

# Day of Prayer and Fasting

## Handbook and Resources

**Made Strong Through the Power of the Word:**  
*Interceding for Our Children*

Third Quarter 2018  
Sabbath, July 7

*Revival*  
& REFORMATION

Prepared for church group and individual use by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in coordination with the Revival and Reformation Committee. Prepared by Melody Mason for the Day of Prayer and Fasting global initiative.

Visit [www.revivalandreformation.org](http://www.revivalandreformation.org) for information.

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# Why a Day of Prayer and Fasting?

Imagine you are a parent about to leave your children, knowing you will not see them again until the Kingdom of Heaven. What is the most important thing you could say to them?

Jesus had that dilemma as He prepared to return to heaven after His crucifixion. What was the burden of His last words to His disciples? As we read through His last prayers and counsel in John 15-17, we discover repeating themes: Unity, love, and seeking God through prayer. Jesus longed for His fledgling church to come together in purpose, harmony, and mission. Today, amid perhaps unprecedented polarization in the world, our nations, and our church, we too need to heed Jesus' counsel to seek His Spirit and come together for mission. The task seems daunting and impossible in our humanity. That's why we need to pray as never before for the miracle of reconciliation that only God can bring.

We invite you to pray "in your closet." We invite you to pray with your local church family. And we invite you to the global Revival and Reformation initiative of prayer and fasting. Perhaps you will not choose to fast totally from food. Perhaps you will fast from desserts or social media, or eat sparingly of plant-based food for a time.

"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" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Feb. 11, 1904).

As you choose to focus more deeply on prayer, God will bless you and strengthen your heart for the challenging days ahead.

Cindy Tutsch  
For Revival and Reformation Committee

# Suggested Planning Ideas

- Key Verse: Isaiah 49:25
- Suggested sermon themes or possible topics for church:  
*Fighting on Our Knees for Our Children*  
*Reaching the Prodigal Child*  
*Preparing Our Families for Eternity*  
*Jesus Loves the Little Children*
- Suggested children's story ideas:  
*Share the story of the return of the Prodigal Son, based on Luke 15:11-24.*  
*Share about the 99 sheep in the fold and the lost one outside. God cares about the one!*  
*Share a personal miracle story about a child who came back to Christ because of prayer.*

## **RESOURCES:**

- **FOR LEADER:** A suggested afternoon prayer program is provided. We recommend that you schedule about two hours, minimum, for this time. Many plan on prayer for a full afternoon. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead in regard to time.
- **FOR LEADER:** See "Pointers for Prayer Leader" (pages 8, 9).
- **FOR LEADER and ATTENDEES:** Make copies of prayer theme sheets (pages 10-12) for attendees.
- **FOR LEADER and ATTENDEES:** Print "Prayers and Promises for Your Children" to guide attendees as they pray. (We suggest you copy these sheets double-sided so you will end up with two pages total. See pages 22-26).
- **FOR LEADER:** We have provided a Day of Prayer and Fasting devotional: "Developing a Prayer and Faith that Can Move Mountains" (see page 14). This could be shared before the prayer time or could be used with the sermon, if desired.
- **PERSONAL READING FOR CHURCH LEADERS/PASTORS:** With the prayer focus on "Interceding for Our Children" this quarter, we encourage you to read "Five Ways to Encourage Your Youth in Total Member Involvement" (see page 18).
- An additional fasting resource, "The Discipline of Fasting," is located on page 20 in the appendix.
- To download prayer promise cards for your children or other needs, visit:  
[www.revivalandreformation.org](http://www.revivalandreformation.org)

## 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 ask God what type of fast He wants them to undertake.

While fasting is a "given" in the Bible (see Matthew 6:16), we must remember that fasting is not a magic key to righteousness or blessings, 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" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 280).

However, even if people choose not to fast, we 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!"

# Suggested Program Format

**Place:** Gather together in the church sanctuary to begin this time of prayer.

**Opening the Prayer Time:** After a few songs to set a reverent atmosphere, have the song leader lead everyone in the hymn “Standing on the Promises” (*Adventist Hymnal*, no. 518), as we entreat God to help us stand on His promises while we intercede for our children.

**Opening Prayer and Official Welcome:** Have the Prayer Ministries director or a designated leader welcome everyone to the time of prayer. Share that even if participants don’t have children, they can still pray for the children of others, or for their spiritual children. Then have the leader read the devotional “Developing a Prayer and Faith That Can Move Mountains” (see page 14) if it has not already been shared. Follow with Isaiah 49:25: “But thus says the Lord: ‘Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children.’”

**Instructions:** Give instructions for the actual prayer time! See “Pointers for Prayer Leaders” (pages 8, 9) for prayer tips to emphasize and instructions for the afternoon.

- Hand out the prayer theme sheet for the Day of Prayer and Fasting (pages 10-12).
- Hand out the sheets “Prayers and Promises to Claim for Your Children” (pages 22-26).

**Actual Prayer Time:** Two to three hours, minimum. This time will go quickly. Many enjoy spending the whole afternoon in prayer. We suggest using part of the time to pray as a group and part for families to pray together. However, throughout the afternoon, keep the focus on actual prayer time, rather than talking or sermonizing. This is the day to pray—and to surround our children and families in prayer!

**Closing:** In closing the prayer time, sing a few songs of praise, thanking God for what He’s going to do. Encourage members to continue praying for their children.

**Ending the Day of Prayer and Fasting:** Have a special evening meal to break the fast together. You might consider doing a special “Youth Banquet” in honor of the youth of the church, with a testimony time where people can share what they appreciate about their children or about other youth in attendance. Adult affirmation does wonders for young people.

# Pointers for Prayer Leaders

While people are encouraged to pray multiple times, remind them of the importance of keeping 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, vol. 10, p. 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 and 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. If you're going to divide up your group to pray, begin this time together as one large group. Then separate into smaller prayer bands. 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."

## **Prayer Time for the Children:**

As you pray for the children of your church, whether for your own or for others, encourage everyone, by your own example, to pray God's Word, claiming His promises. 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.

## **The Family Prayer Time:**

Partway through the afternoon, send the parents to pray alone with their children for 30 minutes to one hour. (Use your wisdom to decide how long, or decide as a group.) The family groups can spread out around the sanctuary or prayer room, or go to a private place of their choosing. Ask them to come back and join the group again at a specified time.

## **NOTE: For those who don't have children or are single:**

Encourage those who are single, who don't have children, or fit into some other category, to stay in the main room and pray for the families who have gone away to pray. They can also pray for the children of relatives and friends they know, as well as for the spiritual children that God promises to give to those who don't bear children physically (see Isaiah 54:1).



Designate a specific leader to be responsible for this group and prayer time while the families are away.

Remember, these are ideas to help get things started, but it's most important that the Holy Spirit leads the prayer time!

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

# Interceding for Our Children (Prayer Theme and Outline)

“For I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children.” Isaiah 49:25

## CORPORATE PRAYER TIME:

- **PRAISE GOD:** Begin the time of prayer by praising and worshiping God for who He is. Truly, He can heal and restore broken hearts. He can also bring our children home again!
- **PRAISE GOD FOR YOUR CHILDREN:** No matter your current relationship with your children, take time to praise God for the children He’s given you, or for the young people you know.
- **CORPORATE CONFESSION:** Next go into a time of corporate confession, asking God to forgive us as a people for our selfishness and pride and for allowing the enemy a foothold in our homes and relationships. (Encourage people to confess whatever God lays on their hearts, while at the same time, keeping personal, private sins private.)
- **PRIVATE CONFESSION:** Take time for personal, silent confession, asking God to search hearts and bring to attention any unconfessed sins that need to be made right.
- **SUPPLICATION FOR CHILDREN OF CHURCH LEADERS:** Pray that God will put a hedge of protection around the homes of our church leaders, including local pastors, elders, deacons, and conference and union leaders. The enemy always attacks by starting with the home and personal life. Pray that God would overrule the purposes of the enemy and save our children.
- **SUPPLICATION FOR CHILDREN OF CHURCH MEMBERS/ATTENDEES:** Take turns praying over the children of the church. Call all the young people/young adults into the middle of the circle and surround them with prayer. (Make sure all the young people in attendance are prayed for!)
- **SUPPLICATION FOR CHILDREN OF BACKSLIDDEN MEMBERS:** Pray for the children of those who no longer come to church. Pray that God will not only bring these church members reconciliation with their children but also bring them back to church as a family.
- **SUPPLICATION FOR CHILDREN OF NEIGHBORS/FRIENDS:** Pray for the children of those closest to us. They may not be church members, or of our faith, but God wants to restore their broken hearts as well. Pray for children and loved ones who may not have been mentioned yet.
- **SUPPLICATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE DEALING WITH PAIN FROM THE LOSS OF A CHILD:** Pray for those in the church who have lost a child. Pray that they will sense God’s love and also feel that their church family supports and loves them. (Perhaps ask those who have lost children to come to the center so the group can circle them collectively in prayer. Pray over people as the Holy Spirit leads.)
- **SUPPLICATION FOR OUR SCHOOLS:** Pray for our young people who attend nearby schools to develop a personal experience with Christ. Pray for godly Christian education that will grow their faith, not destroy it. Pray that God will raise up a movement of young missionaries for His glory!

## FAMILY PRAYER TIME: Each family should find a private place to pray together.

- **FAMILY PRAISE:** Praise God for the good things about your family and for the ways He’s blessed you and helped you grow as a family. Be specific in your thanks to God.
- **FAMILY CONFESSION:** Ask God to forgive you for ways that you may have wounded your children or family members through your words, actions, or choices. Be specific! (Ask your family members and children to forgive you for whatever God brings to your mind.)

- Ask God to forgive you for pride, selfishness, and for the times you've been more worried about defending your rights than for caring for your family and their needs. (Ask your family members and children to forgive you for whatever God brings to mind.)
- Ask God to forgive you for not reflecting His love and mercy (as depicted in 1 Corinthians 13) to your family.
- FAMILY SUPPLICATION: Pray together over the "Prayers and Promises to Claim for Your Children."
  - Pray that you would have not just a happy family but also thriving, loving relationships that help others come to the kingdom because of your testimony.
- FAMILY THANKSGIVING: End by praising God for what He can and will do as your family surrenders and yields to Him. Thank God for your family again and for the chance to help each other prepare for heaven. Commit to continue praying together and putting God first.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Before returning to the main group, ask what you can do to show mutual love to each other in a meaningful way in the coming weeks; attempt to practice what is shared, in God's strength. Make a plan to continue praying together, not just once in awhile but regularly!

WORLD CHURCH PRAYER TIME: In addition to praying for the children in our church, please remember the following World Church prayer requests during this day of prayer and fasting.

- Please pray that our worldwide churches become houses of prayer, where members intercede on behalf of our marriages, our homes, our children, and the nations around us.
- Pray that our churches are havens where young people love to worship and fellowship.
- Pray that our young people catch a passion for Jesus and for service in ministry, based on an abiding relationship and walk with Him.
- Pray that our young people take an active role in the church and recognize that God has called them to do their part in Total Member Involvement.
- Please pray that our schools maintain biblical principles in their education programs and teach biblical truth throughout the curriculum.
- Pray for Adventist youth not currently attending Christian schools to stay strong for the Lord. Pray that the Lord protects them from the enemy's snares and that Satan's efforts to pull them out of the church will fail.
- Pray that church leaders will lovingly lead and mentor our youth and that any hypocrisy (which discourages young people) will be put away.
- Pray that we will know how to prepare ourselves and our young people for Jesus' soon coming.

# APPENDIX

## Developing a Prayer and Faith That Can Move Mountains

By Melody Mason, United in Prayer coordinator for the World Church

I still remember the pain and agony in Karin's eyes. Her heart was heavy for her two sons who did not know the Lord. She'd been praying for them for many years, and it seemed that nothing was happening. With tears and love, our prayer group surrounded this mother, grasping hold of the promises of heaven as we pled with God to intervene and hear our prayers.

Time passed. In the following months, I prayed many prayers for others, and slowly the memory of Karin and her situation began to fade from my mind. Almost a year later, I entered a room at a youth conference where a group was praying. Kneeling down, I closed my eyes as I listened to the earnest prayers. Many agonizing prayers went up. Tears were shed. Two young men beside me prayed passionately, claiming God's Word, as they wrestled on behalf of their unsaved friends. I joined my prayers with theirs.

After the prayer time, I opened my eyes to learn who my courageous young prayer partners were. Just then a familiar-looking woman entered the room. It was Karin. "Did you meet my sons?" she asked? "These boys?" I questioned incredulously. "Yes! These are the boys we prayed for together a year ago. God has heard and answered our prayers. They've accepted Christ!"

Not only had both boys accepted Christ, but both were actively engaged in helping others do the same. (They have since gone on to become active in ministry for God's glory. One has even become a pastor.) Truly we serve a God who can do the impossible. Nothing is beyond Him. Only our lack of faith and perseverance limit Him.

Ellen White writes, "I asked the angel why there was no more faith and power in [the Adventist church]. He said, 'Ye let go of the arm of the Lord too soon. Press your petitions to the throne, and hold on by strong faith. The promises are sure. Believe ye receive the things ye ask for, and ye shall have them.' I was then pointed to Elijah. He was subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly. His faith endured the trial. Seven times he prayed before the Lord, and at last the cloud was seen. I saw that we had doubted the sure promises, and wounded the Savior by our lack of faith" (*Early Writings*, p. 73).

How can we grow our faith, a faith that will not let go? One secret, I believe, is recognizing the great God that we serve!

When Abraham was beginning his journey of faith, knowing not where he was going and questioning whether he would ever have a son, God took him out one night and asked him if he could number the stars. "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be" (Genesis 15:5).

Abraham could only shake his head in awe and wonder, just as we do today. And yet the Bible tells us that God not only knows the number of the stars, He also calls them each by name (Psalm 147:4).

While Abraham couldn't comprehend God's promise, he believed God's Word. As a result, Scripture tells us, "Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore" (Hebrews 11:12). Amazingly, God is still fulfilling His promise to Abraham today.

As we begin to understand the magnificent God we serve, we might echo the cry of King David who wrote, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3, 4).

We could rephrase it this way: "What is a mother, what is a father, that He is mindful of us and our prayers for our children? What is a child that He is mindful of us and our weak, feeble prayers for a parent or loved one?"

Hard as it is to comprehend and understand, our God, who stretched out the heavens by His great power, is mindful of us. God is not only mindful, but He has created us and commissioned us with a holy calling! We are to be co-laborers with Him. Not only are we to be a light to the Gentiles, but we are also to stand in the gap on behalf of the blind, the lame. We are to help set free those who are locked in darkness (Isaiah 42:5-7).

Unfortunately, many times it is our own children who are locked in darkness; our own loved ones have lost their way. But no darkness is too deep, no difficulty too great that God cannot intervene and deliver. In fact, when it comes to a point where we don't know what to do, that is just when the miracle of God can truly begin.

I think nothing honors God more than when we have faith in the completion of His work, faith that sees far beyond our own ability and grasps hold of His infinite resources. We are told that nothing is too hard for Him (Jeremiah 32:17). Inspiration tells us, "The power at God's command is limitless" (*Gospel Workers*, 1915, p. 60).

Limitless? Do we comprehend what this means? Obviously, when it comes to God, the sky is not the limit; the universe is not the limit. There are no limits—except for the limit of our faith!

"We have too little faith. We limit the Holy One of Israel. We should be grateful that God condescends to use any of us as His instruments. For every earnest prayer put up in faith for anything, answers will be returned. They may not come just as we have expected; but they will come—not perhaps as we have devised, but at the very time when we most need them" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 209).

If we truly realized how big our God is, we would have a lot more faith to move forward in His work. We would also have a lot more faith when we pray for our loved ones and children. Consider the following thoughts from the words of Inspiration:

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

"The Lord will hear our prayers for the conversion of souls [this includes our children]" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 315).

"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).

"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" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 146).

"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).

"In answer to fervent prayer, God can turn the thoughts and hearts of men as he turns the waters of the sea" (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 30, 1902).

"Their warfare is not to be waged against flesh and blood, but 'against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places' (Ephesians 6:12, RV). They are to contend with supernatural forces, but they are assured of supernatural help. All the intelligences of heaven are in this army. And more than angels are in the ranks. The Holy Spirit, the representative of the Captain of the Lord's host, comes down to direct the battle. Our infirmities may be many, our sins and mistakes grievous; but the grace of God is for all who seek it with contrition. The power of Omnipotence is enlisted in behalf of those who trust in God" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 352).

The promises go on and on.

May we not grow weary and faint. May we not let go of the Lord's arm of strength! As long as there is breath, there is hope. He can bring the prodigal home. He can bring loved ones home. Our children and loved ones may not see their condition, they may not see their need of help. But just as Jesus acted in Bible times on behalf of the prayers of parents and family members, so He will act today.

In Matthew 18:19 we read, "If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven." In response to this promise, Ellen White writes, "Precious promise! Do we believe it? What marvelous results would appear if the united prayers of this company were to ascend to God in living faith! Jesus stands ready to take these petitions and present them to His Father, saying, 'I know these persons by name. Send answers to their prayers; for I have graven their names on the palms of My hands'" (*Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 152).

Let's move forward on our knees, claiming the promises of God's Word in faith. There is nothing too big for God. And when we pray in faith, He can move mountains, even the mountain of a stubborn heart.

# Five Ways to Encourage Your Youth in Total Member Involvement

By Ted N.C. Wilson

1. Encourage your youth to develop a personal relationship with Jesus through daily time in the Word, time in prayer, and active witnessing and evangelism. Show them by your own example what true faith, authentic Christianity, and discipleship look like when empowered by the Holy Spirit. Encourage them to seek even higher ideals for God's honor and glory. Time is short. Let's put away all spiritual pretense. Young people long to see godly, sincere Christianity being lived out in today's world. They long to know that the God we serve is real, and able to do far abundantly above and beyond all we ask or think.
2. Encourage your youth to be creative as they follow biblical principles in finding ways to be part of Total Member Involvement. In fact, Ellen White writes, "Never, never feel the slightest disturbance because the Lord is raising up youth to lift and carry the heavier burdens and proclaim the message of truth" (Letter 14, Dec. 11, 1891). The work before us is large, and it can't be completed by church leadership alone. All must be involved: Leaders, laity, old, and young . . . especially our youth! Remember, youth aren't inhibited by the same limitations that we often see as adults. Because of this, they dream big, pray big, and plan big! We need the energy, enthusiasm, and passion of our young people in sharing the everlasting gospel as centered in the three angels' messages. Then true revival and reformation will sweep our globe, and Jesus will finally return.
3. While we should mentor our young people, don't try to control them too tightly or hold them back from moving forward with enthusiasm for the sake of the gospel—as long as what they are doing is biblical and is producing good fruit (Matthew 7:17; Isaiah 8:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Philippians 4:8). Give them freedom to work and rally others together for God's glory. Support and encourage them in their efforts. This is God's work. It's bigger than we are! It's bigger than our church. And if their work is truly of God, He is fully capable of taking care of His work. As we get closer to the end of time, the Spirit will be the one controlling the work. In fact, God will use simple means that we don't expect to accomplish His great purposes. Ellen White writes, "God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness" (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 300). Therefore, let's not discourage our youth as they do great things for God!
4. Look for active ways to encourage youth to be involved and lead out. Look for ways to give them greater responsibility in making decisions, in leading out in evangelism and preaching, and in rallying the support of their fellow youth in sharing the Great Commission. Encourage them when they form prayer groups, lead out in Bible studies, and work to share the good news. Inspiration tells us, "Make [the youth] feel that they are expected to do something. The Lord chooses them because they are strong" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 279). We far underestimate what truly dedicated, godly young people can accomplish for God's glory!



5. Finally, pray with your youth and encourage them to pray for one another and for their local churches. Encourage them to pray that those who have left the church can be re-claimed, that unbelievers would find the truth, and that the proclamation of the three angels' messages would go forward with power, opening the way for the outpouring of the latter rain. Let every member, every adult, every young person, be involved. This is what Total Member Involvement is all about! Jesus is coming soon! "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world" (*Education*, p. 271).

To learn more about Total Member Involvement initiatives, visit: [www.tmi.adventist.org](http://www.tmi.adventist.org)

# The Discipline of Fasting

By Derek Morris

## A. Fasting in the Scriptures

- a. Types of fast
  - i. Normal fast—Luke 4:1, 2.
  - ii. Partial fast—Daniel 10:3.
  - iii. Absolute fast—Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9.
  - iv. Supernatural fast—Deuteronomy 9:9.
- b. In the teachings of Jesus
  - i. Study Matthew 6:16-18 and 9:14, 15.
  - ii. What can we learn about fasting from the teachings of Jesus?

## B. Insights on spiritual fasting in the writings of Ellen White

- a. "The fasting which the word of God enjoins is something more than a form. It does not consist merely in refusing food, in wearing sackcloth, in sprinkling ashes upon the head. He who fasts in real sorrow for sin will never court display. The object of the fast which God calls upon us to keep is not to afflict the body for the sin of the soul, but to aid us in perceiving the grievous character of sin, in humbling the heart before God and receiving His pardoning grace" (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 87).
- b. "The true fasting which should be recommended to all, is abstinence from every stimulating kind of food, and the proper use of wholesome, simple food, which God has provided in abundance. 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" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 188).
- c. "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).
- d. "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*, pp. 187, 188).
- e. "The spirit of true fasting and prayer is the spirit which yields mind, heart, and will to God" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189).
- f. "All the fasting in the world will not take the place of simple trust in the word of God" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189).

## C. The purpose of a spiritual fast

- a. Fasting helps us to focus our attention upon God.
- b. Fasting calls us to prayer.

- c. Fasting exposes those things which control us.
- D. How should we fast?
- a. Plan a 24-hour partial fast.
  - b. Eat sparingly of very simple food, or you may wish to drink only fruit juices.
  - c. Drink plenty of pure water.
  - d. Begin your fast with prayer following a wholesome breakfast. Break your fast the following morning with a light meal of fresh fruit and a special time of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord! Remember that you should not “advertise” your fast. Such an attitude leads to spiritual pride and robs you of the special blessings that God desires to bestow during this time.
  - e. Consider setting aside a day each week for this type of spiritual fast.
- E. Plan a normal or absolute fast in times of great need
- a. In times of crisis, God may impress you to enter into a normal or absolute fast.
  - b. Realize that you must severely limit your activities during such a fast. (You should consult your physician if you suspect that such a fast might endanger your health.)
- F. Do not become extreme—there is no virtue in a marathon fast
- a. Ellen White writes: “You are not called upon to fast forty days. The Lord bore that fast for you in the wilderness of temptation. There would be no virtue in such a fast; but there is virtue in the blood of Christ” (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189).

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# Prayers and Promises to Claim for Your Children

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that Your thoughts toward us are good and not evil. You want to give my children a future and a hope. I praise You for hearing my prayers on their behalf.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you" (Jeremiah 29:11, 12).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You promise to teach my children. You promise to give them what I cannot give them. You also promise to give them peace!

"All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You will teach my children what it means to walk in truth, for You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. May you receive the heritage and reward that is rightfully Yours!

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4).

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalm 127:3).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You are able to work on hearts. You can turn the hearts of my children toward You. Lord, please change our hearts today! Give us hearts that we may desire to know You.

"Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

"In answer to fervent prayer, God can turn the thoughts and hearts of men [even children] as he turns the waters of the sea" (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 30, 1902).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that while we don't always see results immediately, our tears and prayers are making a difference. Thank You for promising to build a hedge of protection around our children.

"It costs something to bring children up in the way of God. It costs a mother's tears and a father's prayers. It calls for unflagging effort, for patient instruction, here a little and there a little. But this work pays. Parents can thus build around their children bulwarks which will preserve them from the evil that is flooding our world" (*Child Guidance*, p. 479).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You hear my prayers on behalf of my children and that You are fighting for their salvation. I praise You that You will save them!

"But thus says the Lord: 'Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children'" (Isaiah 49:25).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You have promised to save the children of the needy. We are in great need, Father. The enemy wants to claim our children, and he's seeking to attack them in a thousand ways, but we are looking to You to break the power of the oppressor.

"He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor" (Psalm 72:4).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, for the testimony of Augustine's mother.

"The mother of Augustine prayed for her son's conversion. She saw no evidence that the Spirit of God was impressing his heart, but she was not discouraged. She laid her finger upon the texts, presenting before God his own words, and pleaded as only a mother can. Her deep humiliation, her earnest importunities, her unwavering faith, prevailed, and the Lord gave her the desire of her heart. Today he is just as ready to listen to the petitions of his people. His 'hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear;' [Isaiah 59:1] and if Christian parents seek him earnestly, he will fill their mouths with arguments, and, for his name's sake, will work mightily in their behalf in the conversion of their children" (*Christian Education*, pp. 236, 237).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You have promised to bring my children back from the land of the enemy. You have promised to bring them home. I cling to this promise and wait for You to work!

"Thus says the Lord: 'Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the Lord, that your children shall come back to their own border'" (Jeremiah 31:16, 17).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that no matter how far our children might have strayed, You are able to bring them home from the North, South, East, and West. I stand strong upon Your Word!

"Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 43:5, 6).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that it is Your love that draws us. And You have already set in operation a plan to bring my child back to You. Teach me how to love as You do!

"The love of God still yearns over the one who has chosen to separate from Him, and He sets in operation influences to bring him back to the Father's house. The prodigal son in his wretchedness 'came to himself.' The deceptive power that Satan had exercised over him was broken. . . . Miserable as he was, the prodigal found hope in the conviction of his father's love. It was that love which was drawing him toward home" (*A Call to Stand Apart*, p. 12).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You promise to heal us. I need healing. My children need healing. Please lead us in the path of healing and peace.

"I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips: peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near,' says the Lord, 'and I will heal him'" (Isaiah 57:18, 19).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You promise to give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of You. I'm claiming this promise for my children. May they know the hope of their calling. May they experience the richness of Your grace. May they know YOU!

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Ephesians 1:17-19).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You will always provide for me as well as providing for my children. Help my children know that You will never leave us or forsake us. Help them know that You are their daily bread!

"I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You've promised that the Holy Spirit and the words of promise that You've put in my mouth will go from my generation to my children's generation and beyond. I cling to this promise!

"As for Me,' says the Lord, 'this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants,' says the Lord, 'from this time and forevermore'" (Isaiah 59:21).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You fight for me and for my children. Teach us what it means to hold our peace. Deliver us from the "Egyptians" of temptation and evil that seek to overcome us. Break the generational sins that bind us!

"And Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace'" (Exodus 14:13, 14).

I PRAISE, YOU Lord, that You will restore the years the locusts have eaten. I'm pleading that You will do a great work in my child's life, and that You will pour Your Spirit upon them in the coming days as You've promised!

"So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten" (Joel 2:25).

"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You hear our cries. You see the spiritual battle that we face with our children, but You promise to deliver. You promise to give us what we need for victory. I cling to You and the surety of Your Word!

"Parents have a great and responsible work to do, and they may well inquire: 'Who is sufficient for these things?' But God has promised to give wisdom to those that ask in faith, and He will do just as He said He would. He is pleased with the faith that takes Him at His Word" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 322).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, for promising that when we train our children in the way they should go, when they grow up, they will not depart from this teaching.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that You hear the burdens of this mother’s heart, and no matter what emergencies I face, You are my faithful companion and friend.

“He knows the burdens of every mother’s heart and is her best friend in every emergency. His everlasting arms support the God-fearing, faithful mother” (*Adventist Home*, p. 204).

“The power of a mother’s prayers cannot be too highly estimated. She who kneels beside her son and daughter through the vicissitudes of childhood, through the perils of youth, will never know till the judgment the influence of her prayers upon the life of her children” (*Adventist Home*, p. 266).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, that just as You responded to the cry of a father in the Bible, You still hear the prayer of the father’s heart today. Thank You for saving our children! Thank you for Your Spirit!

“The nobleman said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your son lives.’ So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way” (John 4:49, 50).

“For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring” (Isaiah 44:3).

I PRAISE YOU, Lord, for giving me my children so that I could learn from them how to truly be converted. Help me not to take these lessons for granted. And help me know how to keep pointing them to you. Make me a true testimony of what it means to be converted!

“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).