before. We need to be on our knees as never before! We need to be dying to self as never before!

Ellen White writes the following:

“Said the angel, ‘Get ready, get ready, get ready. Ye will have to die a greater death to the world than ye have ever yet died.’ I saw that there was a great work to do for them and but little time in which to do it.”<sup>2</sup>

“The people of God should be wide awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but wholly in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer. . . .”<sup>3</sup>

This is why we've set aside this day for fasting and prayer! We need wisdom. We need help from on High. Most of all, we need the power of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, taking extra time to pray might be considered a sacrifice, especially if we aren't in the habit of praying together. Fasting is also a sacrifice! It's not easy to deny our temporal and physical desires. However, these are just small sacrifices and are nothing in comparison to the big blessing that God wants to give.

Acts 1:8 says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

When God fills us with His Spirit, then He will give us the Words to speak—words that we would never have thought to say on our own. When He is leading us, He will lead us to people that we would have never thought to approach. When He is loving through us, people will be drawn to the Jesus they see in our life. This is because His Spirit is changing us from the inside

out. And we are told, through the Spirit, “God can do more in one moment to convict people than we can do in a lifetime.”<sup>4</sup>

It’s a small sacrifice to spend an afternoon or a night in prayer. But these small sacrifices will make a big difference for eternity, for when we pray, God works in ways He would not have worked if we hadn’t asked.

In *The Great Controversy*, page 525, we are told, “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.”

So as we pray today for those of other faiths, for the churches next door, and for those who don’t yet understand the truth of God’s Word, let’s pray for the Holy Spirit, and that He would give us His heart for the world around us. Let’s pray that we would receive our inheritance. What is our inheritance? Again, Psalm 2:8 tells us, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

There is power in prayer! And there is even more power when we pray together. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

Inspiration also tells us, “The ambassadors of Christ will have power with the people after they have, with earnest supplication, come before God.”<sup>5</sup>

So let us grasp hold of the arm of the Lord, and let us pray in faith, for we are promised, “By your fervent prayers of faith you can move the arm that moves the world.”<sup>6</sup>

Let’s pray to move the arm that moves the world today!

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<sup>1</sup> This was a special period of prayer leading up to the General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas in 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Writings*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> *Selected Messages*, 3:414.

<sup>4</sup> *Signs of the Times*, Nov. 7, 1900, par. 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Review and Herald*, October 20, 1896.

<sup>6</sup> *Adventist Home*, p. 264.

# Steps to Witnessing to Other Faith Groups!

You are now much more likely to meet Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and people of other religions and faith persuasions than ever before. How can you effectively share your Adventist faith in a way that shows respect and kindness while also communicating the unique and essential truths of the Bible?

Study and try these following four simple steps. Bathe the whole process with prayer, as only the Holy Spirit can give you adequate love and wisdom. It is the Holy Spirit that will make it possible for people of other religions to understand and receive truth (1 Corinthians 2:11; 12:3).

## 1. Listen

**Inspirational Thought:** “In all our associations it should be remembered that in the experience of others there are chapters sealed from mortal sight. On the pages of memory are sad histories that are sacredly guarded from curious eyes. There stand registered long, hard battles with trying circumstances, perhaps troubles in the home life, that day by day weaken courage, confidence, and faith. Those who are fighting the battle of life at great odds may be strengthened and encouraged by little attentions that cost only a loving effort. To such the strong, helpful grasp of the hand by a true friend is worth more than gold or silver. Words of kindness are as welcome as the smile of angels. . . . Sympathize with them in their trials, their heartaches, and disappointments. This will open the way for you to help them. Speak to them of God’s promises, pray with and for them, inspire them with hope” (*The Ministry of Healing*, 158).

In witnessing, we usually talk too soon and too much. Instead, be friendly to the person, ask good questions, and listen with true interest. As appropriate, ask about their families, hobbies, education, career, future plans, health, or anything you can find that matters to them. Listening communicates to them that you value and respect them. It gives you the information you need to really care and help.

You don’t need to be an expert on Buddhism to witness to a Buddhist. Just ask her about her beliefs. What does she think about God, life, death, and what comes next? Each person is different. Some are highly philosophical, with no room for what is unseen. Some Buddhists think more about spirits, magic, and protection than about Buddha’s teachings. Others are very secular, thinking primarily about their families, businesses, or personal interests.

Once we know their beliefs, interests, and needs, we will know better which specific pieces of God’s good news we should focus on to best help them. A person fascinated by spiritual powers is likely to be intrigued by the story of God’s great battle with evil. A person with marriage problems may be more interested in the power of prayer and God’s ability to help people love the unlovable. Listen, learn, and care. People of any religion will be touched.

## 2. Affirm Similarities

**Inspirational Thought:** “If you walk humbly with God you may unite with the students not of our faith, agreeing with them as far as possible by dwelling upon points wherein you harmonize. Make no effort to create an issue. Let them do that part of the work themselves. Let them see that you are not egotistical, pharisaical, thinking no one loves God but yourselves, but draw them to Christ, thus drawing them to the truth. All heaven is engaged in this work. Angels wait for the cooperation of men in drawing souls to Christ. ‘We are laborers together with God’ ” (*Manuscript Releases*, 4:49).

Even though we usually think of our differences from others, as Bible-believing Christians we have much in common with people of other religions. When we affirm those similarities, we draw our hearts together. This also makes it easier to look at differences later on.

Here are some similarities:

The Jewish Scriptures are the same as what Christians call the Old Testament. Jews who accept the Scriptures believe in the Creator God, uphold the Ten Commandments, including the Seventh-day Sabbath, and avoid unclean meats. Muslims focus on the necessity of being totally surrendered to the One True Creator. They believe that Jesus was born of a virgin and will come again to judge the world. Their scriptures tell them to study the law, the prophets, and the gospels. They are not supposed to eat pork or drink alcohol. Hindus and Buddhists believe in a judgment for every good and bad deed, word, and motive. Many are vegetarians, valuing life and health. Many strongly believe in spiritual realities that cannot be seen by the eyes. Compassion, self-sacrifice, honesty, and family fidelity are important morals that all world religions share.

In our eagerness to speak about our unique differences, we may fail to recognize the prejudices that many people of other world religions have toward Christianity. They may feel Christianity is less spiritual and less moral than their own religion because they associate it with the aggressive politics, materialistic lifestyles, and immoral Hollywood movies from the “Christian” West. If they can see their own values in us and hear us affirm the good we have in common, they will be more ready to hear the new special truths we share.

Speak about Solomon’s proverbs and Jesus’ teachings that highlight the morality we hold in common. Live a life of healthfulness and peaceful relationships. Be completely devoted to God and to care for the poor. Affirm, value, and draw together.

## 3. Share Differences Through Stories

**Inspirational Thought:** “Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that

is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls" (*The Desire of Ages*, 347).

Most people want to avoid conflict, and so they don't want to talk about religious differences. However, we must not stay silent about the essential differences we have with other world religions, especially regarding salvation and God's true nature and character. Jesus showed us His compelling plan for witnessing when He said to the demoniac, "Go tell them what great things God has done for you." Share what is unique to your faith through stories.

Scatter the seeds of truth lightly and frequently. Tell your stories, your friends' stories, and stories from the Bible. If you want them to understand about a living God, tell a story of when you asked for His help. If you want them to believe Jesus can forgive sins, talk about your struggles and the peace you found in the story of the cross. When you want to deal with lies about reincarnation, ghosts, and gods, tell the amazing story of the Great Controversy.

Be enthusiastic. Be sincere. Pray much, and the truths will never be forgotten. Story-telling is much better than a debate in which no one is changed and hearts are closed. Build your evidences for truth right into the beautiful stories.

#### **4. Invite to a New Experience**

**Inspirational Thought:** "The secret of our success and power will be found in making direct, personal appeals to those who are interested, having unwavering reliance upon the Most High" (Pamphlet 118, *Address to Ministers*, 3).

"Never should a sermon be preached, or Bible instruction in any line be given, without pointing the Hearers to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' John 1:29. Every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words" (*Testimonies*, 6:54).

Too often we stop witnessing after one of the steps above. This fails to give our friend an opportunity to actually experience God. We must invite him or her to try something related to what we have been talking about, however small. Little steps will lead to a big encounter with Jesus. Pray always, expecting great miracles from God. Then ask something like:

"May I pray for your troubled teenager?"

"This time, you try praying to God every night before you go to sleep and see if it helps your fears go away."

“You said your wife is ready to divorce you. Each time before you see her, would you read this scripture that helped my marriage?”

“We’re going to the park this Saturday afternoon to spend time as a family. Would you like to join us and experience a special stress-reliever we call ‘Sabbath rest’?”

## **Above all, remember, we can do nothing to bring souls to the truth without the power of the Holy Spirit!**

Pray, pray, and keep praying for the Holy Spirit to attend your efforts!

“The Saviour knew that no argument, however logical, would melt hard hearts or break through the crust of worldliness and selfishness. He knew that His disciples must receive the heavenly endowment [the Holy Spirit]; that the gospel would be effective only as it was proclaimed by hearts made warm and lips made eloquent by a living knowledge of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 31).

“After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were so filled with love for Him and for those for whom He died, that hearts were melted by the words they spoke and the prayers they offered. They spoke in the power of the Spirit; and under the influence of that power, thousands were converted” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 22).

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# The Call to Biblical Fasting

Resources for the Day of Prayer and Fasting

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. And even now Jesus is fasting: He promised He would not drink grape juice again until we are all together in heaven (see Matt. 26:29).

Have you ever thought about the fast Christ is currently keeping for you and me?

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.

Hudson Taylor once said, "Perhaps the greatest hindrance to our work is our own imagined strength; and in fasting we learn what poor, weak creatures we are—dependent on a meal of meat for the little strength which we are so apt to lean upon" (J. Hudson Taylor, ed., *China's Millions*, 1887).

Of course, in Bible times fasting wasn't merely a denial of food. It was a time of heart evaluation as the petitioner sought God's blessing or deliverance in some situation.

Inspiration encourages us: "Men need to think less about what they shall eat and drink, of temporal food, and much more in regard to the food from heaven, that will give tone and vitality to the whole religious experience" (Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 90).

If a fast is not combined with extra time in the Word and seeking God in prayer, it would better to term it dieting! However, true biblical fasting is not about dieting, nor is it about self-righteous attitudes to impress others of our piety.

Referring to the outward type of fasting the hypocrites practiced, one Bible commentator writes,

Do we not often [even today] feel that there is something meritorious in the very inconveniences which we suffer in our acts of self denial? . . . [However, ] the pain and inconvenience which we may endure by the most rigid fasting are not meritorious in the sight of God. They are not that at which he aims by the appointment of fasting. He aims at justice, truth, benevolence, holiness (Isa. 58:6–7); and he esteems the act of fasting to be of value only as it will be the means of leading us to reflect on our faults, and to amend our lives (Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible* [1834] on Isaiah 58:5).

It's important to remember that we can't earn God's blessing or answers by prayer and fasting any more than we can earn our own salvation. Fasting doesn't substitute for obedience or personal surrender. However, it is a means of cleansing the heart of distractions and helping us have a more receptive frame of mind to what God wants to do in our life and through our prayers. And we are promised, "To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 59).

Speaking to early Adventists, Ellen White writes, "It is your privilege to receive more of the Spirit of God, as you engage in fasting and earnest prayer." In fact she correlates this fasting and prayer with the ability to more clearly present the truths of God's Word to the unconverted. Continuing, she writes, "You need to accept the promises and assurances of God and walk out on them in faith. You need to learn how to present the truths of the Word to those around you in all their binding force and in all their encouragement, that the unconverted may feel the influence of the Spirit of God upon heart and mind and character" (*The Review and Herald*, Jan. 13, 1910).

In the book, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, Wesley Duewel writes the following:

The great leaders of the Reformation, in their spiritual warfare to restore purity to the church, naturally made great use of the biblical means of fasting. Martin Luther not only maintained the spiritual discipline of fasting one day a week but additionally fasted so often along with his three hours of daily prayer that he was often criticized for fasting too much. But he blessed the whole church and impacted the world for God by his prayers, fasting, and holy boldness. . . . John Calvin was called an inveterate [habitual] faster—and lived to see God's power sweep Geneva. The Moravians fasted, as did the Hussites, Waldensians, Huguenots, and Scottish Covenanters. Except for prevailing prayer that included fasting, we would have had no Reformation and no great awakenings over the centuries (p. 181).

Throughout the Bible we see many examples of God's people fasting: for wisdom (Daniel 1, Acts 14:23), for deliverance (Esther 4:16, 2 Chron. 20:3), when beginning in ministry (Matt. 4), when seeking spiritual revival (Neh. 9:1, Joel 1:14, Jonah 3:5), when seeking victory over demonic oppression (Matt. 17:21), and many more.

Ellen White also has written a number of reasons why and when we should consider fasting. Consider the following:

- We should fast when searching out the truths of Scripture so our understanding is clear!<sup>1</sup>
- We should fast when seeking heavenly wisdom that God has promised!<sup>2</sup>
- We should fast when seeking God's direction in making important plans.<sup>3</sup>
- We should fast when dedicating our talents to God's service.<sup>4</sup>
- We should fast when requesting God's help in crisis.<sup>5</sup>



- We should fast when contending with demonic oppression.<sup>6</sup>
- We should fast when seeking God for more laborers for the harvest.<sup>7</sup>
- We should fast for unity among church members.<sup>8</sup>
- We should fast when seeking heart cleansing and spiritual renewal.<sup>9</sup>
- We should fast when seeking to overcome spiritual temptation.<sup>10</sup>
- We should fast when seeking to develop an appetite for plain food.<sup>11</sup>
- We should fast when seeking to conquer disease (for a meal or two).<sup>12</sup>
- We should fast over our decaying zeal and languishing spirituality.<sup>13</sup>
- We should fast as we seek a deeper walk with God in the last days.<sup>14</sup>
- We should fast when seeking to see the lost brought into the Kingdom.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to fasting when specific problems or issues arise, there is also *an advance fasting* we might consider. This is what Christ did in the wilderness for 40 days *before* He started His ministry. This is what we should do *before* we make big decisions, or *before* we go forward in our work, as we want to make sure we have God’s full blessing upon our lives.

Prayer and fasting should go hand in hand! Prayer is the means by which we grasp the invisible things of God, while fasting is the means by which we let loose and cast away the visible things that we are prone to depend upon. Ultimately, the goal of true fasting should be the fulfillment of Isaiah 58. This is the kind of fast that God is calling us to.

The true fast is no mere formal service. The Scripture describes the fast that God has chosen,—“to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke;” to “draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul.” Isaiah 58:6, 10. Here is set forth the very spirit and character of the work of Christ. His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. Whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew’s feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost. Not in idle mourning, in mere bodily humiliation and multitudinous sacrifices, is the true spirit of devotion manifested, but it is shown in the surrender of self in willing service to God and man (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 278).

## The Daniel Fast and More Specifics

The Daniel Fast is based upon the prophet Daniel’s fasting experiences as recorded in the Bible. While we don’t know Daniel’s complete menu, we are told a few things. In Daniel 1, Daniel chose not to eat the royal food that he was being served and ate only vegetables and drank water. Another time (in Daniel 10:2, 3) he deprived himself of choice food, meat, and wine as he sought the Lord in prayer. Most commentaries believe “choice food” would have been bread and sweets.

You will find some variation in the specific guidelines for the modern-day Daniel Fast, in what different people think you should or should not eat. **But our word of advice is, don't stress**

**about the details. Just keep it simple. The most important part of the fast is not necessarily what is on your plate but what is happening in your heart.**

Ellen White writes, “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” (*The Review and Herald*, Feb. 11, 1904).

The intention of today’s Daniel Fast is not to duplicate exactly what Daniel did but rather the spirit in which he did it. Daniel’s passion for the Lord caused him to hunger and thirst more for spiritual food than for physical food, which should be the desire of anyone choosing to participate in this type of fast.

With that in mind, here are some general guidelines.

## **Fasting Guidelines**

It’s important not to get too hung up on what we should and shouldn’t eat. Again, remember that the most important part of the fast is what is happening in our hearts. We deny ourselves physically so that we can seek the Lord in prayer with fewer distractions and more clarity of mind. We fast because we desire to grow closer to Him. Our particular fast may look a little different than someone else’s fast, but that’s OK. Some people may choose to be stricter than others in their food choices; however, that doesn’t make them more spiritual or holy. That just means they are being led to do something different. Thus, these food guidelines are meant to be just that—a guide. They are given to help create some healthy boundaries for a fast. But ultimately the decision on how and what to fast from should be between us and God.

### **The Modern-Day Daniel Fast Food List**

- **All fruit** – fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned
- **All vegetables** – fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned
- **All whole grains** – amaranth, barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa, millet, and whole wheat
- **All nuts and seeds** – almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, and sunflower seeds; unsweetened almond milk; nut butters
- **All legumes** – canned or dried: black beans, black-eyed peas, cannellini beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), great northern beans, kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans, and split peas
- **All quality oils** – avocado, coconut, grape seed, olive, peanut, sesame, and walnut
- **Beverages** - distilled water, filtered water, spring water, or herbal teas.
- **Other** – unsweetened almond milk, coconut milk, rice milk, or soy milk; herbs, spices, salt, unsweetened coconut flakes, seasonings, Bragg’s Liquid Aminos, soy products, and tofu.

## Foods to Avoid on the Daniel Fast

- **All meat and animal products**
- **All dairy products** – butter, cheese, cream, eggs, milk, etc.
- **All sweeteners** – agave nectar, artificial sweeteners, cane juice, honey, molasses, raw sugar, syrups, stevia, sugar, etc.
- **All leavened bread and yeast** – baked goods and Ezekiel bread (if it contains yeast and honey)
- **All refined and processed food products** – artificial flavorings, chemicals, food additives, preservatives, white flour, white rice, etc.
- **All deep-fried foods** – corn chips, French fries, potato chips, etc.
- **All solid fats** – margarine, shortening, etc.
- **Beverages** – carbonated drinks, coffee, energy drinks, and regular tea.

For more inspiration on fasting, I recommend reading chapter 10, “Fasting,” in the compilation *Counsels on Diet and Foods* by Ellen White. This reading starts at page 185.

Remember that fasting for more effective prayer and spiritual breakthrough is not about mastering a method but about having a change of heart. Only as we listen to the Holy Spirit’s promptings and allow Him to lead us into deeper surrender will our fasting truly be effective.

—Melody Mason  
United in Prayer Coordinator  
**General Conference World Headquarters**

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1. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 187.
  2. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
  3. *Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 364.
  4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 134.
  5. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 517, 518.
  6. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 431.
  7. Letter 26, 1883.
  8. Letter 98, 1902.
  9. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 187, 188.
  10. *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 202.
  11. *Counsels on Health*, p. 148; *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 190; and G. D. Strunk, “Fasting,” *Canadian Adventist Messenger*, Dec. 21, 1978, p. 5 ([http://docs.adventistarchives.org/docs/CUM/CUM19781221-V47-24\\_C.pdf](http://docs.adventistarchives.org/docs/CUM/CUM19781221-V47-24_C.pdf)).
  12. *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189.
  13. *Gospel Workers* 1892, p. 37.
  14. *A Call to Stand Apart*, p. 69.
  15. *Ibid.*

# SPIRITUAL BREAK THROUGH

by Janet Page

**W**ould you like to make your spiritual life come alive? Develop a deeper passion for God? Be able to better discern God's will for your life? See God move in a powerful way in your life, your family, your church, and your community? Have a deeper understanding of Scripture? Have more energy and feel better? Be happier and full of God's joy and peace?

## TRY FASTING AND PRAYER!

**Don't panic and please don't stop reading.** It's really true. Fasting will change your life and the lives of those you pray for.

**You don't have to go without food to fast. You could do the following:**

- Leave off desserts
- Eat simple foods like fruits, vegetables, and bread
- Skip lunch or supper (use the time to pray)
- Stop eating between meals
- Do 1, 2, or 3 days of just fresh vegetable and fruit juice (be sure to check with your physician beforehand)
- Omit television, videos, computer, books, stereo, or radio (use time to pray)

**Involve your children.** Children take prayer requests seriously and they believe God will answer. Some activities are:

- Eat simple foods or eliminate dessert.
- Get a map of your community and have the children join in praying over the streets.



- Obtain a world map or globe and involve the children in praying for specific areas of the world.
- Prayer walk the neighborhood.
- Pray together, pray one subject at a time, keep it short, go back and forth.

**Why fast?** Because God wants us to fast.

*The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; and then they will fast”*

Matthew 9:15

“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 of 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*, p. 188.

**Fast only as God directs you.** As you spend time with God, ask Him to give you a desire to fast

# AYER

and to show you when, how long, and what type of fast.

“For certain things, fasting and prayer are recommended and appropriate. In the hand of God they are a means of cleansing the heart and promoting a receptive frame of mind. We obtain answers to our prayers because we humble our souls before God.” *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 187

## FASTING IS...

- An attitude of the heart in which we interrupt our life to pray for a specific matter or cause.
- A tool that may be used to glorify God and realize answers to prayer.
- A means by which we can worship the Lord and submit ourselves in humility to Him. 🙏

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## BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

For some fascinating biblical examples of the purpose of fasting:

*The Disciple’s Fast:*

“To loose the bands of wickedness” from ourselves and others.  
Isa. 58:6, Matt. 17:21.

*The Ezra Fast:*

“Undo the heavy burdens.”  
Isa. 58:6; Ezra 8:23.

*The Samuel Fast:*

“To let the oppressed (physically and spiritually) go free.”  
Isa. 58:6, 1 Sam. 7:6.

*The Elijah Fast:*

“To break every yoke” conquering mental and emotional problems.  
Isa. 58:6, 1 Kings 19:4, 8.

*The Widow’s Fast:*

“To share our bread with the hungry” and to care for the poor.  
Isa. 58:7, 1 Kings 17:16.

*The Paul Fast:*

To allow God’s “light to break forth like the morning” bringing clearer perspective and insight as we make crucial decisions.  
Isa 58:8, Acts 9:9

*The Daniel Fast:*

So “thine health shall spring forth.”  
Isa. 58:8, Dan. 1:8.

*The Esther Fast:*

That “the glory of the Lord” will protect us from the evil one.  
Isa. 58:8, Esther 4:16, 5:2

### FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Isa. 58 Chapter 10

“Fasting,” *Counsels on Diet and Foods* by Ellen G. White - Both books are available at the Adventist Book Center, **800-843-8585**